

pro bono press


SUMMER 2009

The Best Way to Celebrate Pro Bono is to Do It

The American Bar Association has declared October 25-31st Pro Bono Week, which is terrific. The SJC Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Services decided that we needed at least a month to properly celebrate *pro bono*. And Governor Deval Patrick agreed. At The Committee's request, the Governor issued a proclamation declaring October as Pro Bono Month. VLP is celebrating big

time and we want you to join in.

Here's what's up. VLP issues a challenge: Just Do It: Take 100 Pro Bono Cases in October. VLP's goal is to place 100 cases in October. This means we need you all to help. Progress toward the goal will be graphically

depicted on VLP's website. The name of each attorney who accepts a case will be included in the list on the website. Don't embarrass VLP, take a case! 



VLP's Month-Long Pro Bono Celebration

- September 23:** VLP's observation will actually begin at the end of September with the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Boston Housing Court Project. *See article on page 2.*
- October 5:** Training: Transfer Cases in Public Housing
- October 13:** Training: Introduction to Family Law
- October 20:** Senior Partners for Justice Seminar Luncheon
- October 22:** Training: Representing Clients at an Unemployment Benefits Hearing
- October 26:** Training: Landlord/Tenant Law
- October 27:** Training: Introduction to Guardianship of Minors

(See details at www.vlpnet.org/calendar)

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Save the Date!

Please join us to celebrate Meg Connolly's many years of service to Volunteer Lawyers Project, as she steps down as Executive Director.



Tuesday, December 8, 2009
4:30 p.m. reception
Suffolk University Law School

Boston Housing Court Attorney For The Day Project Turns Ten

The Boston Housing Court Attorney for the Day Project is the result of a ten year collaboration of the Real Estate Section of the Boston Bar Association, the Boston Housing Court, the Volunteer Lawyers Project, Greater Boston Legal Services and the Hale and Dorr Legal Services Center, along with many volunteer attorneys. In recent years the Litigation Section of the Boston Bar Association has joined efforts to recruit and train attorneys for the project's expansion to include litigation. In celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Boston Housing Court Project, the Boston Bar Association is hosting a reception on Wednesday, September 23 from 5:00 to 7:00. All folks involved in the project since its inception are invited to attend. Please check the Boston Bar Association Web site to RSVP.

A special thank you is given to the following law firms and in house counsel offices that have provided lawyers to staff the project:

Goulston & Storrs
 Goodwin, Procter
 Liberty Mutual
 Ropes & Gray
 WilmerHale
 Foley Lardner
 Hinckley Allen and Snyder
 Holland and Knight
 DLA Piper
 Foley Hoag

K & L Gates
 Boston College Law School
 Alumni Association
 Brown Rudnick
 Posternak and Blankstein
 Sullivan and Worcester
 Nixon Peabody
 Sherin & Lodgen
 Rackeman Sawyer
 Davis, Malm



Conservatively estimated, over 2500 parties have been assisted through the Project, with 6500 *pro bono* hours donated at a value of \$1,250,000.

The Project provides *pro bono* legal advice and assistance to pro se litigants in eviction proceedings. Every Thursday, 150 to 200 eviction cases are scheduled at the Boston Housing Court. In over 90% of the cases one or both parties appear pro se. The Project plays a critical role for the unrepresented parties for whom no other assistance is available. Conservatively estimated, over 2500 parties have been assisted through the Project, with 6500 *pro bono* hours donated at a value of \$1,250,000.

Recently, growing numbers of individual attorneys also have been participating with a core contingent volunteering almost weekly for many months. The individual volunteers come from a range of backgrounds and include solo practitioners, both recent graduates and experienced practitioners; attorneys working in other professions, including social workers, financial managers, and teachers with the summer off; retired lawyers; and stay-at-home parents. Particularly deserving of recognition are Kathryn Birkby, Sharon Jones, Julia Baddour, Deborah Bornheimer, Mary Lee and Judy Heller. 

Fall Training Schedule

Unemployment Compensation

September 24, 9:30 - 12:15 am

Location: MCLE

October 22, 4:30-6:00 pm

Family Law

Family Law 101 (Intro)

September 22, 4:30-6:00 pm

Family Law 102 (Advanced)

October 13, 4:30-6:00 pm

Family Law 101

November 17, 4:39-6:00 pm

Family Law 102

December 1, 4:30-6:00 pm

Guardianships

Introduction to
Guardianship of Adults

September 29, 4:00-6:00 pm

Introduction to
Guardianship of Minors

October 27, 4:00-6:00 pm

Introduction to
Guardianship of Adults

November 24, 4:00-6:00 pm

Housing

Landlord/Tenant Law

September 15, 4:15-6:00 pm

Transfer Cases in
Public Housing

October 5, 4:00-5:30 pm

Landlord/Tenant Law

October 26, 4:00-5:30 pm

Landlord/Tenant Law

December 7, 4:00-5:30 pm

Bankruptcy

How to Handle
Consumer Bankruptcies

October 15, 9:00 am - 1:00 pm

Location: MCLE

Bankruptcy Law
Conference 2009

October 28, 1:00-6:00 pm

Location: MCLE

**** Pro Bono Month Special:**
Anyone who takes a VLP
bankruptcy case in October
will immediately get a
voucher to attend either of
the Bankruptcy offerings
listed above for \$25!!


All programs are held at VLP's offices, 99 Chauncy St., Boston, 4th Floor, unless otherwise indicated. Register online at www.vlpnet.org or by contacting Isabel Burney at iburney@vlpnet.org.

Making a Difference


LAST NOVEMBER, Attorney Ben Clarke of Mintz, Levin agreed to represent three Volunteer Lawyers Project clients who had severe bedbug infestation in their neighboring apartments. Each was withholding rent from the Malden Housing Authority in a futile attempt to get the landlord to effectively exterminate the bedbugs. Despite the families having multiple bites and allergic reactions to the bugs and despite the emotional toll the unsightly welts and sleepless nights were having on the family members, the housing authority had not effectively remediated the problems.

Thanks to Attorney Clarke's advocacy, the clients now have new apartments and other settlement gains that have saved the families from the discomfort and humiliation of bedbugs. One client wrote the Volunteer Lawyers Project about the representation she received:

"I was very satisfied. Ben Clarke was always keeping me informed almost every other day with new progress with my case. He was extremely professional, very thorough and definitely on top of his game. So easy to speak to and understanding with what my family and I had to experience last summer. Ben Clarke is a lifesaver. He gave me my home back, my sanity and lots more sleep at night. Thank you so much ...I was able to get a new apartment for my 3 children and I. I was able to get my life back. What I experienced was so traumatizing I was on anxiety medications because of the stress... There is absolutely no way that I could suggest any improvement. If every person gets a person like Ben Clarke, they will be so impressed and appreciative."


It is with much gratitude that Volunteer Lawyers Project recognizes the service Ben Clarke provided to these tenants. He truly exemplifies the *pro bono publico* spirit! 

Economy Is Down, Bankruptcy Demand Is Up

As you no doubt know the downturn in the economy has had a substantially adverse impact on VLP clients. The number of clients seeking assistance for representation in unemployment matters has tripled since January of this year. VLP has witnessed a similarly dramatic increase in persons seeking assistance in filing a Chapter 7 bankruptcy. Your response to these problems has been remarkable, and yet we need more. If you can help in either of these areas, please contact Kenny Sambour at KSambour@vlpnet.org, Joanna Allison at JAllison@vlpnet.org, or Lynn Girton at LGirton@vlpnet.org. And as always, thank you so much for all you do for our clients. 

They Depart...They Arrive

Both Jessica Rubin-Wills, Referral Coordinator, and Caitlin Loftus, Paralegal, left VLP in early August to attend law school: Caitlin at the University of Connecticut and Jessica at New York University. VLP hates to see them go but is proud to help launch the careers of two such talented people.

In late July, VLP welcomed two new staff members. Kenny Sambour, Referral Paralegal, is a graduate of Brown University and worked at GBLS' Asian Outreach Unit before joining VLP. Nicole Lim, Paralegal, is a Harvard University graduate with prior work experience at Facing History and Ourselves and the Irish Immigration Center. The new staff members bring talent and energy to VLP's work and substantially expand VLP's language capacity. 

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**Providing
Equal
Access to
Justice!**

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