MCBA President Urges Members to Join VLP

By the time you read this article, we will have concluded “Celebrate Pro Bono Week” during the week of October 25-31. Celebrate Pro Bono Week, which was sponsored by the Alabama State Bar, was a coordinated state-wide effort to showcase the great difference that pro bono lawyers make to the state and its system of justice. This Celebrate Pro Bono Week was also dedicated to recruiting more pro bono volunteers to meet the ever-growing legal needs of the poor. Your local bar association stepped up to this challenge in a big way. First, we had a pro bono celebration party on Oct. 15. It was attended by a number of attorneys and offered attorneys an opportunity to sign up for the Volunteer Lawyer Program. Second, and perhaps, most importantly, our Bar has instituted the first of what we hope to be monthly legal clinics to serve the needs of the disadvantaged in our community. The clinics will be held at 1610 Adams Ave. (the Head Start Educational Building), and a number of local attorneys volunteered their time to provide legal assistance to members of our community on a pro bono basis. If you are interested in volunteering for one of these monthly clinics, in the future, please contact me. Many thanks to Suzanne Duffey and Royal Dumas for organizing these events.

If you are not already a member of the Volunteer Lawyer Program, I really encourage you to sign up. You will find an enrollment form on the Alabama State Bar website, or you can call Suzanne Duffey at the MCBA office and she will email or fax you one. Based on some comments I have received from several lawyers, I think there may be a misunderstanding of what is involved with becoming a VLP member. It is not an unlimited, open-ended commitment to volunteer your time. In fact, I have handled two cases for the VLP, and both of them took less than 10 hours. In both cases, I received handwritten letters from the clients expressing their thankfulness. I can assure you that if you volunteer for this program, you will be rewarded much more than any of the clients you serve. It is truly (cont’d p.6)

Bench and Bar 2009 a Great Success

You know it’s time for the leaves to turn and the temperatures to drop when we report to you, as we always do at this time of year, that another installment of the annual Bench and Bar Conference has come and gone. Fall weather has traditionally played a big role in the staging of this annual seminar. In fact, as more than one of our attendees remarked last Friday– it doesn’t matter what sort of weather leads up to it, the day of the Bench and Bar will be cool and blustery.

Because of our long history of uncooperative weather, this year’s seminar was held indoors at the Marriott Legends Conference Center, instead of the traditional location on the clubhouse veranda at the Capitol Hill golf course. After a fantastic breakfast, we enjoyed a slate of great speakers and informative presentations. The presentations included remarks on the state of the 15th Circuit by Presiding Judge Charles Price and on the state of the Middle District U.S. Courts by Presiding Judge Mark Fuller; substantive presentations on electronic discovery by Joe McCorkle, the United States Supreme Court’s recent decisions and upcoming arguments by John Garman and Charles Campbell, and truth-in-sentencing in Alabama by Judge Joe Colquitt; as well as a very moving call from Alabama State Bar President and MCBA member, Tom Methvin, to join in the effort to afford more Alabamians the access to justice they so desperately need. The seminar was well attended by (continued p.4)
First 100 Days– by Tom Methvin

On July 18, it was my privilege to begin my term as President of your Alabama State Bar.

While serving as President-Elect, one of the projects that meant the most to me was establishing a program to help people facing home foreclosure. In partnership with Legal Services Alabama, the Access to Justice committee and the Alabama Civil Justice Foundation, we established the Mortgage Foreclosure Assistance Program. It provides an 800-number hotline for people to call for free legal assistance. We ran statewide public service announcements on TV to promote the program.

From March 1, 2008 through October 7, 2009, the hotline has received more than 5,000 calls, and we have spoken with over 3,600 callers (some phoned multiple times). We opened over 3,000 mortgage cases and have completed over 2,300 of those cases. There are currently more than 900 open cases that attorneys are working on with clients.

Inspired by the success of the program, and determined to help more people in need of legal services, we decided that Access to Justice would be the focus of my year as Bar president.

In addition to the Mortgage Foreclosure Assistance program, the Bar's contribution to Access to Justice is accomplished through the Volunteer Lawyers Program (VLP). The VLP works to meet the needs of low-income Alabamians with the active participation of our members, who donate their time to ensure the underserved have equal access to justice. Our clients are low-income persons who cannot afford an attorney and who have a wide range of legal problems including consumer, domestic, housing, and probate matters.

Recognizing the importance of access to justice for the poorest among us, the American Bar Association declared October 25-31, 2009 as its first ever National Pro Bono Week.

The Alabama State bar wholeheartedly participated in this important event, involving lawyers form every circuit in the state and all the law schools to provide pro bono services in their communities. As part of the event, we set a number of goals designed to help those in need, to promote Volunteer Lawyer services to our colleagues, to help increase funding for these services, to raise public awareness, and to get more lawyers to help.

Alabama was the first state in the nation to officially designate October 25-31, 2009 as Pro Bono Week, with a proclamation signed by Gov. Bob Riley. In Montgomery County, both the Montgomery County Commission and Montgomery Mayor Todd Strange presented proclamations recognizing the celebration in the city and county.

Outreach activities included VLP clinics providing free legal services as well as continuing education seminars for lawyers and law students to encourage pro bono work. Bar members also were enlisted to speak to members of the media, as well as to their local civic clubs and organizations to raise awareness in the community about the nature of pro bono work, and the dedication of our volunteer lawyers.

Although Pro Bono Week has ended, its important mission of ensuring access to justice for all is an ongoing commitment for Alabama lawyers. In November, Montgomery County Volunteer Lawyers will begin hosting monthly clinics to provide pro bono services to those in need of access to justice in our area. We are just getting started!

In order to make this effort a success, we need you to get involved. Our Montgomery County Bar Association has recently formed a Pro Bono Committee, tasked with increasing in our VLP. If you are not already a part of this program, please consider joining now and taking an active part in ongoing pro bono legal services clinics. For more information or to commit your services, contact Royal at 334-834-7600 or rdlumas@hillbillcarter.com.

Tom Methvin, President, Alabama State Bar, 2009-2010

MCBA MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS—GETTING MORE FOR YOUR MONEY THAN EVER BEFORE

What do you get for your MCBA dues? Quite a lot:

1. Over 20 free CLE hours offered each year;
2. Free photograph and listing of practice areas on our new MCBA website directory;
3. Opportunities to give back to the community through charity fundraisers, Toys for Tots, and pro bono legal clinics;
4. Opportunities for networking with fellow attorneys;
5. Free Notary Public service.
6. Privilege of buying a courthouse security I.D. badge for $25.00. (Call 265-4793 for details.)

If you have not had your photo taken or submitted one for the website, please contact our office to schedule your photo. Your business websites will be able to be linked to the MCBA website. Your invoices for 2010 dues will be mailed in December. Instructions for listing your practice areas will be sent at that time.
Notice to Montgomery County Bar Members

Any member of the MCBA who plans to run for Secretary/Treasurer, or for the two positions on the Board of Directors for the 2010 term must submit a letter of intent to run on or prior to December 11, 2009. Any candidate for Sec./Treas. Must first serve on the Board of Directors.

1. The letter should be addressed to:

   Kendall Dunson, MCBA Secretary/Treasurer
   Beasley, Allen, Crow, Methwin, Portis, and Miles, P.C.
   P.O. Box 4160
   Montgomery, AL  36103-4160

2. A copy of the letter of intent to run and a short biography and photograph must be sent to:

   Suzanne B. Duffey, Executive Director
   Montgomery County Bar Association
   P.O. Box 72
   Montgomery, AL  36101-0072

   For additional information, call Suzanne Duffey at 265-4793.

2009 MCBA Holiday Party
Thursday, December 10
6:30-9:30 p.m.
Wynlakes Country Club

This year’s Holiday Party will again be at Wynlakes Country Club. We hope to repeat the success of last year’s TOYS FOR TOTS campaign. In previous years our members have generously donated 200-300 toys for needy children. There will be representatives from the U.S. Marine Corps there to collect the toys. As usual, we will have scrumptious food, and great entertainment will be provided by Tapestry. All current members of MCBA will be given two free tickets. Guest tickets cost $25 each.
MCBA YLS NEWS

ATTENTION ALL NEW MEMBERS!

For those who are new to the practice of law and/or who are new to the Montgomery County Bar Association and are receiving this newsletter for the first time, the Montgomery County Bar Association’s Young Lawyers Section (MCBA YLS) would like to encourage you to become active in YLS. The purpose of the YLS is to encourage interest and participation of young lawyers in MCBA activities, to develop and conduct programs of value to young lawyers and the public, to improve the legal system, and to enhance the equality of the legal profession in our county, state, and country.

Our regular membership consists of attorneys who are 36 years of age and under as well as attorneys who are over 36 and are practicing law for five years or less. If you fall into our regular membership requirements, then are automatically part of the YLS and your YLS dues are covered by your regular MCBA membership dues. Our associate membership consists of law students who are awaiting their bar results. Our membership spans all types of law practices: large, medium, and small firms, in-house counsel, the non-profit sector, solo practitioners, and law students to name a few.

The MCBA YLS is a fun, diverse organization that gives its membership an opportunity to experience more than just practicing law. It allows them to serve the community, socialize, network, and enjoy recreational activities. People get involved in the MCBA YLS for a variety of reasons: to net work, to make friends, to be leaders. To join the YLS mailing list, please contact the MCBA YLS President, Bill Robertson (bill.robertson@beasleyallen.com) or the Secretary/Treasurer, Megan McCarthy (mmccarthy@nixholtsford.com).

Bench and Bar continued from p. 1

Both the MCBA members and the judges of the 15th Circuit and Middle District. Sponsors of CLE presentation included Jackson, Thornton-Litigation Support and Valuation Group and Legal Copy Service, LLC.

After the seminar portion of our program, several stayed for, and some new MCBA members and judges joined in, the annual four-player golf scramble at the RTJ Senator Golf Course at Capitol Hill. We were fortunate to be able to play the Senator course within weeks of the conclusion of the NaviStar Classic, and the course was in incredible condition. Despite the chilly weather, all the golfers enjoyed the chance to socialize and fellowship outside of the normal confines of the offices and courtrooms we normally inhabit. Prizes were awarded to the first place team (Judge Johnny Hardwick, Guy Holton, LaBarron Boone, and Cameron McEwen), and the second place team (Ron Wise, Kevin Butler, Don Bethel, and Clayton Tarrt), and for the longest drive (Zach Meeks) and closest to the pin (Richard White). Prize sponsors included Haslip Regan Court Reporters, the Law Offices of Aimee C. Smith, and Freedom Court Reporting.

Thanks to all who attended and participated in this year’s event. I would personally like to thank Suzanne Duffey, Dot Robinson, and Stephanie Marlow for their help in running a fantastic program, our presenters who went out of their way to make the seminar an excellent experience, and our friends at the Marriott Legends and Capitol Hill for their recurring hospitality. We hope to see you at next year’s Bench and Bar Seminar!

Written by Paul Clark, Vice-President MCBA and Bench and Bar Chairperson

Bill Robertson, President, MCBA Young Lawyers Section (YLS), 2009

Above, the breakfast buffet sponsored by Jackson Thornton. Right, Judge Tracy McCooey is joined by Ron Wise (L) and Paul Clark (Rt) at the Capitol Hill Golf Course.

THANK YOU, SPONSORS!

The following businesses sponsored the Bench and Bar.

Jackson Thornton Haslip Regan Court Reporters
Freedom Court Reporters Law Offices of Aimee C. Smith
Montgomery’s Pro Bono Program Gets the “Royal” Treatment

When the Montgomery County Bar Association needed to jumpstart its VLP program, it looked for someone who could infuse the passion needed to help those individuals who have the least access to the legal system. Royal Dumas answered the call.

Helping people is a family affair. Royal, who is married to Patricia Randich-Dumas, met her while she was working with the Jesuit Volunteer Corp in Mobile. Royal volunteered alongside Patricia helping the homeless.

Royal has been married to Patricia for twelve years. She is a social worker who works with the Department of Defense working with military families who deal with the stresses of having family members deployed. They have two sons, ages seven and five. Royal was born in California, but was raised in Mobile, AL.

Who would have thought Royal’s first passion, music, would have led him to his second passion, law. Mr. Dumas is a 1999 graduate of the Harrt School of Music where he obtained a B.A. in Music Performance, classical guitar. He completed his M.M. in Music Performance, classical guitar, with a secondary concentration in Music History from Southern Methodist University. While doing research, Royal came across the history of voting and civil rights issues in America. Now learning the law to help people access justice became his second passion. He applied to Louisiana State University and the University of Alabama. He was accepted at LSU and put on the waiting list at the University of Alabama. Royal, Patricia, and his 2 year old and six weeks old sons moved to Baton Rouge and bought a house. After only one day at school the call came from Tuscaloosa that he had now been moved from the waiting list and was accepted to law school at the University; the catch was he had to be there the next day. Royal graduated form the University of Alabama and was admitted to the Alabama State Bar in 2007. He has been with the firm Hill, Hill, Carter, Franco, Cole, and Black, P.C. since 2008.

MCBA President Pat Sefton asked Royal Dumas to help with the pro bono effort for the Montgomery County Bar this year. Royal has arranged for the MCBA’s first legal clinic to be held November 3, at the Head Start Education Building on Adams Ave. This bar association is fortunate to have Royal Dumas share his passions for the law and helping others and his leadership to make access to help from the legal community a reality for those who are not able to afford it. Maybe we can get him to share his passion for music with us, too. Eric Clapton might have some competition.

(submitted by Suzanne Duffey, Executive Director, MCBA)
As you will note from this edition, we will be holding elections for directors and officers in January. I have been blessed to be a member of the Board of Directors since 2001 and can truly say that my Board service is one of the most rewarding things I have experienced so far in my practice. I hope you will consider running for one of the open board seats and serving our Bar in a leadership position. Of course, my thanks to you, the members, for allowing me to serve over the past eight years.

Pat

Due to space constraints, we cannot list the new members to MCBA in this issue. Watch the December issue for the list of new members.