

NEWSLETTER

ProBonoNY

AN ACCESS TO JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP FOR THE POOR

For Local Action Committees

SPONSORED BY THE NEW YORK STATE UNIFIED COURT SYSTEM, OFFICE OF THE HONORABLE JUANITA BING NEWTON, DEPUTY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE FOR JUSTICE INITIATIVES
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Volume 1, Number 4 December 2007

EIGHTH DISTRICT COMMITTEE

By Amanda Warner

Extending its outreach to a wider circle of attorneys, the Eighth Judicial District Pro Bono Committee circulated a District-wide mailing in October which described the Pro Bono Committee and its mission, discussed my hiring as Pro Bono Coordinator, and encouraged participation in the Committee's project. The mailing included a brochure with further information about the Committee and volunteer opportunities and a registration form for attorneys to sign up to take various types of pro bono cases, which has already resulted in a number of attorneys signing up to accept pro bono referrals. Kenneth Manning, co-chair of the Committee, was able to make available staff members of his law firm, Phillips Lytle LLP, who were invaluable in helping us design, edit, and make production arrangements for our brochure and the committee's new letterhead.

In November, the Committee launched its Large Firm Initiative, in which Buffalo's largest firms will be called upon to designate at least five attorneys to receive training and take a pro bono matrimonial case in the coming year. On November 12 and 13, the Honorable Janice M. Rosa, Supervising Judge for Matrimonial Matters, matrimonial attorney Paul Vance, and I trained seven attorneys from Phillips Lytle in the basics of matrimonial practice. The attending attorneys received 3.5 CLE credits in exchange for their commitment to take a pro bono divorce case from the Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project. I will be working to schedule training programs at the other large firms in Buffalo in the coming months.

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NOTES & COMMENTS

John Ritchie

Annual Reports from the local committees have been arriving (still one or two to come). Judge Newton is in the process of reviewing them, and a summary, statewide consolidated report will be prepared based on the individual committee reports. The summary should be ready by the end of the month, so I'll save any comments until Judge Newton has completed her review and the summary is ready.

Pro Bono Coordinators

As you know, a key feature of ProBonoNY is the provision of funded positions to provide full-time attorneys to work with local committees in managing an expanded pro bono practice in each district. The coordinators are employed with local legal service providers under service contracts between the providers and the court system. The coordinators work closely with their local committees, assisting in client intake and case evaluation, attorney recruitment, training, mentoring, program planning and other aspects of the committees' activities. Precisely what the coordinators do will vary over time and will also depend on such factors as individual capabilities and experience, other services available in a particular area, and variable local needs. In any event, the coordinators are key elements of ProBonoNY. Indeed, I think the coordinators' activities and the continued, committed, and active involvement of all committee members are the two essentials of whatever success ProBonoNY achieves.

Our first pro bono coordinator, Esther Weingarten, has recently taken a new position, so we have a new coordinator in the Fifth District. We also have coordinators in the Eighth and Ninth Districts. To facilitate contacts and the exchange of information, here is contact information for all three:

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Eighth District

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Several Committee members, including co-chairs Judge Townsend and Kenneth Manning, participated in the court system's conference, "A Conversation about Justice Issues in Rural New York: Planting the Seeds for Collaborations and Partnerships," in Geneva on November 14 and 15. The conference offered Committee members the opportunity to meet with other access-to-justice stakeholders throughout the state, identify challenges to providing services to the poor in rural New York, and think about future solutions and action through collaborations and partnerships. The Committee is grateful to have had the opportunity to attend and will undoubtedly integrate many of the ideas generated at the conference into its future programming and plans.

The Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project held its Fifteenth Annual Volunteer Recognition Reception on November 28. It was held in the former Bank Lobby at the Main Seneca Building in downtown Buffalo, where VLP moved its offices in late September. Members of the Committee were in attendance to congratulate Committee Co-chairs Administrative Judge Sharon Townsend and Kenneth Manning for the "VLP V.I.P. Award" and Committee member Judge Henry Nowak for the "Judicial Award." The V.I.P. Award is given to those who have demonstrated a longtime commitment to working with VLP for the success of pro bono programs. The Judicial Award is given to judges or members of their staff who have made exceptional contributions to facilitating and supporting pro bono work.

The Eighth District Committee plans to host a CLE program and reception in early February. Stay tuned for more details in the January issue of the ProBonoNY Newsletter.

That's it for this issue of the **ProBonoNY Newsletter**. The editor apologizes for this issue's late publication—conferences and travel somewhat slowed things down. To all, best wishes for the holidays and a happy and productive New Year!

Notes and Comments

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In the near future, we are planning to add three more coordinator positions. Details soon, as arrangements are completed.