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VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROGRAM

News from the VLP

The VLP Petitions the Supreme Court to amend Rule 38(d)(3)

By Annie Barrett

Although I only served as the VLP's Staff Attorney and Law Student Coordinator for one year, the experience was truly inspirational. Not only was I humbled each day as I witnessed students and attorneys giving back in a way which was purely selfless, I also had the privilege to work alongside the talented staff and dedicated professionals at the Volunteer Lawyers Program. One of the most significant projects I worked on was the petition to the Arizona Supreme Court regarding a change to Rule 38(d)(3) regarding the activities of law students acting in a volunteer capacity.

Rule 38(d) governs the court appearances of law students who are enrolled in a clinical curriculum-based law school program for which they receive credit. As written, the rule allows law students to appear in a variety of matters under the direct and indirect supervision of a supervising attorney with the written consent of any person on whose behalf the student is appearing. Unfortunately, the rule does not consider a paradigm where a law student appears in court, supervised by a volunteer attorney, and only acts in a volunteer capacity to essentially assist the court and give pro per litigants a sense of empowerment.

[To read the rest of this article, click here!](#)



helping clients

In the first quarter of 2008, the VLP opened 596 new cases. Of these, 455 were for Pima County residents and 141 were for residents of the eight rural counties served by the VLP. The VLP closed an additional 498 cases during this same time frame.

VLPArizona.org

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Arizona Legal Aid (SALA). It's really that easy. Each time you search, SALA will receive a penny. It may seem like a small amount, but it adds up quickly and it's painless.

Awards & Recognition

On June 19th, the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education will honor eighteen of Southern Arizona Legal Aid's (SALA) Volunteer Lawyers Program (VLP) attorneys as part of the **Top 50 Pro Bono Attorneys in Arizona**.

Building upon the proud work on the past Top 50 Pro Bono Attorneys, first named in 2001, the 2008 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 to be honored from Pima County include **Jeanie Geiser, Anne Graham-Bergin, Steve Itkin, Kate McMillan, Jim Sakrison, Skip Skinner, Tom Slutes, Spencer Smith, Alan Solot, Ron Sommer** and **David West**. SALA VLP attorneys in Apache and Cochise will also be recognized by the Foundation. These attorneys include **Juan Flores, Charles George, Albert Lassen** and **Patrick Ledger**.

In addition to the Top 50 awards, the Foundation will also honor **Hon. Fred Dardis**, a SALA VLP Advisory Board member, as the recipient of the **Foundation for Justice Award**. The award is given annually at the State Bar Convention to the attorney who has devoted expertise and time to changing the justice system to promote access and opportunity for those most vulnerable.

Commissioner Dardis has been a relentless advocate for the Volunteer Lawyers Program for more than twenty years. As a volunteer lawyer, Commissioner Dardis dedicated ten years to advancing the legal claims and causes of domestic violence victims. During that time he always juggled multiple pro bono cases and frequently called the program to request additional referrals. The cases that Commissioner accepted from the program were among the most difficult seen by the VLP. In addition to the legal complexity of the cases, Commissioner Dardis also utilized his bilingual ability by accepting monolingual Spanish speaking clients. Living in the southwest where a large percentage of the population is comprised of Spanish speakers, Commissioner Dardis' skill in this area was critical to the program's ability to serve the Spanish-speaking client community. In addition to Commissioner Dardis' eagerness to provide direct representation to clients, he was also a frequent and willing participant in the VLP's domestic relations clinics. With his assistance, pro per litigants were able to complete the necessary forms to file their divorce and paternity cases.

[To read more about Commissioner Dardis, click here!](#)

Tucson Attorney Assists with Development of Rural Pro Bono

For twenty-seven years, Dean Christoffel (pictured at right) has been an enthusiastic and active member of the Volunteer Lawyers Program (VLP). During that time, Dean assisted nearly four hundred clients and dedicated countless hours to help the most vulnerable domestic violence victims seen by the program. Dean is also a frequent participant in the VLP's domestic relations clinics where he helps pro per clients complete the necessary forms to file their cases and secure safety and shelter for their children.



While all of Dean's activities with the VLP are important and appreciated, what is extraordinary about Dean is that over time his commitment to the delivery of pro bono services has continued to grow. At first he accepted and requested additional VLP cases and signed up to participate in more clinics. Next he embraced the VLP's law student program where he now trains, supervises and mentors students each semester.

This year Dean continued to seek new ways to serve pro bono clients. Recently he wrote me a letter and asked for a meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to find out how he could help the program serve clients who reside in the rural and remote areas of Arizona. As Dean is an attorney who lives and practices in Pima County, I believe this to be an extraordinary gesture, and a welcomed one.

[To read the rest of this article, click here!](#)

Upcoming CLE Seminars



Mediation & Alternative Dispute Resolution

Presented by Luis Ochoa and Tom Roberts

Friday, April 25 » 9:00 am to noon

Show Low Holiday Inn

151 W. Deuce of Clubs | Show Low, AZ 85901

928.537.5115

Annual Ethics Update & Tips

Presented by Lynda Shely

Friday, May 9 » 11:00 am to 1:00 pm

Tucson Marriott University Park

880 E. 2nd | Tucson, AZ 85719 | 520.792.4100

Box lunch will be provided

The CLE seminars are *free* to all attorneys currently signed up with the VLP, and are also offered *free* to attorneys willing to sign up with the VLP. You can register to attend the seminars by going to www.vlparizona.org/CLE.htm.

Student Recognition

On April 29, the VLP will sponsor a recognition luncheon for all students involved in the program this semester. The luncheon will take place at El Saguarito Restaurant. Dean Massaro is scheduled to speak, as well as several members of the judiciary. More information about the event can be found on the VLP website at <http://www.vlparizona.org/LawStudentEvents.htm>

Staff Corner

Southern Arizona Legal Aid (SALA) Welcomes First Development Director

Norma MacKenzie is the new Development Director for Southern Arizona Legal Aid. She has worked in Tucson for the past twenty years as an advocate for women and children who are victims of domestic violence. Norma has a Masters Degree in Social Psychology from the University of Alberta. After graduation, Norma worked in Domestic Violence, Child Protective and Foster Care Services for the Canadian and Alberta governments. Norma began her work with SALA on February 11th. Please join us in welcoming Norma!

Staff Anniversaries

On March 13, **Olivia Sanders** marked 2 years with the SALA VLP. Olivia coordinates the VLP's Divorce with Children and Advice Only Clinics. Originally from Panama, Olivia is bilingual and has translated numerous court forms and documents into Spanish, and she serves as an interpreter for the VLP's Spanish speaking clients. Olivia has been a wonderful addition to the VLP. Her no-nonsense attitude and intense commitment to her clients make her an asset to the VLP. Please join us in thanking Olivia for her years of service.

This month **Socorro Diaz** celebrated **17 years** with the SALA VLP. Joining the VLP on April Fools Day 1991, Socorro has dedicated her career to assisting low-income clients in Pima County who are in need of legal help. Socorro is responsible for referring clients to volunteer attorneys in Pima County for direct representation, assisting with CLE seminars and recognition events, and scheduling attorneys to staff a variety of VLP clinics. As a Spanish speaker and native Tucsonan, Socorro goes out of her way to make sure her clients receive the services they need. The VLP is very fortunate to have dedicated staff like Socorro (her puppies are pictured at right). Congratulations, Sukura!



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.



Volunteer Lawyers Program of Southern Arizona Legal Aid, Inc.
64 E. Broadway
Tucson, Arizona 85701
520.623.9465