



Pro Bono News

Winter 2005 Vol. 15 No. 2

NYSBA/Bar Foundation Collaboration

Hurricane Katrina Fund Helps Restore Legal Services

By Rosanne Van Heertum

We look back with fond memories on our visits to New Orleans...the historic French Quarter, Cajun cuisine, and smoky blues and jazz. Hurricane Katrina, however, has jolted us back to the now grim reality of that area of lost homes and jobs. Many agencies and nonprofits are giving help and hope through cash disbursements and hands-on volunteers to those whose lives have been devastated, not just in New Orleans, but in other parishes in Louisiana and in hard-hit Gulf coast towns in Mississippi and Alabama.

NYSBA, Foundation Join Forces

NYSBA President A. Vincent Buzard recognized that part of the process of recovery would include restoring legal services and the legal system in the affected states. Attorneys, judges, and court facilities on or near the Gulf Coast had experienced a staggering blow, and the death, injury, and destruction caused by the storm would leave countless people in need of legal assistance to recover from the disaster.

The NYSBA joined with The New York Bar Foundation, under the leadership of Robert Haig, to establish a special Hurricane Katrina Relief Fund in The Foundation to help in the restoration of legal services and the legal system. Through an e-mail to the NYSBA membership and by other means, President Buzard reached out to lawyers – who are in a unique position to understand the indispensable role that the legal system would play as people repair their lives and property – by asking for their charitable contributions to this fund.

If you have not already done so, you are encouraged to send your check, made payable to The New York Bar Foundation,



with a note that it is for the Hurricane Katrina Relief Fund. Mail your contribution to The New York Bar Foundation, One Elk Street, Albany, NY 12207, and remember that your envelope must be postmarked on or before December 31, 2005 to receive the tax benefit of your charitable contribution in 2005. You may choose to contribute by credit card payment; please call (518) 487-5651 to complete this easy process.

Members' Generous Response

The membership's response to President Buzard's e-mail was immediate, and gifts from individuals, firms, and bar associations started to flow into the fund. By October 6th, the first grant from the fund for \$10,000 had been awarded to Southeast Louisiana Legal Services through the expedited efforts of The Foundation's Board of Directors and its Committee to Review Grant Proposals. The grant was used to contribute to the salary and fringe benefits of one staff attorney for one year to provide direct legal services to victims of Hurricane Katrina in six Louisiana parishes that sustained the greatest damage.

At its November 5th meeting, the

Board of Directors of The Foundation voted to award four more grants to programs established to assist victims of Hurricane Katrina in law-related matters.

Four More Grants Awarded

Legal Services Alabama, Inc. received \$10,000 for its Disaster Response Legal Assistance project to provide free, civil legal assistance to hurricane victims who reside in Alabama.

Mississippi Workers' Center for Human Rights was awarded \$10,000 to implement its Witness Delegation Program, which is an advocacy initiative designed to specifically provide emergency representation for victims of Hurricane Katrina who reside on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

The Mississippi Bar received \$3,500 to set up office centers in or around the courthouses to make available basic word processing, e-mail, and Internet access to lawyers impacted by the hurricane. The Louisiana Bar Foundation was awarded a grant for \$3,500 to fund the establishment

Please go to page 8 for the continuation of this article and other information on Katrina legal assistance activities.

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Promote Pro Bono to Expand Service, Elevate Law Firm

By Elizabeth M. Guggenheimer

Attorneys who are active volunteers, and pro bono coordinators who promote this work, know why pro bono work is important to them and to their institutions. However, some law firms are not as effective as they could be in communicating the value and impact of pro bono work beyond those who do it. Integrating marketing concepts into pro bono efforts can give pro bono the wider, positive attention it deserves and maximize the benefits that lawyers and law firms realize from their efforts.

Increasing the visibility of a law firm's pro bono program elevates the law firm's stature among current and prospective clients, helps with staff recruitment and retention, and positions the firm as a leader among its peers. Increasing the visibility of pro bono work by individual lawyers rewards those attorneys' initiatives, sends a message to others about the value of volunteerism, and encourages bonds and connections between partners and associates that are based on shared values beyond their professional skills.

Marketing pro bono does not necessarily mean expending enormous additional firm resources, if done strategically. In developing a pro bono marketing strategy, start with three key questions: Why do you or your institution want to promote pro bono? Who are your key audiences? What are the primary messages you want to convey to each of these audiences? How a firm frames – and delivers – these marketing messages will vary depending on whether you are targeting your clients, your partners, your associates, law schools, associate candidates or a larger public audience.

Add pro bono to strategy

Successfully promoting pro bono externally should be a part of the firm's comprehensive marketing program. Law firms have become increasingly sophisticated about marketing their services to clients, but often suffer from a puzzling disconnect when it comes to publicizing their pro bono programs. As more dollars are spent on paid media promoting the depth and scope of the firm's expertise, why not devote a portion of those marketing dollars to your attorneys' pro bono achievements? Reproductions of print



Elizabeth M. Guggenheimer

advertising or an article in the national legal press can add credibility to your firm's description of its pro bono program during recruitment interviews, for example, and extend the value of those expenditures.

Marketing efforts are more likely to penetrate if they feature a human element. The client must be part of the story, especially if the goal is to attract media interest. Reporters are more likely to be inspired to cover pro bono if there is a visible, personal impact on the client and the community being served.

Constant reinforcement crucial

Successfully marketing pro bono internally requires constant reinforcement. Many firms have developed annual pro bono reports, annual pro bono receptions, and other techniques to announce pro bono achievements formally. Yet, many are mystifyingly deficient when it comes to the inexpensive, day-to-day internal communications that are necessary to reinforce the message that pro bono matters to the firm. The firm's internal communications vehicles, especially e-mail and intranet, can be used by the firm's managers to announce the positive outcomes of each significant pro bono project, rather than waiting for annual reports or awards ceremonies.

There are several ways that pro bono organizations can help law firms market pro bono, internally and externally. For starters, they are often the source of newsworthy pro bono success stories. These organizations know firsthand which volunteers have gone above and beyond the

customary client-attorney relationship. They know the clients and can arrange for client interviews. They can provide the firm, in writing, with the compelling facts that the firm can use for a Web site posting or press release. They can help spread the word by sending highlights of a pro bono project, not only to those directly involved, but also to the firm's marketing staff, the volunteer's supervisor, and firm leaders.

Relationships with reporters

Pro bono organizations are also becoming more adept at cultivating relationships with reporters who cover topics of relevance to their organizations. They can work with firms to attract media coverage. Attorneys with expertise in a program area such as domestic violence or public education, or a substantive area of law such as real estate or charities law, can be a vital resource for reporters who seek background information on such issues. Groundwork is thereby set for later when there is a compelling pro bono story on this issue.

In the end, effective marketing requires pro bono professionals to think creatively and be proactive. "Lawyer does good" or "nonprofit does good" is not in itself a powerful news story in the mainstream press. But it is a story that is compelling to certain audiences – if you take the time and trouble to reach them.

Elizabeth M. Guggenheimer is Co-Chair of NYSBA's Pro Bono Coordinators Network. She also is Legal Director of Lawyers Alliance for New York, the leading provider of pro bono business law services to nonprofits improving the quality of life in New York City neighborhoods. Her observations are also based on prior experience working at a large firm.



New Program Provides Free Legal Assistance to Seniors

By Ann Biddle and Alice Morey

Seniors across the state now have a new resource for help with legal matters. On December 1, the New York Seniors Legal Assistance Project (NYSLA) began offering free assistance to seniors. This Project is made possible by a generous grant from the federal Administration on Aging and is hosted by Legal Services for the Elderly (LSE) and the City Bar Justice Center (CBJC), both based in New York City. The New York State Bar Association support of the grant request was critical to our success in obtaining the grant.

LSE and CBJC together have more than a hundred years' experience delivering legal services to needy New Yorkers. LSE specializes in issues affecting seniors, using a range of delivery models, from traditional neighborhood storefront methods to hosting statewide projects, including the Mid-Atlantic Pension Counseling Project, an Administration on Aging-funded program. CBJC, the legal services arm of the New York City Bar, has expertise in both hotline and direct representation services, a history of innovative partnerships, many of which serve seniors, and a cadre of volunteer attorneys eager to undertake pro bono opportunities.

NYSLA will offer advice and shorter services on legal issues that most commonly affect low-income seniors: health care issues (including the new Medicare drug plans); income security issues (Social Security and other benefits); advance directives (living wills, health care proxies, living wills, and other wills, and powers of attorney); consumer issues (bankruptcy and debt collection); nursing home transition issues; and other elder law issues (such as guardianships).

NYSLA expects that, in the first six months of operation, the bulk of clients will have questions about Medicare Part D and that staff will spend considerable time assisting clients in selecting Part D plans and in explaining the interplay of Part D benefits with other prescription drug programs.

The Project was designed to supplement the services available from legal services agencies serving low-income seniors across the state by handling the advice or shorter-service cases, thus freeing up local legal services agencies to provide more extended representation. Priority will be given to lower-income clients and clients who face barriers to

obtaining legal relief without assistance, such as callers with limited-English skills or personal factors such as fear and stress, frailty and ill health, absence of support mechanisms, living alone, and mobility restrictions.

NYSLA's services will be available by telephone to all seniors in the state, regardless of income and resource levels. Calls from outside New York City will be toll-free. The number within New York City is (646) 442-3333 and outside the five boroughs is (866) 382-7955. The Project will operate from 10 a. m. to 1 p. m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays and from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Tuesdays.

NYSLA seeks volunteer attorneys, particularly to provide assistance with requests for advance directives and with Medicare Part D appeals. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Luz Laulo, Project Coordinator, at llaulo@nycbar.org. CLE credit is available for pro bono activities.

Ann Biddle is the Deputy Director of Legal Services for the Elderly, and Alice Morey is the Managing Attorney at City Bar Justice Center, both in New York City.

About This Issue of *Pro Bono News*

The central theme of this issue of *Pro Bono News* is how pro bono can thrive at law firms and among in-house counsel. We have invited a number of attorneys with a significant access to justice role to contribute articles providing their unique perspective on pro bono. Many of the authors are active members of the Pro Bono Coordinators Network, a 100-member coalition of pro bono professionals sponsored by the Association for two decades.

- Network Co-chair Elizabeth M. Guggenheimer offers insights on how law firms can market pro bono, in a column on page 2.

- Two law firms that climbed onto the 2005 *American Lawyer* A-List of the best 20 U.S. law firms by making impressive strides in pro bono are featured on pages 4-5.

- Also featured on page 5 is a column by Ivan Dominguez on pro bono as the key to recruitment, training, and retention of top attorneys.

- Page 6 contains articles by two Monroe County pro bono leaders, in recognition of the fact that Rochester will be the site of an Association conference on pro bono for law firms and in-house counsel, to be held on April 27, 2006, thanks to NYSBA President A. Vincent Buzard and Network Co-Chair Sheila A. Gaddis.

- Pro Bono Partnership, a premier pro bono program serving nonprofits, provided the page 7 article.

This issue of *Pro Bono News* also includes articles on Hurricane Katrina relief efforts and on an exciting new program providing legal assistance to seniors.

Pro Bono News

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Editor

Cynthia Feathers, Esq.
Director of Pro Bono Affairs

Assistant Editor

Eva Valentin-Espinal

Contributors

Ann Biddle, Esq.
Carol Bockner
Miriam Buhl, Esq.
Margaret A. Clemens, Esq.
Gary B. Cohen, Esq.
Saralyn Cohen, Esq.
Ivan J. Dominguez, Esq.
Elizabeth M. Guggenheimer, Esq.
Richard S. Hobish, Esq.
Maria Imperial, Esq.
Alice Morey, Esq.
Maurice K. Segall, Esq.
Rosanne Van Heertum

Pro Bono Affairs, New York State Bar Association, One Elk Street, Albany, NY 12207, (518) 487-5641

Choice is Focus of Shearman & Sterling Pro Bono Program

By Saralyn Cohen

At Shearman & Sterling LLP, the focus of the firm's pro bono program is on choice. Recognizing that the need for pro bono continues to be great, the firm seeks to involve all attorneys in suitable pro bono work that matches their individual skills and interests. The firm is proud of its long history of providing pro bono legal services to low-income individuals and nonprofit organizations and on civil rights related cases. To bolster its commitment to pro bono, the firm instituted an annual 25 hour pro bono expectation/requirement for all attorneys in 2005. The policy change resulted in a strong increase in the number of attorneys taking on pro bono matters, large and small.

Upon launching the "25 hour" aspect of the policy, the firm leadership emphasized choice. Attorneys are encouraged to work with the firm's Pro Bono Group to find an appealing pro bono project. In addition, the Pro Bono Group launched an interests survey. Attorneys receive an e-mail from the Pro Bono Group, referencing the firm's pro bono policy, explaining the services available, and asking them to respond to an on-line survey.

Survey Guides Matches

The survey captures their class year, practice group, and non-English language skills. It also asks them to select from a list legal issues of interest to them. Further, they are asked if they wish to work on a litigation or transactional matter, and if there are any particular practice skills they wish to develop. The Pro Bono Group uses the resulting information to search for appropriate opportunities for attorneys and offers opportunities first to those who have expressed an interest in them.

The firm works closely with a number of outstanding national and local legal services organizations that provide a steady supply of pro bono projects for attorney consideration. The Pro Bono Group seeks out organizations that offer solid case screening, as well as training, mentoring, and ongoing support for volunteer attorneys. There is no shortage of need for pro bono legal services, and lists of opportunities are circulated to attorneys, generally by daily e-mail.

Opportunities range from representing immigrants or those facing family law or public benefit issues; representation of indigent criminals or assisting the Office of the Prosecution at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda; advising nonprofits on formation or corporate governance questions; preparing end-of-life documents for the elderly or ill; providing disaster relief; or advising neighborhood entrepreneurs. Attorneys are encouraged to take part in pro bono related trainings and to join Probono.net and avail themselves of its features, from the calendar to practice area libraries and discussion groups.

Attorneys may also propose new matters to the Pro Bono Group. Subject to the firm's pro bono definition and standard conflicts checks, attorneys can continue projects they worked on in law school or at prior law jobs. They can also ask the Pro Bono Group to research opportunities for them related to a specific geographic region, issue or area of the law. The team prides itself on being available for one-on-



Chief Judge Kaye and Saralyn Cohen, who won a NYSBA pro bono award in 2004.

one meetings with attorneys to help them find a suitable pro bono project and to provide support to attorneys working on matters. At the end of 2005, one associate said, "I wasn't sure I had the time or the skills to do pro bono work before. I took on an immigration case to satisfy the requirement and found it to be some of the most personally satisfying work I have ever done."

Saralyn Cohen is the Pro Bono Attorney at Shearman & Sterling LLP.

New Pro Bono Policy at Weil Gotshal

By Miriam Buhl

The international law firm Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP announced in October the adoption of a significant new firm-wide pro bono policy. This announcement came as part of the firm's development of an infrastructure that will sustain the growth of its public service and pro bono representation.

The firm's new policy includes the requirement that every incoming lawyer, from first-year associates to prominent lateral partners, take on at least one pro bono matter during his or her first two years at the firm, and sets the expectation that every partner will take or supervise at least one pro bono matter every year. The policy also reiterates the firm's longstanding goal that every U.S. lawyer perform a minimum of 50 hours of pro bono

work each year.

In an effort to further bolster the firm's commitment to pro bono and the number of hours the firm's lawyers dedicate to it – which jumped 60% from 2003 to 2004, earning the firm a position on the *American Lawyer* "A-list" of marquee law firms – the firm's Pro Bono Committee was determined to set a guide for the firm's attorneys worldwide and pledge significant financial and human resources to the firm's pro bono initiatives and its leadership of them.

An equally vital component of Weil's effort to increase our pro bono work was the firm's decision to rebuild the Pro Bono Committee. Senior litigation partner

(Continued on next page)

Weil Pro Bono cont'd

Steven Reiss chairs the Committee, which includes senior partners from every office and every department.

Weil Gotshal hired me as Pro Bono Counsel in early 2005 to facilitate these initiatives and unify the firm's 20 offices' and 1,200 lawyers' pro bono efforts. My background working for philanthropic and nonprofit institutions informs my view of our pro bono work. We are distributing precious resources and should be strategic, efficient, and effective with this investment. My colleagues and I are focusing on developing and strengthening relationships with nonprofit institutions that are vitally important to obtaining and successfully accomplishing pro bono work, while understanding that each office's tradition of pro bono is unique.

Weil Gotshal has a long history of encouraging pro bono work and public-



Miriam Buhl

service and is dedicated to the principle that attorneys should devote significant time to rendering pro bono legal services. There is no question we can do more, and we are energizing and mobilizing all the

firm's resources to get pro bono to be an even bigger part of the firm culture.

Steven Reiss feels strongly that "preeminence in pro bono is key to achieving Weil Gotshal's goal to be not just a great law firm, but a great institution." To Weil's management, that means having a stellar pro bono program woven into the fabric of our firm, so that it is integral to our institutional identity and the way we define success.

Our long-term goal of the new pro bono policy is to set a standard that other firms can emulate. Developing a pro bono department, adopting the new policy, and having a strong Pro Bono Committee all underscore the innovative way Weil has chosen to meet our commitment to pro bono legal services.

Miriam Buhl is Pro Bono Counsel at Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP.

Pro Bono Programs at City Firms Attract Talented Attorneys

By **Ivan J. Dominguez**

Institutionalized pro bono programs are becoming the industry standard for private New York law firms, and for compelling reasons. One only need turn to the *Vault Guide to Law Firm Pro Bono Programs* for a long list of New York-based law firms and a detailed description of the structure of their pro bono programs, as well as the variety of pro bono legal services that they provide.

First and foremost, as attorneys, we do pro bono work because we know it is essential in order to maximize access to justice for all. Pro bono, quite simply, is the right thing to do and something that all attorneys should do and do often. As with any other enterprise or endeavor, though, we know that proper structure and organization can lead to efficiencies. And there is no reason why the private sector's pro bono operations should not be as efficient and effective as its others.

Through structured pro bono programs, firms can enhance benefits of pro bono work, to their attorneys and to those provided with legal services. Too often, though, the benefits to a firm's bottom line of a successful pro bono program are overlooked. Perhaps this is because the relationship between what is expended and what is gained by the firm



Ivan J. Dominguez

through pro bono is not as stark as the "hour of time for an hour of fees" paradigm. Properly organized pro bono programs, though, provide immeasurable aid in the recruitment, retention, and training of attorneys. Today's law school graduates evaluate a firm's pro bono programs not just for its substance, but also for what it says about the firm's culture. Many law schools now teach lawyering skills through for-credit pro bono clinics. Once someone engages in pro bono work, they are hooked.

In addition, such programs aid in the retention of attorneys. Pro bono work

adds to the diversity of matters handled by the attorney, while providing excellent training and skills development, particularly for young associates. It is a lot easier to conduct a massive document production or due diligence review on one of your billable matters, while devoting some hours each week to aiding the persecuted in securing asylum in this country, helping a battered woman extricate herself and her children from an abusive situation or guiding those with little to no material wealth in setting up a microenterprise so they can care for themselves and their families.

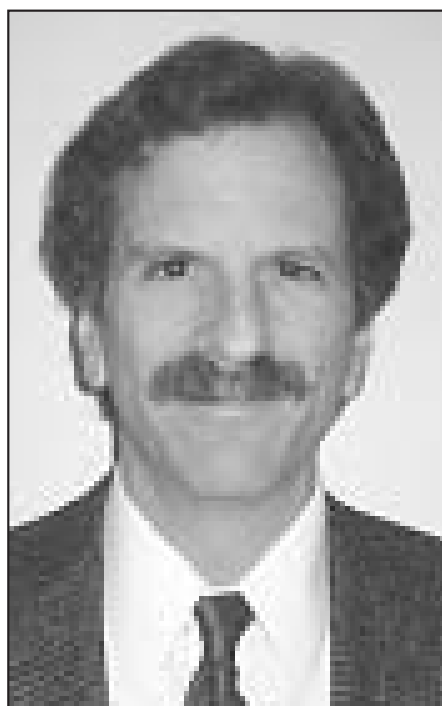
Finally, given the tremendous resources now available in New York through bar associations, various legal services providers, and the growing network of private law firm pro bono coordinators, appointing a program administrator and point of contact can bring tremendous value to the table, while eliminating some of the inefficiencies attendant in running one's pro bono program solely by committee.

Ivan J. Dominguez is the Director of Diversity, Pro Bono, and Community Relations at Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP.

Xerox In-house Counsel Serve Community, Expand Skills

By Gary B. Cohen

Many in-house legal specialists, particularly lawyers practicing in a federal area, might not feel comfortable, or even competent, to handle pro bono legal matters outside of their specialty areas. For instance, what practical experience would a typical patent lawyer have in handling matters related to bankruptcy, domestic affairs or real property disputes? Quite a few Xerox legal specialists have found, however, through their partnership with Volunteer



Gary B. Cohen

Legal Services Project (VLSP) of Monroe County, that meaningful pro bono legal practice is readily available.

Pro Bono Enriches Careers, Brings Real Rewards

Of course, certain barriers to pro bono legal practice by an in-house legal specialist, such as the unauthorized practice of law, simply cannot be ignored. And even where practice is authorized, the in-house practitioner must still be wary of practicing in areas where the details of applicable state laws might be unfamiliar. Nevertheless, a number of legal areas associated with administrative agencies, such as Social Security, unemployment insurance, and immigration, are very accessible for any in-house lawyer having any U.S. state bar membership. Indeed, many Xerox lawyers have found practice in these areas to be career enriching and tremendously rewarding.

The first reason is that practice in these areas can advantageously broaden the in-house specialist's legal skills. In particular, many in-house specialists are deprived of the experience of representing a real person in a courtroom-like setting. Even handling one Social Security

Disability matter provides the in-house specialist with such experience. Collecting evidence, assessing the significance of the evidence in the context of a case record, working with an individual client to develop a case, and presenting the case in a courtroom-like setting serves to solidify the time-honored bond common to the legal profession.

The second, and possibly most impor-

tant, reason is that pro bono legal practice permits the in-house practitioner to make meaningful contact with those who so urgently need access to, and assistance from, our justice system. There are many people throughout the United States who struggle just to make ends meet, and it is easy to lose sight of the ability that all lawyers (including in-house specialists)

(Continued on next page)

Nixon Peabody: Pro Bono Leader

By Margaret A. Clemens

Recognizing that all people are entitled to legal representation, regardless of their ability to pay, and that every lawyer has an ethical obligation to devote some time to those in need, in September 2005, Nixon Peabody appointed a firm-wide pro bono partner, Stacey Slater to oversee the firm's expanding pro bono initiative. Stacey chairs the firm's Pro Bono Committee, which has established guidelines providing for, among other things, billable hour credit for pro bono work. The Pro Bono Committee also publishes a quarterly newsletter reporting on pro bono successes and recognizing attorneys who volunteer their time.

Firm attorneys have handled hundreds of cases, including death penalty appeals, denial of Social Security Disability benefits matters, and cases involving orders of protection, custody, and divorce for battered women. Firm attorneys have also provided legal help to migrant farm workers, the homeless, and refugees seeking political asylum. The firm has longstanding ties to Volunteer Legal Services Project (VLSP) of Monroe County and Alternatives for Battered Women in Rochester, Human Rights First in NYC, Long Island Housing Partnership, Inc. in Garden City, and The Legal Aid Society in Albany.

Lawyers in other locations have strong ties to similar organizations in their respective areas. The firm has a



Margaret A. Clemens

long history of involvement with Rachel's Women's Center in Washington D.C., and in 2004, was named Corporate Sponsor of the Year. The firm's San Francisco office has similar connections with Habitat for Humanity.

Most recently, the firm has expanded its pro bono work to include partnering with clients, including Xerox and Computer Associates. Firm lawyers have committed to partner with law students from Syracuse, Buffalo, and Cornell law schools in a new program administered by VLSP, as one more way to advance the firm's pro bono commitment.

Margaret A. Clemens is a partner at Nixon Peabody LLP in Rochester. Last year the firm's Rochester and Albany offices won a NYSBA President's Pro Bono Service Award.

Nonprofit Groups Get Pro Bono Boost from Business Lawyers

By Richard S. Hobish and Maurice K. Segall

EDITOR'S NOTE: Statewide there are a variety of pro bono opportunities for in-house counsel and other attorneys with business law expertise. (For a list of programs, e-mail probono@nysba.org.) Highlighted here is a premier pro bono program for in-house counsel, which is based in White Plains, NY.

Contrary to popular belief, many excellent opportunities exist for in-house counsel to engage in meaningful pro bono activities. Assisting nonprofit organizations with their business legal needs is at the top of the list. Nonprofits have similar organizational legal needs as for-profit entities, but are often unable to afford legal advice. As a result, they often make important decisions with serious legal implications without the benefit of legal counsel of any kind.

The Pro Bono Partnership, a tax-exempt public charity assisting nonprofit organizations in Westchester County, NY, Fairfield County, CT, and New Jersey, is helping to address this problem. The Partnership recruits, coordinates, and supervises volunteer attorneys from leading corporations and law firms to provide business legal services to its clients – nonprofits that are serving the poor and disadvantaged or otherwise providing important social services in our communities.

Thanks to the participation of more than 950 in-house and law firm lawyers, since 1997 the Partnership has been able to provide free business legal services to over 850 qualifying nonprofit organizations on more than 2,300 discrete and manageable legal matters. The Partnership also serves as a national model for other in-house pro bono programs.

Some examples of legal needs addressed by in-house counsel include:

- A nonprofit organization working with victims of domestic violence required assistance negotiating contracts with funding sources, reviewing its bylaws and personnel policies, negotiating leases for space in its building, and terminating an employee.
- An independent living association working with people with developmental disabilities needed assistance from an



Maurice K. Segall, left, and Richard S. Hobish, right, are the Deputy Director and Executive Director, respectively, of the Pro Bono Partnership, which works with leading corporations and law firms to deliver pro bono service to nonprofits serving the community.

environmental attorney concerning whether to accept the donation of potentially contaminated land formerly used as a gas station and car dealership.

- A nonprofit organization developing books for underserved mothers and their newborns needed help from an intellectual property lawyer in obtaining copyright protection for its new product.
- A large, multi-faceted social service organization required corporate law help in consolidating its various corporate entities into the parent organization.
- A program offering parent education and support programs to low-income families had been working as a program of a state agency and needed help in becoming an independent nonprofit, tax-exempt organization.

Applying the legal knowledge they use in the course of their daily work, in-house attorneys help address these and other legal issues for the Partnership's nonprofit clients. As a result, employment issues are successfully resolved, intellectual property is protected, bylaws and personnel policies are created and updated, leases are reviewed, litigation is avoided, tax disputes are addressed, and new tax-exempt organizations are created. Ultimately, these efforts are helping to feed the hungry, house the homeless, and provide important health and social services to individuals and families in need.

In-house counsel throughout New York may find that nonprofit organizations in their areas would welcome such legal advice. In the words of one of our corporate volunteers, providing pro bono

help to nonprofit organizations will help you "keep sharp, hone your skills, meet some great new people, and do some good for organizations that interest you."

For more information about the Partnership, please visit our Web site at www.probonopartnership.org or call (914) 328-0674.

Xerox Pro Bono Service (Continued from page 6)

have to make a real difference in the lives of many of these people. Doing the "right [legal] thing" by an indigent client can often significantly improve the quality of that person's life.

No matter how rewarding and fulfilling pro bono legal practice might be, it seems improbable that an in-house pro bono legal program can succeed without an appropriate corporate culture and the support (including training resources) of organizations such as VLSP. Prior experience indicates that pro bono legal service is most likely to thrive in an environment where (1) senior legal management recognizes the value and importance of performing pro bono legal service and (2) takes a proactive role in nurturing pro bono legal participation so that it is viewed as something more than an extracurricular activity.

Gary B. Cohen is a Senior Patent Counsel with Xerox Corporation.

K A T R I N A

Lawyers Give Pro Bono Help to Katrina Evacuees in NYC

By Maria Imperial and Carol Bockner

Almost immediately after the terrible effects of Hurricane Katrina on the people of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama became evident, lawyers from firms, large and small, as well as in-house counsel began calling the City Bar Justice Center (CBJC) to ask how they could help. The New York City Bar convened two meetings, one with pro bono coordinators at law firms and corporate legal departments and the other with legal service providers, to brainstorm on how the bar might help victims of the disaster.

Legal Community Consensus

There was consensus at both meetings that the New York City legal community should focus on serving Katrina victims who were relocating to New York City. As a first step, the New York City Bar established a helpline for victims to call.

Shortly thereafter, the City's Office of Emergency Management opened a Disaster Assistance Service Center to provide assistance to evacuees, and CBJC staffed a Legal Help Desk at the Center. More than 20 law firms volunteered to staff the Help Desk, covering two shifts per day, and additional firms volunteered to serve as "facilitators" – volunteer attorneys charged with determining the clients' various legal issues and assuring

that the clients received the necessary legal help within the volunteers' firms. Legal service organizations agreed to provide back-up to the firms with regard to certain cases in their areas of expertise. The CBJC and the legal services community developed this holistic model to assist victims of the 9/11 tragedy, and the model is proving useful in aiding Katrina evacuees.

Variety of Problems Addressed

To date, 170 clients have received assistance. Volunteers are helping them gain access to benefits, resolve insurance claims, address immigration problems, and handle other problems as the evacuees cope with their relocation and ponder their future. The tireless efforts and outpouring of support from the City's legal community has been outstanding. In addition to providing direct services, the New York City Bar has been addressing substantive legal and policy issues triggered by the Katrina disaster and by the government's response.

Maria Imperial is Executive Director of the City Bar Justice Center and a member of the NYSBA President's Committee on Access to Justice. Carol Bockner is the Director of Pro Bono Initiatives at the City Bar Justice

Bar Foundation Katrina Fund (Continued from page 1)



Rosanne Van Heertum

of business centers for displaced attorneys with computers, Internet, and telephone services.

The Foundation plans to award additional grants from the Relief Fund, and we welcome your continuing generous contributions to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina in law-related matters.

Rosanne Van Heertum is the Director of Development for the The New York Bar Foundation.

Save the Dates

April 27, 2006 in Rochester:
NYSBA Pro Bono Conference

May 1, 2006 in Albany:
NYSBA President's Pro Bono Awards

June 5-7, 2006 in Albany:
NYSBA Partnership Conference