

October is time to Celebrate Pro Bono

5th Annual 'Celebrate Pro Bono Month' Kicks off Today

Tennessee lawyers to offer free legal services across the state in October

NASHVILLE, Oct. 1, 2013 —Tennessee lawyers will offer free legal services to those unable to afford a lawyer throughout the month of October as part of the [Celebrate Pro Bono](#) initiative. Activities kick off today with four legal clinics, the first of more than 60 events planned across the state.

“Throughout the month of October, we have the opportunity to increase awareness about the justice gap that exists for those who cannot afford legal assistance and also take tangible steps toward closing that gap through a focus on increasing pro bono service,” TBA President Cindy Wyrick said. “The initiative provides an opportunity for us to increase our efforts to recruit, train and utilize legal volunteers and to mobilize community support for pro bono services,” she stated, “while at the same time honoring the amazing efforts of Tennessee’s legal community over the past year.”

This year’s celebration builds on the success of the 2012 initiative, during which more than 350 volunteers – including lawyers, law students, paralegals and language interpreters – assisted thousands of clients with issues ranging from domestic violence protection to landlord disputes and debt management. New this year is a focus on rural areas of the state with more than 15 legal clinics planned in non-metro areas.

The need for free legal assistance is evident given that:

- One in five Tennesseans is living at or below the poverty line;
- One in five Tennesseans cannot afford to pay for basic legal assistance;
- There are only 81 paid legal aid lawyers in the state, which means that for every
- 12,658 low-income Tennesseans eligible for assistance, there is only one legal aid lawyer; and
- Less than 30 percent of those living below the poverty line are aware that assistance is available to help them with their legal problems.

Tennessee lawyers are helping to meet this need by volunteering during Celebrate Pro Bono Month and throughout the year.

“While there is an ever-increasing need for pro bono legal services, I am always amazed by the extraordinary response from Tennessee lawyers to meet these demands,” Wyrick said. “Celebrate Pro Bono Month, now in its fifth year, is the perfect opportunity to acknowledge that, together, we make a difference by increasing meaningful access to justice for those most in need in our state. I encourage all attorneys, as well as law students and other members of the legal community to devote time and resources to pro bono programs in their area.”

The Tennessee Bar Association (TBA) is the largest professional association in Tennessee with more than 11,000 members. Founded in 1881, the TBA provides opportunities for continuing legal education, professional

development and public service. The TBA's dedication to serving the state's legal community is evidenced by its membership roll, which represents the entire spectrum of legal practice: plaintiff and defense lawyers, corporate counsel, judges, prosecutors, public defenders, government lawyers and legal services attorneys.

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