
ProBonoNY

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NEWSLETTER

For Local Action Committees

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SIXTH DISTRICT COMMITTEE PLANS PRO BONO EXPO AND A CLE PROGRAM By Suzanne S. Myette

The Sixth Judicial District Pro Bono Action Now Committee met in November, with several new faces attending: the new Sixth District Administrative Judge and committee co-chair, Hon. Michael V. Coccoma; a new member, Paul J. Lupia, who recently assumed the position of Executive Director of Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York upon the retirement of Bob Salzman; and myself, the recently hired Pro Bono Coordinator for the Sixth District Committee.

Judge Coccoma replaced Hon. Judith F. O'Shea as Sixth District Administrative Judge and committee co-chair in July of this year. Judge Coccoma is dedicated to leading the implementation of the committee's action plan and taking an active role in developing a working partnership among the judiciary and the ten bar associations and several legal service providers in the Sixth Judicial District. We are glad that Judge O'Shea expects to continue her active involvement as a member of the committee.

At the November meeting, the committee approved implementation of two proposed initiatives, and, together, Judge Coccoma and I (with the valuable assistance of Kelly Nannery, Court Analyst in the Sixth Judicial District Office) have begun plans to move forward with both.

The first initiative will be aimed at Broome County, our largest county, with over 550 private attorneys: a Pro Bono Expo in early 2009. The Third Judicial District Pro Bono Discussion Group hosted a successful similar event in 2007, in conjunction with the Albany County Bar Association, the Legal Project, and the Legal Aid Society. Our Expo will be similar in format, will introduce our new Administrative Judge, and will offer a panel of

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DUTCHESS COUNTY PRO BONO RECEPTION By Hon. Christine A. Sproat

The Ninth Judicial District/Dutchess County Pro Bono Local Action Committee kicked off the ProBonoNY initiative in Dutchess County on Wednesday night, November 12, 2008, with a cocktail reception at Coppola's Restaurant in Poughkeepsie.

As Chairperson of the Dutchess County committee, I was joined by the Hon. Juanita Bing Newton, Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives, in addressing the attendees. Other judges in attendance that evening: Hon. George Marlow, Hon. James Brands, Hon. James Pagonos, Hon. Victor Alfieri, Hon. Katherine Moloney, Hon. David Steinberg, and Hon. Jude T. Martini, who is also my Principal Court Attorney. Hon. Francis Nicolai had representatives Nancy Barry, Esq., and James Garfein, Esq., in attendance. Denise Watson, Esq., represented the Hon. Peter Forman.

Erin Guven, Director of Pro Bono Affairs at Legal Services of the Hudson Valley and Ninth Judicial District Pro Bono Committee co-chair, addressed the crowd and explained this program. There were about 44 attendees, and, as a result of this event, eleven law firms (six Partners in Pro Bono and five Volunteer Attorney Program) signed up to accept 20 pro bono case referrals.

The Dutchess County Pro Bono Local Action Committee is planning its next recruitment event for January 2009. The current President of the Dutchess County Bar Association, Richard Fiorile, Esq., has agreed to write an article for the next bar newsletter on practitioners' obligation to render public interest and pro bono legal services pursuant to the New York Lawyers' Code of Professional Responsibility EC 2-34 and to include a sign-up form with that newsletter in order to encourage participation. The Bar Association and its Executive

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judges, private attorneys, and attorneys with not-for-profit service providers to address issues and answer questions about pro bono opportunities and service in Broome County. It will be held in conjunction with the Broome County Bar Association and Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York (Binghamton); one CLE credit in Ethics will be given to attorneys who attend the late afternoon/evening event and agree to take one pro bono case during the coming year.

The second initiative is a Judges' Best Practices forum which we will host in the spring of 2009 in Norwich, which is centrally located among our eastern rural districts, where increased pro bono services are very much needed: Chenango, Delaware, Madison, and Otsego Counties. This will be a half-day seminar co-hosted by the Rural Law Center and will follow a successful model that the Center has used for a number of years—a panel of judges, law clerks, and court magistrates from Supreme, Surrogate's and Family Courts, who will discuss practice in their respective courts. Each attorney who attends and agrees to accept a pro bono case referral during the coming year will receive three CLE credits.

Judge Coccoma and I will be attending upcoming bar association meetings in the counties we've targeted for the first two initiatives for 2009 in order to introduce ourselves, discuss the planned events, and solicit support from the bar associations and their members. Thus, we will in the near future be attending meetings in Broome, Chenango, Delaware, Madison, and Otsego Counties, and well as Cortland County, located in close proximity to both planned events.

Of course, we anticipate that our committee's co-chair, Judge Hugh Humphreys, and the other members of the committee will also have active roles in connection with both of these initiatives. And we will be planning other events, including initiatives targeting our western counties, Chemung, Schuyler, Tioga, and Tompkins.

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Director, Janna Whearty, were also instrumental in creating reminder postcards for the kick-off event.

Volunteers to date include:

*Basso and Associates
Feldman, Kleidman and Coffey
Hanig & Handel
Marvin & Marvin
Rutberg & Associates
Speigel, Brown & Fichera
David Ferenz, Esq.
Ronald Friedman, Esq.
Lynn Hanig, Esq.
Jeffrey Martin, Esq.
Daniel McCabe, Esq.*

**NOTES and COMMENTS
By John Ritchie**

ANNUAL REPORTS: a few more words about these reports, which if possible should be sent to Judge Newton before the end of December.

The reports need not be long. They should include both narrative and quantitative data. The narrative can briefly describe the committee's activities and events, note lessons learned if any, and discuss plans for the coming year. The narrative can also recognize the volunteers themselves in whatever manner may be appropriate. And of course the narrative can include any other topics that a committee may want to mention.

Quantitative data should include information about the direct results of each committee's activities—numbers of attorney volunteers recruited, numbers of cases referred for pro bono services (and if possible types of cases), numbers of cases concluded, or similar data . . . whatever may be available and useful in tracking results.

If possible, data should also cover any other pro bono activity in each committee's area. This is not for the purpose of claiming "credit," as some have apprehended; rather, it is for the purpose of tracking, reporting, and publicizing what we hope will be a general increase in attorneys' pro bono work.