



hope. justice.

VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROGRAM

News from the VLP

Save the Date!



On October 25, 2006, the VLP will celebrate the program's 25th Anniversary! The celebration will take place at the newly renovated Fox Theatre during the lunch hour. Volunteer attorneys, law firms, students and support service businesses will be honored for their pro bono work. Please save the date and join us in thanking all of those who have served thousands of clients since the inception of the program in 1981.



helping clients

During the first six months of 2006, the VLP opened 1,448 new cases and closed 1,387. Currently, the VLP has 1,078 active cases.

Law Student Update

The VLP recruited and trained 18 law students in May. The students will volunteer in the VLP Advocates program during June, July, and August. The students will participate in a variety of clinics that include the Domestic Relations Clinic, the Domestic Violence Law Clinic, the Child Support Clinic, the Guardianship of Minors Clinic, and the Reaffirmation Clinic in Bankruptcy Court. Over the course of the summer, it is expected that the students, supervised by volunteer attorneys, will assist several hundred clients.

VLPArizona.org

Awards & Recognition Child Support Project Recognized by Arizona Supreme Court



In May, the VLP nominated the Family Law Bench of the Pima County Superior Court for the Arizona Judicial Branch 2006 awards. The program nominated the bench for their work with the VLP's Child Support Project. Through the project, volunteer attorneys supervise law students as they meet with underrepresented litigants prior to final divorce hearings in Superior Court. The students review documents and calculate child support to ensure that children receive the support to which they are legally entitled. Students also work to ensure that children have access to safe shelter, education, and medical care. The students prepare new and accurate documents if the child support amount calculated by the client is incorrect.

The Family Law Bench, which was honored by the Supreme Court on June 21, volunteer their time to train law students (pictured above: Chief Justice Ruth McGregor, Comm. Fred Dardis, Judge Jan Kearney, Justice Rebecca White Berch). The court also provides space at the courthouse for the students and volunteers attorneys to meet with clients and financially supports the project as well. In addition, the court provides the project with computers and the necessary technical support.

More than 700 Pima County residents are served annually through the Child Support Project – 85 percent of those seen by the project incorrectly calculate their support.

VLP Attorneys Recognized by Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education



On June 15th, the AZFLS&E honored 20 SALA VLP attorneys as part of the Top 50 Pro Bono Attorneys in Arizona. Many of those nominated by the VLP were recognized by the Foundation for their work with victims of domestic violence. Building upon the proud work of the past Top 50 Pro Bono Attorneys, first named in 2001, the 2006 honorees were chosen for giving tirelessly to provide legal services to low-income clients. Their selection was based on such factors as the number of pro bono cases accepted and hours donated, indicators of overall commitment to pro bono work. SALA VLP attorneys honored from Pima County included Peter Akmajian, Elizabeth Berenguer (pictured at left with Chief Justice Ruth McGregor), Lindsay Brew, Ben Burnside, Stacy Rupprecht Butler, Emily Dillof, Shannon Giles, Kristen Green, Pat Green, Todd Jackson, Cindy Kuhn, Carl Piccarreta, Dan Rylander, Tim Struse, and Gary Urman. SALA VLP attorneys in Cochise and Graham Counties were also recognized by the Foundation. These attorneys include Karl Elledge, Lowell Jensen, Peter Kelly, Anita Wightman Pitroff, and Larry Scheafer.



In addition to the Top 50 awards, the Foundation also honored Tom Roberts (pictured at left), a SALA VLP attorney, as the recipient of the William E. Morris Pro Bono Service Award. Tom was selected for this award because of his career-long commitment and devotion to advancing delivery of legal services to the poor. Tom has been a member of the Volunteer Lawyers Program (VLP) for twenty years.

In addition to serving indigent clients, Tom has volunteered for the past nine years as a member and Co-Chair of the VLP Advisory Board. Tom's service to the Board has ranged from participating in new volunteer attorney recruitment to fundraising assistance to training other volunteer lawyers. United States Judge Bernardo P. Velasco, who has served with Tom on the VLP Advisory Board, commended Tom's efforts, saying, "He is committed, not only to being a Board member, but to being an active participant in all of the activities of the Volunteer Lawyers Program."

Tom's enthusiasm for pro bono legal service has inspired many attorneys to join VLP and donate their legal services to those who otherwise could not afford legal assistance. Tom was nominated for this award by his peers, who admire his compassion and commitment to equal access to justice. Dwight Whitley, an attorney who shared offices with William E. Morris during the last years of Mr. Morris' life, said of Tom, "I am not personally acquainted with any other lawyer who, by their commitment to providing legal services to the disadvantaged, are more deserving of the William E. Morris Pro Bono Service Award."

New Grants & Funding

Grant Awards » The Community Foundation

On June 13th the VLP was notified by the Community Foundation that the program had been awarded \$10,000 to support the law student projects.

Other Funding » Pima County Bar Association

At its annual meeting on May 30, 2006 the Pima County Bar Association presented a check in the amount of \$7,121 to VLP Advisory Board members Hon. Karen Nygaard and Alyce Pennington. The check represents donations made by individual lawyers in support of the VLP. Thanks to newly elected PCBA president, Jim Dyer, the amount represents an increase in funds from those donated by the membership in 2005. Jim wrote a letter and made a personal plea to members of the bar on behalf of the VLP. The VLP appreciates Jim's efforts and the continued support of the PCBA.

New Employees

The VLP is excited to announce the hiring of two new employees. Annie Barrett, a graduate of Vermont Law School, has accepted the Law Student Coordinator position and started with the program on July 24th. Michele Ellis has accepted an administrative assistant position with the program and began work on July 17th. Annie and Michele are both exceptional people and highly qualified for their positions. Please welcome Annie and Michele!

Questions or comments? E-mail Michele Mirto at mmirto@sazlegalaid.org or call 520.623.9465, ext. 4171.

The VLP is a joint program of Southern Arizona Legal Aid and the Pima County Bar Association.

25 | volunteer
years | lawyers
program

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