

Pro Bono Publico: A Core Component of the Connecticut Bar Association's Mission



By William H. Clendenen, Jr.

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On July 1, 2013, our CBA President Kimberly A. Knox, in making the new appointments to the Connecticut Bar Association's Pro Bono Committee, emphasized that "[p]ro bono service is an integral part of the mission of the Connecticut Bar Association and each lawyer's responsibility." She explained:

...the CBA Pro Bono Committee should strive to 'promote the public interest through the advancement of justice and the protection of liberty,' and more specifically, 'facilitate the delivery of competent legal services to the public particularly those in greatest need.' Constitution of the CBA, Art. II. The Committee should investigate, implement and otherwise provide opportunities for members to render public interest legal service, which includes 'providing professional legal services at no fee or a reduced fee to persons of limited means' or such service is defined in Rules of Professional Conduct, Rule 6.1. A most important component of the Committee is the Pro Bono Network, which is a collaboration between the Connecticut Bar Association and Connecticut's legal service organizations.

As discussed in last month's column, despite extraordinary efforts by our members and the organized legal services providers, less than one in five low income Connecticut citizens receive the legal assistance they need. Equally distressing is the virtual absence of legal help for the disadvantaged, near-poor, and working poor in Connecticut.

Undaunted by the enormity of the problem of lack of resources to meet the needs of Connecticut's low income and disadvantaged citizens, the CBA has increased its commitment to pro bono services. As many of you know, the Connecticut Bar Association Young Lawyers Section (CBA-YLS), with the Pro Bono Network, created the "\$1 Million Pro Bono Service Campaign." The campaign sought to increase CBA member pro bono service to the tune of \$1 million worth of pro bono legal services from March 2013 to May 2013 (4,000 hours at a rate of \$250 per hour). The CBA-YLS campaign was a resounding success. CBA members per-

formed over 8,700 hours of pro bono legal services worth more than \$2 million! The officers and members of the CBA offer our warm congratulations to the CBA-YLS and all of its participating members for a job well done.

To the hundreds of CBA members who volunteered with the 19 agencies of the Pro Bono Network in 2012, the new officers of the CBA salute you and thank you again for all of your service and dedication. When you get a chance, please look again at the May/June 2012 issue of *Connecticut Lawyer* (pp. 21-27) for the names of your colleagues on the Pro Bono Honor Roll and thank them for a job well done.

On a more modest—but no less important—note, the CBA has launched the Small Claims Volunteer Attorney Program. The program began this year at the Centralized Small Claims docket at the Hartford Judicial District. CBA members will be available to provide limited-scope legal aid advice in the area of small claims law on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month. If you would like to join in this important CBA program, please contact the CBA's Pro Bono Coordinator Melissa Wyckoff at (860)612-2036 or mwyckoff@ctbar.org.

Your new officers have made the provision of legal services to Connecticut's needy citizens a top priority. Working closely with the Judicial Branch, three of Connecticut's law schools, Connecticut's legal service providers, the Connecticut Bar Foundation, the Pro Bono Network and, most importantly, our members, we are committed to make sure that no Connecticut citizen is denied access to Connecticut courts because he or she cannot afford to hire an attorney. This is our call to action for the CBA! **CL**

The "Time to Go Pro Bono" Column for the August/September 2013 issue of *Connecticut Lawyer* was written by CBA Vice President and Pro Bono Committee Chair William H. Clendenen, Jr.