
ProBonoNY
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NEWSLETTER

For Local Action Committees

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EIGHTH DISTRICT COMMITTEE UPDATE **By Amanda Warner**

I am pleased to announce that Hugh M. Russ, a member of Hodgson Russ, LLP, has taken over as Co-Chair with Hon. Sharon S. Townsend for the Eighth Judicial District Pro Bono Committee. Mr. Russ has been a member of the Committee since its inception, and has been actively involved with Committee activities both individually and with his firm in sponsoring events and committing to be a partner in the Committee's Large Firm Matrimonial Initiative. Mr. Russ will succeed Kenneth A. Manning, member of Phillips Lytle, LLP, who has provided outstanding service to the Committee as Co-Chair for the past three years. We are fortunate in being able to anticipate that Mr. Manning will continue his active involvement as a member of the Committee.

In addition to our co-chair transition, the Committee will be making some modifications in its structure during the coming year. The Committee, which I will hereafter refer to as the "Steering Committee," has decided it can work more effectively in the eight diverse counties in the District by establishing regional subcommittees to work on pro bono recruitment, support, and service in a more localized fashion. The regional subcommittees will be comprised of judges, private attorneys, bar association leaders, court staff, and public-interest legal service providers. Each subcommittee will have representation on the Steering Committee.

This concept grew out of the success of the Chautauqua County Pro Bono CLE held in June, when Hon. Paula L. Feroletto, a Steering Committee member, convened a group of Chautauqua County judges, private attorneys, legal services attorneys, and bar leaders to speak about the need for pro bono work in their county, the work currently being done, and opportunities for additional service. The

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SEVENTH DISTRICT NEWS **By Linda Kostin**

The Seventh District's Pro Bono Action Now Committee met on December 5. The Committee was pleased to announce that Hon. Dennis Bender, Hon. W. Patrick Falvey, and Hon. William Kocher, all from rural counties, have joined the Committee. Their support will help the Committee achieve its goal to increase significantly voluntary participation by rural attorneys in pro bono matters.

During the meeting, the Committee identified training as a particular concern of rural attorneys. Quarterly webinars are being planned for 2009 which will allow rural attorneys to receive training from Volunteer Legal Services Project in Rochester without having to leave their offices.

I reported on my activities as Pro Bono Coordinator, which included organizing a tour of High Falls Brewery and Happy Hour on November 19th. Twenty-eight attorneys attended this social event. To date, seven attendees have taken a case or signed up for training through VLSP. The Daily Record, Rochester's legal community's newspaper, featured the event in its December 12th issue.

Additional items in my coordinator's report included the continuation of discussions with Presiding Justice Scudder's staff regarding the development and implementation of a pro bono policy for court attorneys at the Appellate Division, Fourth Department.

In other news, on December 9, the "Ethics in the Afternoon" steering committee met. Committee members attending included Hon. Elizabeth Pine, Hon. Thomas Stander, Hon. John Schwartz, Hon. Joan Kohout, and Hon. Gail Donofrio. A four-hour program alternating between humorous and

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Eighth District Update

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program came together seamlessly and was very well-received, underscoring the effectiveness of “homegrown” programs tailored to the specific needs of the region.

The Steering Committee plans to establish four or five regional subcommittees, with an additional Large Firm Subcommittee for the Buffalo area that will include designated pro bono coordinators at each of Buffalo’s large firms. Among other benefits, this will provide a forum in which the large firms can compare pro bono policies and experiences, discuss volunteer opportunities, and share ideas about increasing their firms’ involvement in pro bono work.

Many of the same judges and lawyers who participated in last June’s Chautauqua County CLE program now make up the Chautauqua County Subcommittee. They met last month and decided to send a letter out from Justice Feroletto and the other judges on the subcommittee to all Chautauqua County attorneys, urging their participation in an organized pro bono effort through the local service providers.

The letter enclosed a pro bono questionnaire and sign-up form returnable to the local bar association and also announced an upcoming CLE program entitled “How to Handle a Matrimonial Case: A Nuts and Bolts Training,” which will be held at the end of January. Four CLE credits will be offered without charge in exchange for attorneys’ commitments to accept a pro bono matrimonial case. The training will be based on one that the Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project has conducted for years, but will be modified by the trainers (all Chautauqua County judges and lawyers) as appropriate for matrimonial practice in Chautauqua County.



From the editor . . .

BEST WISHES FOR THE HOLIDAYS
AND
A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Seventh District News

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traditional approaches to ethics topics is contemplated for this spring. A reception with judges will follow. The steering committee plans to recruit a Rochester judge and his band to play at the reception. “Ethics in the Afternoon” will be publicized to judges and attorneys throughout the Seventh Judicial District. Both rural and urban attorneys attending will be asked to make a commitment to serve low income clients pro bono.

NOTES and COMMENTS

By John Ritchie

New Ninth District Coordinator:

The Newsletter welcomes the new ProBonoNY pro bono coordinator for the Ninth Judicial District, **Carol Neiditch**, whose appointment commenced November 17th. Carol is a recent graduate of New Directions, a program at Pace University Law School for lawyers transitioning back to the practice of law after careers in other pursuits.

Originally, after graduating from Temple University School of Law, Carol served as law clerk to an Administrative Judge in the Social Security Administration, hearing appeals and writing decisions. She then spent time at home, raising three children, while becoming involved with several community non-profits, both as board member and as a volunteer. That was followed by a stint as assistant to the executive director of a local arts organization. As a lifelong crossword puzzle fanatic and tournament participant, Carol then had a career as puzzle editor before deciding to return to the practice of law via the Pace New Directions program.

As Ninth District Pro Bono Coordinator, Carol’s office is at Legal Services of the Hudson Valley, 90 Maple Avenue in White Plains, zip 10601 (though of course she travels throughout the District), and she can be reached at 914-949-1305 x 133 and cneiditch@lshv.org.