
NEWSLETTER

ProBonoNY

AN ACCESS TO JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP FOR THE POOR

For Local Action Committees

SPONSORED BY THE NEW YORK STATE UNIFIED COURT SYSTEM, OFFICE OF THE HONORABLE JUANITA BING NEWTON, DEPUTY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE FOR JUSTICE INITIATIVES
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NOTES & COMMENTS

By John Ritchie

This is the first issue of a Newsletter for ProBonoNY local action committees. The plan is to publish once a month, with news, comments, and information-sharing. We want to report on successes, of course. And we should discuss problems or projects that don't work out as intended. Each issue will be short, two or three pages, sometimes with an attachment. Articles will also be compact: for the most part, three or four paragraphs.

While I have prepared the contents of this start-up issue, I hope most articles in future issues will be contributed by members of the various committees. Photos or other graphics should be possible, and I hope the general appearance will improve as my technical skills improve. Comments on the technical aspects—and even offers of help—will be welcome.

This issue will be published via e-mail, to the extent I have e-mail addresses, with some supplementation by snail mail. Comments and suggestions—and especially contributed articles—will be most appreciated. Eventually, I plan to have each issue on a ProBonoNY website, with an archive of all prior issues. In addition to access for committee members, the Newsletter will thus be available to the general public.

The Newsletter's contents are intended to be really, practically useful in developing our pro bono initiative. And the Newsletter should be a good publicity vehicle to reach lawyers, potential clients, and the public.

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Recent and Upcoming Events

Contributions for this column will be very welcome. Please let us know of your project plans, recent and upcoming events, and committee activities generally. For October's issue, please send contributions to the editor by September 25.

THIRD DISTRICT

Formation of a Local Action Committee is under consideration in the Third Judicial District. Meanwhile, a Pro Bono Discussion Group has been formed, chaired by Administrative Judge George B. Ceresia, Jr., and the Group sponsored a [Pro Bono Expo](#) held on April 18, 2007, at the offices of the New York State Bar Association in Albany.

The Pro Bono Expo featured panel discussions by judges, bar leaders, and representatives of local legal service providers. Topics included the great need for more legal services for poor people, service opportunities in different types of proceedings, the rewarding experiences of active pro bono attorneys, and training and case referrals available through the service providers.

[Ninety](#) local attorneys attended the Third District Expo, and dozens signed up on the spot to accept pro bono referrals. Many more came away with information and sign-up forms for later submission. Excellent refreshments and an opportunity to socialize added to a very rewarding evening.

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Website

The Fifth District Committee is taking the lead in developing a website. The site will identify the co-chairs, Administrative Judge James C. Tormey and Robert J. Smith of Costello, Cooney & Fearon, as well as all other committee members and Esther Weingarten, the Pro Bono Coordinator, and her assistant, Eileen Steinhardt. There will be a brief description of the Committee's activities, contact information, and provision for a calendar of events.

More information on the Fifth District Committee's website development will follow. It is hoped that it will provide a model for other committees, though of course each committee may develop variations to suit local circumstances. In addition, there will be a "statewide" page for ProBonoNY which will include, among other things, an archive of this Newsletter.

Annual Reports

As of this year, ProBonoNY has developed to the point where a formal year-end report from each active committee is appropriate. Indeed, these reports will be extremely important in publicizing the initiative among the public generally and potential clients in particular, as well as among attorneys. The reports will also be very useful in helping to maintain our present strong support in the judiciary and the administrative structure of the Unified Court System.

In general, the reports should include some narrative material as well as quantitative information about numbers of volunteers, numbers of hours, clients served, types of matters, and so forth. The reports should also provide an overview of plans for the coming year—whether essentially to continue current activities or to amend the current plan in whatever ways may be desirable in light of experience and local developments.

But the reports need not be lengthy, and should not be unduly burdensome to prepare. Ideally, perhaps, a sub-committee could be appointed to prepare each committee's report, with the assistance of the Pro Bono Coordinator and drawing on information

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NINTH DISTRICT

Last November, the Ninth Judicial District Westchester County Committee sponsored "Views from the Benches and the Trenches," a CLE program with presentations addressing cross-examination and summation techniques, bankruptcy work, and an update on the rules governing lawyer advertising. The program also included a recognition ceremony: Judge Newton spoke in recognition of attorneys participating in the pro bono program.

The Westchester Committee has scheduled a similar program for November 15, 2007, at the Courthouse in White Plains. In addition, the Committee for Orange County is sponsoring a "Meet the Judges" reception at the Courthouse in Goshen on September 18, 2007. More information about both of these programs will follow.

Annual Reports

(Continued from left-hand column.)

gathered by the service provider where the Coordinator is employed and perhaps other agencies in each district.

Attached to this issue of the Newsletter is a two-page outline of proposed contents for the annual reports. Please consider whether there is anything additional that should be included and whether anything listed is unavailable or impractical to obtain. The reports should be submitted to Judge Newton in late November or early December, so that a summary statewide report can be prepared by the end of December. A due date is proposed in the attached outline, but some flexibility is certainly possible.

Again, PLEASE consider the attached outline and give John Ritchie any suggestions, comments, objections . . . whatever, preferably not later than the end of September. The individual committee reports, and the summary statewide report, will be very valuable for multiple purposes.

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September 2007 ATTACHMENT

ProBonoNY Local Action Committees: 2007 ANNUAL REPORTS Preliminary outline of contents, for discussion.

Reports to be submitted to Judge Newton Tentative due date: November 30, 2007

- I. The 2007 Annual Reports will provide information on each Committee's activities during 2007. For those Committees whose activities commenced earlier, the 2007 Report should also cover the earlier activities, since these will be the first formal reports. Perhaps most efficiently prepared by a small sub-committee, working with the Pro Bono Coordinator.

The Reports should be concise. They should provide some brief narrative information, as well as numerical information, and they should also provide brief statements about intended activities during 2008.

Annual Reports should be submitted in late November or early December 2007; numerical information for late November and December 2007 will have to be reasonably estimated. For planning purposes, consider the due date to be Friday, November 30, 2007.

Judge Newton's staff will compile information and produce a combined ProBonoNY 2007 Annual Report by late December or early January. We are planning to have the combined Report and each Committee's report available on a ProBonoNY web site.

Outlined below (not necessarily in the order in which they would appear in the Reports) are suggested narrative and quantitative elements of the Annual Reports. Not all items will be applicable for each Committee, and some Committees may have additional items to report.

- II. Narrative elements:
 - A. Brief paragraph or two describing any 2007 (or earlier) activities or results that the Committee would like to highlight; may include information on any collaborative activities with other agencies or individuals, any changes in committee membership, methods of recruitment, publicity by or about the Committee, its activities, needs of the poor, pro bono in general, etc.
 - B. List with brief descriptions (types of cases, basic criteria for client/case screening, special characteristics such as clinical program, etc.) the pro bono legal service programs through which volunteers solicited by the Committee have provided

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September 2007 Attachment, continued.

services, for example: the pro bono program of the service provider where the Committee's Pro Bono Coordinator is employed, programs at other agencies in the District, new projects planned and implemented by the Committee (likely in collaboration with a service provider), etc.

With regard to any new projects, the Committee may want to say something about committee members (including the Pro Bono Coordinator) who were involved in planning the project, any other collaborators, estimated planning time, etc.

- C. List with dates and brief descriptions any individual events, CLE or training programs, etc., sponsored by the Committee to the extent this information is not already covered in narrative for item B, above.
- D. Brief description of Committee plans for 2008: continue current projects? any revisions or improvements? new projects? etc. This might include brief general remarks about the Committee's experience so far, problems, effectiveness of particular aspects of the program such as judges' involvement in recruiting and other activities, etc.

III. Quantitative information for 2007 and, where applicable, earlier:

- A. Number of volunteers "signed up" for pro bono work through the Committee's efforts (of course including both lawyers who are new to pro bono work and those who have renewed their commitments as a result of the Committee's activities); number of cases referred (categorized broadly by type or area of law); number of cases resolved; total hours.
- B. Foregoing information should be provided not only with respect to the Committee's main avenue of pro bono referrals, likely through the service provider where the Pro Bono Coordinator is employed, but also with respect to matters referred through other service providers, bar associations, or otherwise.
- C. Similar data, if any are available, on the ancillary effect of the Committee's existence and activities: actual increase in pro bono representations in the District apart from the Committee's own programs and referrals?

Following, if applicable, might be included in narrative information: general increased interest among lawyers in the District in pro bono work? increased public knowledge of needs of poor people? (The foregoing might be reflected in increased local publicity, bar association or law school activities apart from those of the Committee, etc.)