

# Green Award: History and Purpose

One of the strengths of the provision of legal service in Tennessee has been the historic tradition of working together, across program lines, to address common problems that clients and programs face. To recognize and encourage those efforts, a person who promotes inter-program cooperation or otherwise strengthens the provision of legal aid in Tennessee is annually named the B. Riney Green Award recipient.

In the late 1990s B. Riney Green, a Nashville attorney, relentlessly led Tennessee's effort to prevent the U.S. House and Senate from adopting provisions that would reduce funding to legal services and increase restrictions on legal aid programs.

As a corporate lawyer and a Republican, he was a new and credible voice in this effort. He successfully engaged others in his effort and had access to representatives from across the party and ideological spectrum. His efforts in this state not only improved relations with the Congressional delegation, but were essential to the successful national effort to resist these legislative attacks. This award is named to honor his contribution at a critical time in the history of legal services in Tennessee and the nation.

It is important to recognize that the Green Award is not just a "good person" award, or a way to recognize outstanding advocacy. There are many outstanding advocates in Tennessee, and many of them have outstanding accomplishments every year. **This award is a way to recognize and emphasize the value the access to justice community has for a particular kind of accomplishment – one that promotes inter-program cooperation and strengthens access to justice across the state.**

## What should the nominations include?

Nominations need only be a letter or an e-mail that answers the question: *What contributions has the nominee made to state-wide collaboration for the benefit of our clients or our programs?* Include contact information for yourself and the nominee.

## When should nominations be made?

Nominations must be submitted by 5pm central time **September 12, 2008**. Nominations can be submitted to Erik Cole at TALS by E-mail or FAX.

(e) [ecole@tals.org](mailto:ecole@tals.org)

(f) 615-627-0964

**Erik Cole, Executive Director  
Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services  
50 Vantage Way, Suite 250  
Nashville, TN 37228**

## Green Award: Recipients

*Note: Some Dates May Not Be Correct.*

- 1999 Bonnie King, Christine Wolfe, Gloria Samuels for their work on ***Michael B.***, a state-wide class action in Federal Court, which challenged state policy of seizing social security benefits from children in state custody, and resulted in the return of more than \$4 million to some of the most vulnerable people in our state.
- 2000 Linda Seely, for her work in establishing the TBA's Equal Justice Committee; Patti George, for mobilizing advocates throughout the state in response to sweeping changes in the TennCare program.
- 2001 Bill Haley, for his leadership in state planning. And, Stewart Clifton and Mike Murphy, for their skill, commitment creativity and initiative in developing mechanisms for state funding for legal aid in Tennessee.
- 2002 Pat Mock, for her work in developing state-wide policies governing uniform affidavits of indigency.
- 2003 Doug Blaze, for his leadership in establishing an expanded Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services.
- 2004 Mary Michelle Gillum, for her leadership in establishing the Tennessee Taxpayer Project, and working with advocates throughout the state in improving advocacy to low-wage working families.
- 2006 Sherry Wilds, with the Disability Law and Advocacy Center of Tennessee, for her efforts to promote collaboration among legal aid providers in Tennessee on behalf of children with disabilities.
- 2007 Frank Cantrell, Memphis Area Legal Services, for his leadership in coordinating and helping draft the TALS amicus curiae for the Wimmer Case before the Tennessee Supreme Court. Frank's efforts not only brought advocates statewide together but rejuvenated the TALS Consumer Law Task Force, as well.

# **Request for Nominations: New Advocate of the Year**

The Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services will annually recognize affirmative, energetic, effective advocacy by an advocate who has been with his or her program less than five years.

## **Who is eligible?**

Attorneys and paralegals who work with a provider (LSC or non-LSC funded) of civil legal aid to low-income people, who have been employed by their programs less than five years.

## **What is the award seeking to recognize?**

This award seeks to recognize a specific kind of advocacy: Nominations should be based on advocacy that is affirmative, energetic and effective. It seeks to recognize those who use their legal skills in an active, creative way that produces outstanding benefits for individual clients and the communities in which they live.

## **What should the nomination include?**

The nomination should be made by a brief letter stating the nominee's name, program, the date they began with their program, and specific examples of the kind of affirmative, energetic, effective advocacy that this award seeks to recognize.

Like the Riney Green Award, which recognizes someone who promotes state-wide collaboration, this is not just a "good person" award, but recognizes a specific kind of accomplishment: affirmative, creative, effective advocacy (litigation or other activities). If appropriate, feel free to attach any documents supporting the nomination, such as news articles, opinions, client comments, commendations, etc.

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## **New Advocate of the Year: Recipients**

- 2006      Sharmila Murthy, an attorney with the Legal Aid Society in Nashville, for her high level of creative, effective representation of clients. Murthy handled several complex consumer cases aimed at preventing predatory lending scams. She also greatly expanded the Legal Aid Society's representation of immigrants and refugees in Nashville.
- 2007      Dawn Gerhardt, an attorney with the Tennessee Coalition on Domestic and Sexual Violence Immigrant Legal Clinic, for her effective and high-quality representation of immigrant victims of domestic or sexual violence or victims of human trafficking in their immigration hearings. Because of her work, Dawn has helped make the lives of many immigrant victims and their children safer.