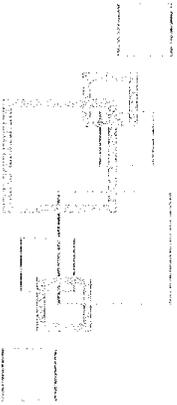
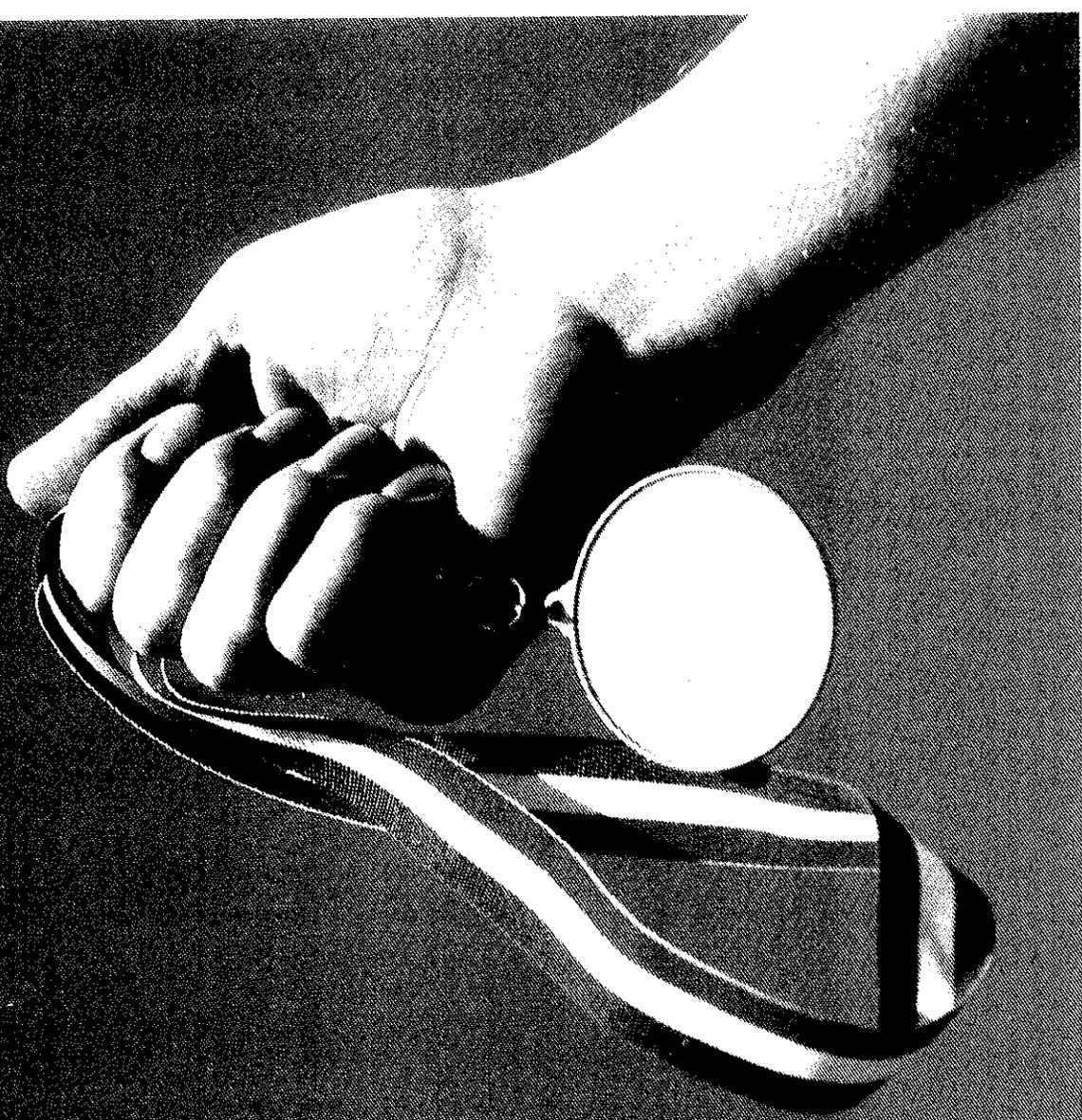


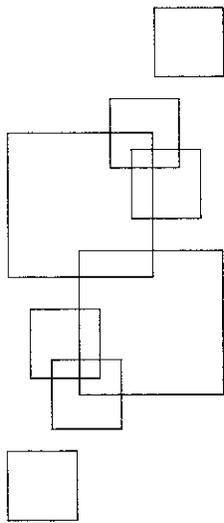


# Champions of Justice

*Words Of Wisdom From 25 Years Of Pro Bono Work*







Be inspired to help a family maintain stable housing.

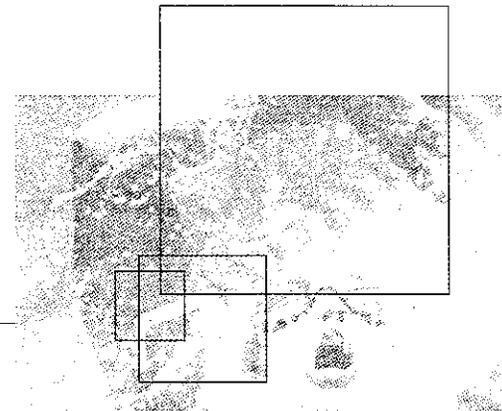
Be inspired to help someone obtain much needed financial assistance.

Be inspired to help a victim of domestic violence.

Be inspired through this collection of thoughts from many pro bono service award recipients over the last 25 years. In honor of their work and the work of thousands of others, be inspired as we continue to seek "justice for all."

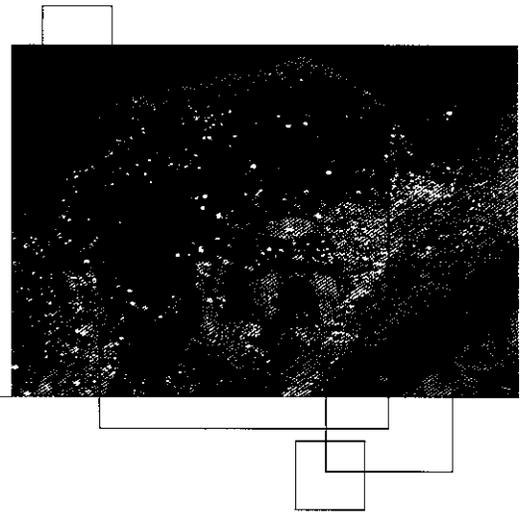
In 1983, the North Carolina Bar Association created the North Carolina Volunteer Lawyers Program (now known as the Pro Bono Project) to facilitate the efforts of these and other attorneys to best serve the essential needs of the poor in our state. Now, 25 years later, we celebrate the Pro Bono Project and these Champions of Justice.

– Janet Ward Black, President  
2007-2008 North Carolina Bar Association



## Small Law Firm Pro Bono Award Recipients

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One common connection that the attorneys in our firm share is a commitment to providing pro bono legal services through various programs of Pisgah Legal Services. We believe that Pisgah not only provides us with a vehicle for meeting our obligation to help low-income people, but also leads us to rewards greater than monetary rewards: sincere gratitude and appreciation for taking the time to help someone to understand and participate in a system that is often foreign and inaccessible.

– William H. “Bill” Christy  
**Stone & Christy PA, 2006 recipient**

Our firm’s involvements in providing free legal services to low-income members of our community have been some of the most rewarding experiences of our legal careers. Whether we have been helping incorporate or dissolve 501(c)(3) corporations, representing low-income homeowners with contractor disputes, or providing family law advice to disadvantage young mothers, we have learned as much from these opportunities to assist pro bono clients as in any other legal endeavor. We encourage our colleagues to join with us and other members of the NCBA in this important and rewarding work. We salute the NCBA for 25 years of success!

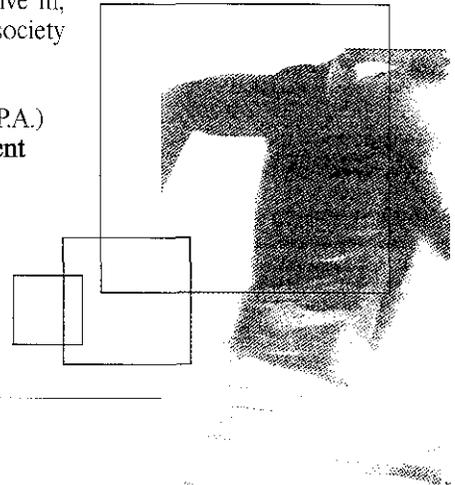
– Auley M. Crouch III  
**Block, Crouch, Keeter, Behm & Sayed, LLP, 2005 recipient**

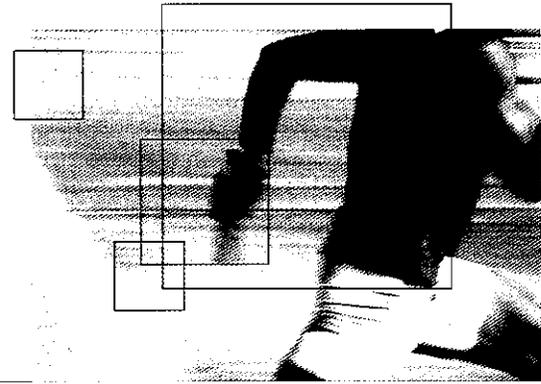


Lou Lesesne and I were honored to receive the first Small Firm Award for Pro Bono Service in 2000. We see most of our colleagues actively engaged in a wide variety of pro bono work. For most attorneys, it is a great and secret thing that they do out of the limelight and veiled by client confidences. For us, pro bono work takes on many forms: agreeing to represent an indigent client at no charge, reducing our fee to fit our client's ability to pay, or to fit the result obtained in relation to the fee assessed. It may be taking on unpopular causes or clients, or serving on the boards or committees of charitable, civic and religious organizations. Little of this work is publicly recognized, but it is hard to imagine what our communities would be like without it.

We are given lots of reasons why we should engage in pro bono service: we are officers of the court. We are given a state-controlled monopoly on the right to practice law. Many of us attended public law schools subsidized by the tax paying public. It's in the finest tradition of our profession. When you do good work you find yourself in the company of good people. All of this is true, but the real reason for our commitment to public service is that there is no other way to live: we are an integral part of the communities we live in, and this is talent we can offer to hold our society together and to make it great.

- Woody Connette (Essex Richards, P.A.)  
Lesesne and Connette, 2000 recipient





## Larger Law Firm Pro Bono Award Recipients

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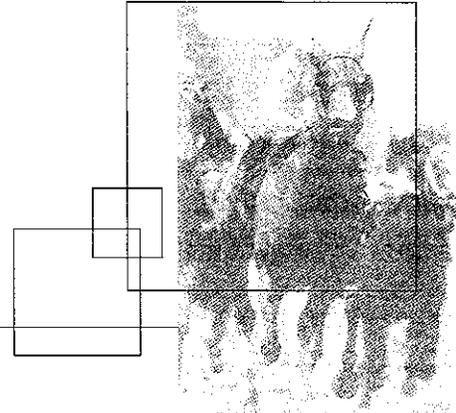
With all of the demands on lawyers' time, it is easy to find reasons not to do pro bono work such as, 'I am too busy,' or 'I don't know enough about that area of the law.' I have no easy responses to these reasons, but I do have several observations. In many instances, the lawyers in our firm who do the most pro bono work are the lawyers who otherwise are the busiest. If they can do it, so can you. Two lawyers in our firm realized that their expertise – corporate law – did not seem to easily lend itself to pro bono work. Instead of making an excuse, they helped create a new pro bono program for small businesses called NC LEAP. If they can do it, so can you. I have heard lawyers in our firm give many reasons why their pro bono experiences were rewarding. The reasons have ranged from the lofty, 'I got to help someone who otherwise would not have been helped,' to the practical, 'I got to manage an entire case on my own and got wonderful experience I otherwise would not have gotten,' to the unexpected, 'It made me appreciate my regular work and my regular clients.' But I have never heard anyone say they regretted making pro bono work a priority. If they can do it, so can you.

– Elizabeth V. LaFollette  
Brooks, Pierce, McLendon, Humphrey & Leonard, LLP, 2008 recipient



At Womble Carlyle we see the North Carolina Bar's pro bono practice at a turning point. The picture is bleak for those nearly three million North Carolinians living in poverty who have legal needs (nearly as bleak for the population trapped between poverty and having the wherewithal to afford legal representation) because there is only one Legal Aid lawyer for every 27,000 North Carolinians living in poverty. Leadership from the bench (North Carolina Equal Access to Justice Commission), the NCBA Board of Governors, our state's law schools, and NCBA President Janet Ward Black's emphasis on improved access to justice makes it possible to see

- a day when pro bono practice will be accepted as a mainstream part of the everyday practice of law;
  - a day when the private bar and the corporate community encourage pro bono practice;
  - a day when pro bono work will be the shared responsibility of every member of the bar, regardless of workload or prominence; and
  - a day when the members of the North Carolina Bar contribute one million hours of pro bono legal services to those North Carolinians who otherwise could not afford them.
- Murray C. "Tripp" Greason III  
**Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice,**  
2007 recipient



The lawyers of Robinson, Bradshaw & Hinson are privileged to provide legal services to indigent and disadvantaged populations in Mecklenburg County and beyond. Our commitment to this work extends from the local magistrate's court to the United States Supreme Court and every level of tribunal in between. We represent, among many others, domestic violence victims, indigent criminals, disabled persons wrongfully denied Social Security, displaced tenants, and first-time homeowners acquiring residences from Habitat for Humanity. Our attorneys have created – and continue to advise and support – 501(c)(3) organizations that now exist to address these and the myriad of other legal needs confronting Mecklenburg County's and North Carolina's low-income populations. We engage in this work for many reasons, but none more important than our acknowledgement that justice denied to anyone – particularly the powerless in our community – threatens justice for us all. We look forward to participating in the NCBAF's Pro Bono Project's next 25 years, and we reaffirm our commitment to assisting clients who may otherwise not receive equal access to our legal system.

– Doug Jarrell  
**Robinson, Bradshaw & Hinson PA, 2004 recipient**



Smith Moore LLP holds a long-time commitment to providing significant free legal services to low-income people. Our rewarding service includes staffing legal clinics at a homeless shelter, accepting referrals from Legal Aid of North Carolina, representing defendants charged with capital crimes, and participating in the Justice 4ALL campaign. By giving back, we have an opportunity to improve the justice system by making it accessible to people of limited means, to shape and become integrally connected with the community in which we live, and to learn more about ourselves. Pro bono work makes us better rounded citizens, but of pinnacle importance is the difference it makes in the lives of the recipients, one case at a time. One attorney can make a difference, one firm can make a difference but it takes the legal community as a whole to meet the need.

– Larry B. Sitton  
**Smith Helms Mulliss & Moore LLP, 2000 recipient**

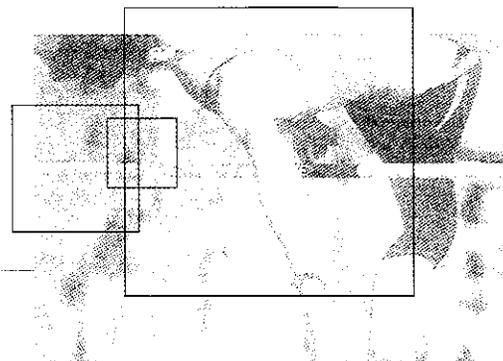


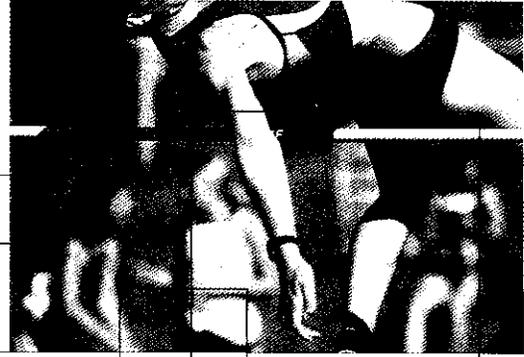
My experiences providing free legal services to those who cannot otherwise retain a lawyer have been some of the most rewarding of my career. I have completed two pro bono jury trials, a handful of appeals and many cases involving counseling and negotiation. In all those cases, I knew I was filling a real need in a legal system premised on the assumption of equal representation. I felt I was helping to ensure that the scales of justice were truly even. The populations I have worked with often face hurdles in their lives that most of us never dream of. Being part of a support system for them has been a great reward in itself, but I have also had pro bono clients whose gratitude sustained me through many other cases. One elderly man called me at least once a month for about two years to thank me for my service.

My firm prides itself on a history of community service that includes providing pro bono legal services to those in need by accepting legal aid referrals, representing guardians ad litem via the volunteer lawyers program, filling in on domestic violence panels, performing intake duties at local Raleigh homeless shelters among other projects. Providing these services gives us an opportunity to contribute to the communities that give so much to us.

Our strong pro bono program reminds us as a large firm to keep the practice of law a profession about more than the bottom line.

– Jay Butler  
Parker Poe Adams & Bernstein LLP, 1998 recipient





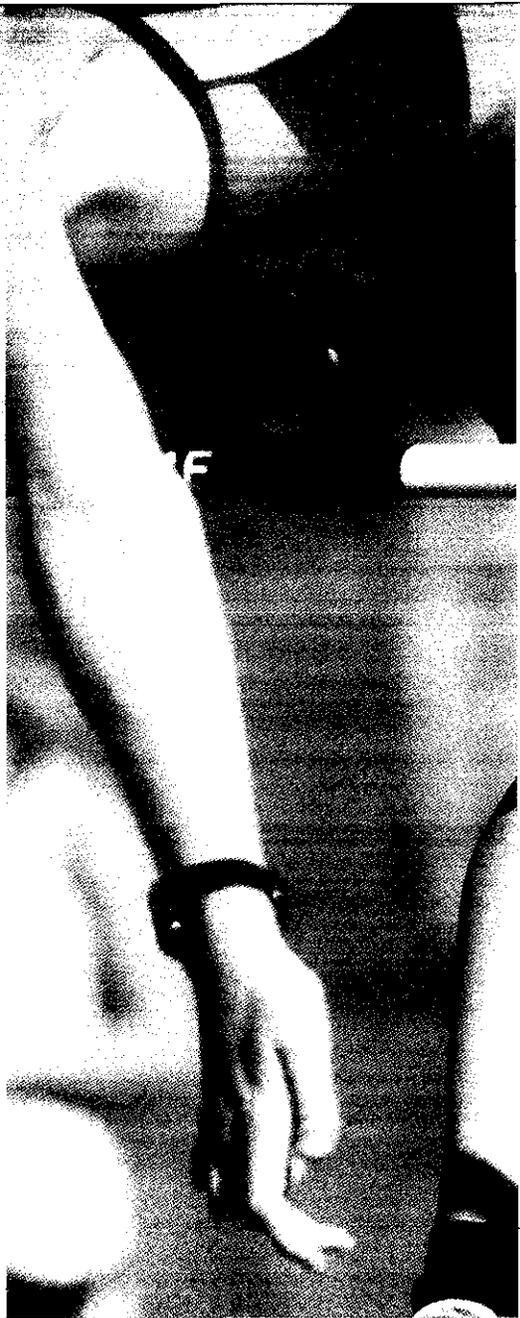
## Thorp Pro Bono Award Recipients

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Pro bono work in the private bar is a way to pay tribute to the heroic advocates at Legal Aid of North Carolina, the North Carolina Justice Center, and all the other public interest agencies that ensure that the justice system works for everyone. Every year these lawyers collectively handle tens of thousands of cases on a shoestring budget in matters with the highest stakes, like safety, shelter, family, and basic civil rights. Although I am grateful and especially proud to receive an award bearing Mr. Thorp's name, I honor my public interest brethren whose selfless commitment to our profession and to the disadvantaged among us inspires me to do my small part as well.

– **Christopher Graebe, 2008 recipient**  
Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice, PLLC

I received my first real exposure to legal services organizations in North Carolina in 1991 when I was asked by my partner, William F. Womble, Jr., to serve as liaison between our firm and the Forsyth County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Program. A year later, I served on the Board of Directors of the Legal Aid Society of Northwest North Carolina. Over the past 17 years, it has been my honor and privilege to work with the highly dedicated and selfless attorneys, paralegals and staff at the various legal organizations throughout the state, including LSNC, LANC, LSSP, Pisgah Legal Services, and the Legal Aid Society of Northwest North Carolina. These dedicated individu-



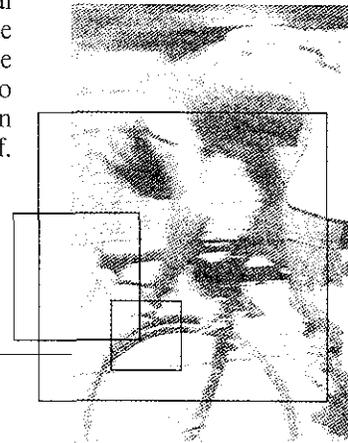
als provide much needed legal assistance for the poorest of the poor. I am always amazed at the dedication of the legal aid attorneys. They graduate from law school with large undergraduate and law school debt and take a job which pays approximately \$39,000 a year. After 10 years in that job, they are still earning less than \$50,000 a year. Sometimes I wonder why they do it, and then I see the people that they help and remember the overwhelming satisfaction I have received in helping those less fortunate resolve their legal problems.

Over the years, I have been involved in a wide variety of pro bono projects and have been very impressed with the outpouring of support for these various projects among lawyers both in our Firm and throughout the state. It is a tribute to our profession that people are willing to give so much of their time – including large blocks of time away from their families – to help a low-income person from New Orleans to New York and back to North Carolina.

– Reid Calwell “Cal” Adams, 2007 recipient  
Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice, PLLC

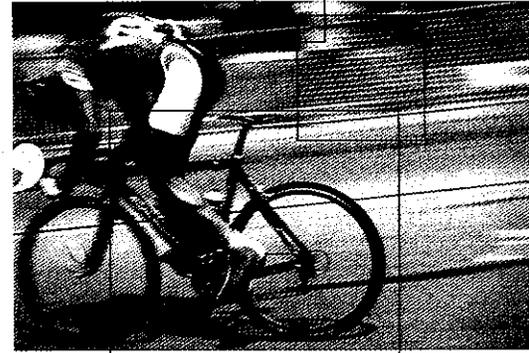
When I started practicing law, I viewed pro bono work as an opportunity for me to gain experience that I could not otherwise get and exposure that would pay long term benefits for my career development. While those things proved to be true, I now see that the real benefit that it provided was the joy that comes with being able to make a tangible impact on people’s lives. Very few things in my legal career thus far can compare to seeing the gratitude expressed by my pro bono clients and knowing the impact that the pro bono work had on them. Pro bono work has allowed me to see the best of our profession and has motivated me to demand the best from myself. I am a better lawyer for it.

– Theodore C. “Ted” Edwards II,  
2006 recipient  
Smith Moore LLP



Providing pro bono services for those who have no resources and no one to turn to for help is certainly not something that is done with the goal or even anticipation of recognition. The personal reward has to come from knowing that you've made someone who feels they have no voice, feel like they've been heard. It also comes from one's sense of self and from knowing that each attorney's actions reflect on the profession as a whole. I was awarded the 2005 "William Thorp Pro Bono Service Award" for my pro bono work in the area of wrongful convictions. Although I did not have an expectation of recognition, being recognized by my colleagues reinvigorated me and inspired me to drive forward. Eventually, the continued work of The North Carolina Center on Actual Innocence resulted in the exoneration of Dwayne Allen Dail after he spent over 18 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. It also contributed toward the passage of several important criminal justice reforms. Hearing the judge say 'Mr. Dail, you are free to go' was better than any award I could ever receive. Those words may not have been spoken but for the support of the NCBA. We should take a moment each day to thank our colleagues for the pro bono service they provide to the profession, the public, and those in need. Attorneys who provide pro bono services should take a minute to be proud and know that they are appreciated. Then, after we're feeling a little more appreciated and a little more invigorated, we should drive forward; there's more to do.

– **Christine Mumma, 2005 recipient**  
The North Carolina Center on Actual Innocence



I do a great deal of work in training the young lawyers who come into our firm. One of the things I always tell them is that some days law is a crusade; however, many days it is simply a way to pay the mortgage. When you are working to pay the mortgage, it is often easy to forget why you became a lawyer. There are moments, however, in the crusade, when there is no greater calling than being a lawyer. In 2002, I stumbled into such a moment when a young associate in our law firm called and asked me to help her in a pro bono capital murder post-conviction to which she had been assigned. That case involved Alan Gell. During the course of working up that case, it became clear that Alan Gell was an innocent man who had been wrongfully tried, convicted and sentenced to death. It also became clear that the State of North Carolina had withheld evidence that proved Gell was innocent.



Using this evidence, we were able to vacate his conviction and secure him a new trial. This evidence then convinced a jury that Gell was not guilty of the murder for which he had been sentenced to death. The day the jury came back with its verdict, I walked outside with Alan Gell and saw him breathe free air for the first time in 10 years. That day will stay with me for the rest of my life.

– **James P. “Jim” Cooney III, 2004 recipient**  
Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice

As the then president of Legal Services of North Carolina, I represented LSNC at William Thorpe’s funeral in 2001. I knew he was a founder of LSNC, but until then I had no idea of the breadth and depth of his contribution to the cause of ensuring equal access to justice. The many tributes to his life as a lawyer and advocate for the poor I heard that day echoed in my mind when I was nominated and then chosen to receive the William L. Thorpe Pro Bono Service Award in 2003. I’ll never be paid a greater compliment than to have his name associated with my pro bono service, and I recognize the award as something that still requires a lot of living up to.

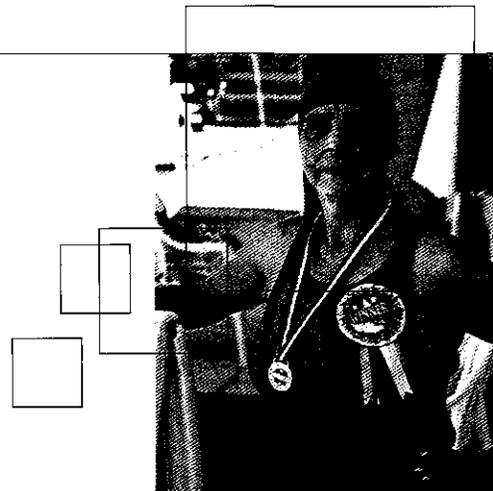
– **Glenn Barfield, 2003 recipient**  
Haithcock Barfield Hulse & Kinsey PLLC



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Providing pro bono legal services to those who would otherwise be deprived of those services is in the highest and best tradition of our ancient and honorable profession. As lawyers, each of us is called to this work no matter what the demands on our time may be. It can be a sacrifice of our time and energy, but it is one sacrifice for which the rewards to humanity far outweigh our inconvenience.

– **Pender R. McElroy, 2002 recipient**  
James McElroy & Diehl PA



When I graduated from Wake Forest University School of Law in 1980, I envisioned myself in a high rise building, impressing high-powered clients who paid me large amounts of money to solve complicated legal problems. I didn't expect to land in a small town (Gastonia) with small law firm working on family law cases. I didn't expect that the highlight of my 28 year legal career would be receiving the North Carolina Bar Association's Pro Bono Service Award in 2001.

The spirit of volunteerism is a large part of the professionalism for which North Carolina's attorneys ought to be justly proud. My career has been enriched by the privilege of working with some of the clients referred to me by the volunteer lawyer coordinator; clients who may be short on money but who have displayed courage, resolve, common sense, the ability to compromise and gratitude that some wealthier clients would do well to emulate. North Carolina lawyers recognize that the privilege to practice law is accompanied by a responsibility to use our legal skills to help some clients who cannot pay. Law is a profession, not just a business, and behaving professionally means behaving generously.

To those of you doing volunteer legal work, recognized or not, keep up the good work. To those of you who have fallen off the bandwagon get back on! When your career is evaluated, I promise it will not be the money and the prestige which will be memorable, but rather the times when you were able to do some genuine good with your education, your talents, and the privilege of practicing law with the other lawyers in North Carolina.

– **Nancy E. Foltz, 2001 recipient**  
Arthurs & Foltz



Helping an aging and ill grandmother keep her modest home when a lender tried to foreclose on the basis of her forged signatures. Providing advice to AIDS Service agencies in the '80's when no one would represent them. Serving as free general counsel for non-profits that provide affordable housing, combat human trafficking, and care for children with the severest developmental disabilities. Defending a young couple defrauded by an unscrupulous contractor. These are but a few pro bono experiences I store in memory's deepest core. I am grateful for my success "making a living" practicing law but I am sustained by "making a life" through pro bono service. Many lawyers were more deserving when the NCBAF conferred on me the Pro Bono Service Award — they simply were not known. So, I display the award in my home, not only for me, but for them and also for any of you who will go forth in service. I will not protest in the afterlife if this recognition is the only thing for which I am remembered in our profession.

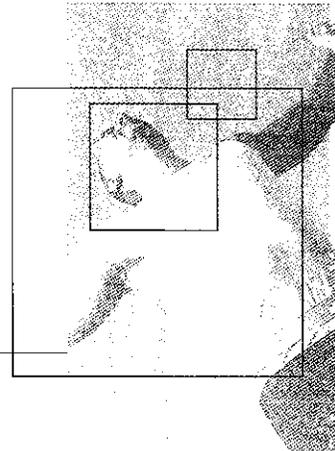
– **Stephen D. "Steve" Coggins, 2000 recipient**  
Roundtree Losee & Baldwin LLP

Giving back to your community is one of the most rewarding experiences a person can have. An attorney, and in my case a sitting judge, has a unique place in the community. We can affect lives, and if done properly, in a positive manner.

When I received the Pro Bono Attorney of the Year Award it was due in large part for helping create The Domestic Violence Advocacy Center (DVAC). This project materially increased access to justice for the poor in perhaps one of the most important areas of the law.

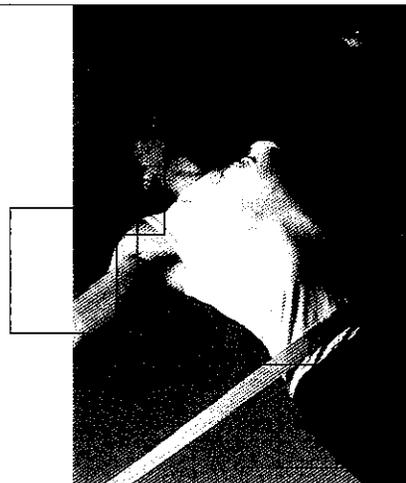
Our statistics showed that DVAC saved lives. I feel privileged to have played a small part in the creation of this program.

– **The Honorable William B. "Bill" Reingold, 1998 recipient**  
North Carolina District Court



Winston Churchill summed it up perfectly when he said, "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." When I was in private practice, a neglected, hearing impaired, 14-year-old girl, whose parents had refused to learn to speak with her through sign language, convinced me to help her in a custody case. This case not only generated unanticipated national media attention, but it also led to the professional recognition that I ultimately received as a pro bono attorney. More importantly, this particular case was one of the most personally satisfying experiences in my private practice. The positive pro bono experience also prompted my decision in the following year to enter a new career in public service law, that of a staff attorney for Legal Aid.

– **James B. "Jim" Morgan Jr.**, 1997 recipient  
Legal Aid of North Carolina



I think there were three things that inspired me to perform pro bono work. One was the education I received at Wake Forest law school, especially from professors like Dave Logan, who taught us in ethics that we, as attorneys had a duty to help those in need. Another thing was what my parents taught me, in their own example, by being very active in the community and helping others their entire lives. The third factor was that growing up in Gastonia, with my grandfather an attorney, I was around attorneys from a young age. In fact, my first job at age 14 was an office clerk for attorney Pat Cooke. These older lawyers, most of whom are gone now, always understood their responsibility to help others. They didn't call it "pro bono" back then, but it was evident in their everyday practice. Back then, there were no public defenders to represent indigent criminals, but they got excellent representation, even if the attorney was paid nothing. They did it because they were part of the "Justice System." Those lawyers are the ones that inspire me still.

– **Randolph H. "Dolph" Sumner**, 1996 recipient  
Mullen Holland & Cooper

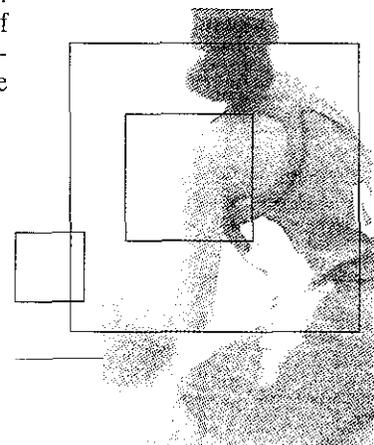


Providing pro bono legal services is more than voluntarily making legal services available to those who are unable to afford them it is doing an act for the public good, without payment, as a public service. Giving of one's legal talents and abilities is evidence of a lawyer's good character and fitness to practice law, and is the best definition of professionalism. For lawyers, pro bono service is not just an ethical requirement but a personal obligation, a noble contribution, and the right thing to do.

A compelling reason to provide pro bono services is the tremendous need. Legal services are important because lawyers are helping people who need help the most, and who have the fewest resources to receive that help. The privilege to practice law brings with it an obligation to ensure access to justice. Pro bono legal services is at the heart of our profession as we strive for social justice.

By sharing our legal skills, we have the opportunity to help confront critical and complicated legal needs including housing, health care, child safety, economic support, and indigent criminal defense. In sharing my legal skills, I had the humble joy of seeing relief and gratitude in the eyes of parents whose child's safety was protected, or who received adequate public housing for their family through our legal system. Pro bono legal services gives us the opportunity to give back to our community for all it provides to us and our families. We serve and benefit from one of the finest systems of justice in the world and we must live up to that reputation through helping provide equal access to justice for all.

– The Honorable Linda M. McGee,  
1992 recipient  
North Carolina Court of Appeals



It was my pleasure to help organize the first Pro Bono Project in the state. Wake County organized bar presidents, small and large firm leaders and decided to help poor people get first rate legal services. We were convinced that Legal Services could not do it all. Allan Head and North Carolina Bar Association leaders made pro bono a priority.

I was humbled to be the first Raleigh lawyer selected for the Pro Bono Award and proud to follow behind Joe Webster, a dedicated sole practitioner. The week I won the award, Governor Jim Hunt declared Pro Bono Publico Week in North Carolina. Lawyers participating in pro bono efforts have fostered a positive image for lawyers and helped us do more than focus on making a lot of money.

- *Geoffrey Simmons, 1987 recipient*

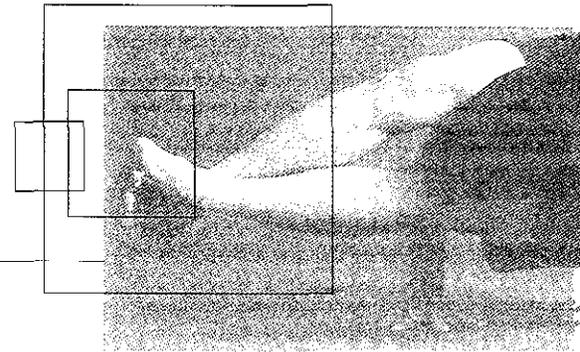


How time flies. This June will mark the 23rd anniversary (1985) of my being awarded the second Pro Bono Service Award to be given by the North Carolina Bar Association. The award came in the sixth year of my legal career. It was at a time in my career when I was still taking almost everything that came through the door, whether the clients could afford to pay me or not. In the Charles Hamilton Houston and Howard University tradition, I knew that it was imperative for me to be a social engineer in my home town which had never had an African-American attorney in its 161 year history. So seeking to zealously represent limited resource clients was what I knew and loved most. In addition to my own clients, I took on as many referrals as the Legal Services office in Greensboro could refer to me. Many of the clients had cases and causes that no one else would undertake. I



must say that at the time, I did not know what reward was at the end for me. I just knew then what I know now that to whom much is given much is required. I had too many bills and too few assets to join the NCBA prior to being awarded the Pro Bono Service Award. However, I became wealthy from the satisfaction I received from helping others who were less fortunate than me. It takes courage to represent the poor. At that time I didn't know that I had courage. Since receiving the Pro Bono Service Award many doors that I didn't know existed have been opened and many opportunities have been presented to me. I'd like to think I made a difference serving as chair of the Minorities in the Profession Committee (1986), on the NC Board of Law Examiners, or as an Administrative Law Judge in the NC Office of Administrative Hearings. I continue to heed the call of that old professor at Howard University, to go down there and make a difference.

- **The Honorable Joe L. Webster, 1985 recipient**  
Office of Administrative Hearings



## Greenblatt Pro Bono Award Recipients



My law school required that applications for admission include an essay about why the applicant wanted to be a lawyer. Thirty years ago, I wrote that I wanted to be a lawyer so that I could help people. I explained that I would be the first lawyer in my extended family, and that as a part of the African-American community, I grew up hearing about lawyers who took families' homes if their legal fees weren't promptly paid and banks that made folks in my community pay 50% down to get a loan to buy a home, even though others in other communities were not required to do so. I wrote then that I wanted a position and a platform from which I could combat such fundamental unfairness and make positive changes in peoples' lives. Fortunately, I was accepted into law school anyway.

Thirty years later, my answers to that question remain unchanged. As I happily inform anyone who asks why I remain a legal services attorney, it is because doing so has provided me a position and a platform from which I can make my own small contributions toward creating a more just society, and toward giving my clients, their families and their communities a fairer chance to achieve the American dream. It also gives me great comfort that whenever my wife or daughter is asked what I do for a living, they always say: 'He's a lawyer . . . but he's one of the GOOD ones.'

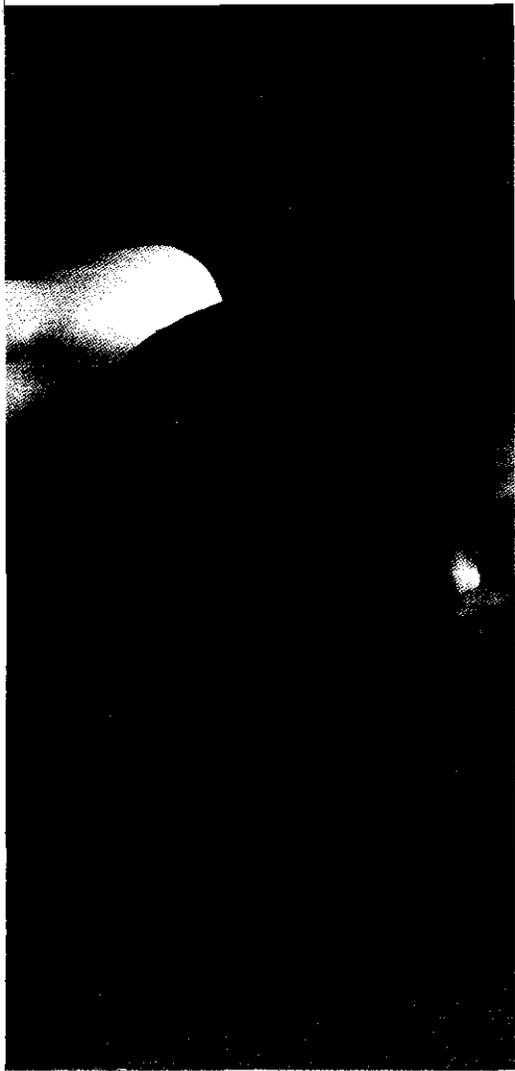
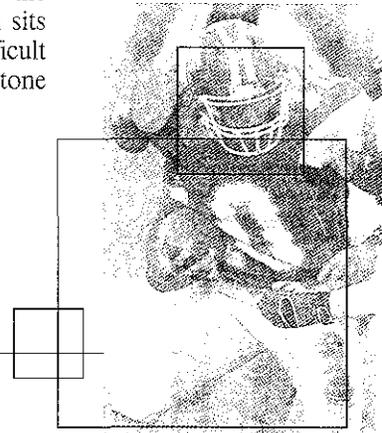
– Evan G. Lewis, 2008 recipient  
Legal Aid of North Carolina

I've had the privilege of being a legal services attorney since I graduated from law school more than 25 years ago. While many of my contemporaries are now contemplating retirement, I have no plans to retire anytime soon. That may come as a surprise to many of you, who view legal aid as a stepping stone to a more prestigious, more lucrative position. But no job can be as rewarding as mine. I spend every day saving clients' homes, and helping them to secure such basic necessities as income and shelter. By becoming a legal aid volunteer, you too can experience the satisfaction of helping those less fortunate than yourself.

– Susan W. Gottsegen, 2007 recipient  
Legal Aid of NC

I was very surprised and humbled at being chosen to receive the Deborah Greenblatt Award. While I had heard of Deborah Greenblatt when I first started working at the Justice Center in 1999, I became very aware of her at the time of her untimely death. Her life and work was such a wonderful example to all of us. To receive an award named after Ms. Greenblatt is a decided honor and a wonderful incentive for me to keep on trying no matter how difficult the immigration law areas becomes. The award, which sits on my cabinet containing many of my most difficult immigration cases so that I'm inspired to leave no stone unturned in my efforts to seek justice for my clients.

– Attracta Kelly, 2006 recipient  
NC Justice Center



Following graduation from law school at UNC, my late grandmother initially lamented my not seeking out the financial rewards of private practice. Soon she became reconciled with my working for legal aid by accepting it as simply being my “calling.” Now, more than 20 years later, I still don’t have any better explanation for how or why I do what I do for my life’s work. After surviving my own impoverished childhood, it is a privilege to be able to serve others who are still struggling to do the same, and at times, make some small difference in their lives. Our client’s dignity and humanity, despite their dire circumstances, as well as the selflessness and courage of my colleagues, continues to astound and sustain me. I am humbled to be a legal aid attorney. Thankfully, my chosen career path also brought me to my wife and daughter, who are my life’s greatest joy and blessing.

– **Andrew Cogdell, 2003 recipient**  
Legal Aid of North Carolina



When I began my career in legal aid in 1973 low-income people did not have many rights to basic necessities. Tenants had no right to any heating, operable plumbing, or other requirements for safe and sound shelter. Some landlords used self-help lock-outs and utility terminations to evict tenants arbitrarily. Homeowners could lose their homes by foreclosures without notice and due process hearings by the clerk of superior court. Consumers were subject to overreaching security interests in all of their personal property and to waivers of their constitutional protections in adhesion contracts. Applicants for financial assistance and Medicaid were subject to delays in processing their applications that sometimes lasted for months, during which time many families were evicted or without utilities. Women and children were not entitled to protection from domestic violence.

In my early career, legal services enabled me to work on changing many of these gross injustices. A relatively small group of lawyers worked to change these laws in the General Assembly and in the courts. Eventually, all of these policies were addressed for the better. Now, we have the privilege of working on behalf of needy individuals to apply these protections and make a difference in their lives. It is rewarding.

– **Theodore Fillette, 2002 recipient**  
Legal Aid of North Carolina



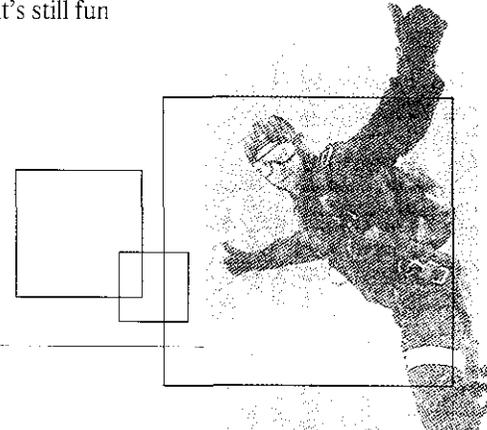
As a legal aid lawyer, I have been privileged to serve clients whom society has marginalized and whose voices are merely whispers, if ever heard at all. They have given me opportunities to prove that justice is not an elusive ideal reserved for those with money and power. Those opportunities and challenges over the years have inspired me as a lawyer and I am proud to say that we have truly made a difference.

– **Celia Pistolis, 2001 recipient**  
Legal Aid of North Carolina

Until a civil Gideon is realized, 'equal justice under law' is not a reality for the poor and powerless. Being a legal aid lawyer has allowed my clients' voices to be heard and their rights recognized.

It's inspiring to work with clients who, because they have a legal aid lawyer standing with them, speak fearlessly and move forward with confidence in the midst of an intimidating legal system. It's tremendously rewarding to preserve a subsidized housing tenancy, secure unemployment benefits, stop a foreclosure, or negotiate a special education plan. These successes have immediate and lasting impact upon our clients' lives. And after 20 years, it's still fun to go to work every day.

– **John R. Keller, 2000 recipient**  
Legal Aid of North Carolina



I believe our legal system often denies basic due process of law to persons who cannot afford legal representation in contested cases. However, legal services and volunteer attorneys are able to provide great benefit to such persons while making the system a little fairer. For example, I once represented a single mother with small children, who had been living for years in dilapidated rental housing, the only housing she could afford. When her home was condemned, she applied for federally subsidized housing but was denied because it was claimed the condition of her home showed poor housekeeping. I appealed that denial, and after a hearing the decision was overturned. She obtained a subsidized apartment. I know from continued contact with her that her children grew up in decent subsidized housing that she could afford. I feel that the benefits this needy family received from this free legal assistance were immeasurable in any monetary sense. Legal services advocates successfully handle similar cases every day. Volunteer private attorneys working pro bono do the same and bring our imperfect legal system a little closer to the ideal of justice for all.



– **Jack S. Hansel, 1996 recipient**  
Legal Aid of North Carolina

The northwestern corner of North Carolina brings to mind the spectacular mountains, a favorite golf or ski resort, or an annual trip to choose and cut your family Christmas tree. For many, the area offers a location for a luxury second home or cabin in a secluded area. But over the past 20 years, the small textile and furniture plants that offered year-round employment in the area are gone. Tobacco, which provided a significant portion of the annual income for many low-wealth families, is gone. Illiteracy remains high, making it difficult for many to find ways to continue to live and work here.

As a legal services attorney, I had the opportunity to work with people adjusting to their changing circumstances. Sometimes people needed general information about any variety of issues, or assistance in obtaining unemployment compensation or Medicaid benefits, in working out a custody arrangement, or in learning how to dealing with abusive creditors. Perhaps the most rewarding part of the practice for me was giving clients the tools – the information and resources to resolve legal problems on their own, not only this time, but in the future.

– **Charlotte Gail Blake, 1993 recipient**  
Legal Aid of North Carolina

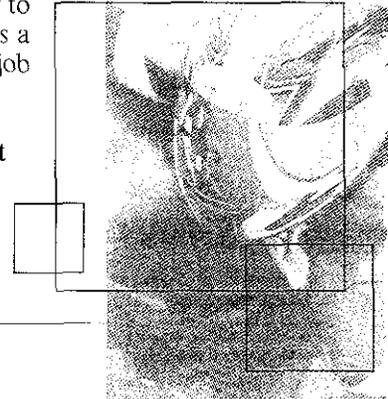


For 23 years, I had the privilege of working with a Legal Services office in the effort to provide equal justice to low-income citizens in North Carolina. The greatest pleasure was working with attorneys, paralegals and support staff who were the most dedicated people in any profession. The most heart-rending part was turning away clients because the office had far more applicants than we could assist, even though those people had meritorious legal claims and were desperate for legal assistance. That situation improved tremendously when the Bar Association's Pro Bono Project became a reality, referring low-income people to private attorneys for free services. Congratulations to the Pro Bono Project for 25 years of outstanding service to the crucial goal of equal justice for all.

- Leonard G. "Len" Green, 1992 recipient  
North Carolina Department of Justice

There is no greater privilege than serving poor people who cannot afford to hire an attorney. Every auto saved from repossession, every eviction forestalled, every apartment repaired, every 26 weeks of unemployment benefits won, every successful appeal of the denial of government benefits literally changes the life of the person one represents. Even cases lost have the positive effect of letting people know that someone cared enough to try to help them. The pleasure that I got from my work as a legal services attorney made it the most worthwhile job that I ever could imagine.

- Ellen W. "Lennie" Gerber, 1991 recipient



## Law School Pro Bono Award Recipient

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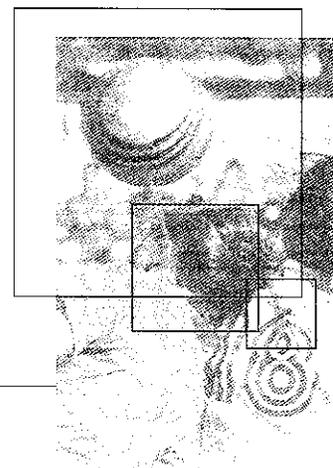
The mission of UNC School of Law Pro Bono Program is to assist attorneys who provide high quality, low-cost legal services to individuals in need and to create a life long commitment to pro bono work among UNC Law Students. In furtherance of our mission, we have adopted the following goals: to increase the provision of high quality, low-cost legal services to North Carolina residents in need; to empower working attorneys to accept more pro bono cases; and to create a life-long commitment to pro bono work among law students.

– Sylvia Novinsky  
UNC School of Law – Immigration Law Association, 2008 recipient

## Chief Justice Pro Bono Award Recipients

Rule 0.1[8] of the North Carolina State Bar Revised Rules of Professional Conduct provides that attorneys have a professional responsibility to “provide community service, community leadership, and public interest legal services without fee, or at a substantially reduced fee, in such areas as poverty law, civil rights, public rights law, charitable organizations representation, and the administration of justice.” This year, the NCBA Young Lawyers Division had the privilege of bringing the national Wills for Heroes project to North Carolina in order to provide free estate planning services to first responders including policemen, firefighters, and EMTs. The Wills for Heroes Foundation was created shortly after September 11, 2001 to acknowledge the extraordinary and daily sacrifices made by first responders. Ironically, it was discovered that a majority of first responders do not have wills based on the fact that they are trained to selflessly come to the aid of others without thinking of the dangers to themselves. The YLD implemented this project in Charlotte in October 2007 with 202 free wills drafted, and more dates set for events in Cary and Salisbury. Hopefully the tremendous interest in this project will allow the YLD to expand it across our state. Whether it is through this worthwhile project or others, all attorneys should strive to provide a lifelong commitment to pro bono work because it strengthens our personal and professional development.

– Kim Sieredzki, 2008 recipient  
NCBA Young Lawyers Division 2008  
recipient





Exemplary commitment and teamwork have been the hallmark of more than 600 attorneys from Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, Polk, Rutherford, and Transylvania counties who, since 1983, have participated in the Mountain Area Volunteer Lawyer Program (MAVLP). In addition to providing outstanding pro bono service to thousands of low-income clients with legal issues effecting their basic needs, these attorneys have provided the committed leadership and support needed to build MAVLP into a program that offers every attorney the resources and support needed to participate and make a meaningful contribution of pro bono service in their community.

The outstanding contributions these attorneys have made to the MAVLP is only part of the story. Since before 1983, attorneys from these six counties have led and supported the development of organized civil legal services to the poor through the formation of Pisgah Legal Services and by forging a pro bono partnership between MAVLP and PLS. The leadership, pro bono service, and financial support contributed by these private attorneys is the foundation for the success of PLS and MAVLP, which in 2007 combined to serve more than 9000 children and adults, secure quantifiable financial benefits of more than \$26 million, and raise more than \$2 million in operating funds.

Kudos and congratulations to the attorneys from Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, Polk, Rutherford, and Transylvania counties! Their commitment to pro bono service and to supporting MAVLP and PLS is remarkable, and demonstrates what can be accomplished when attorneys work together to fulfill our profession's ethical duty of pro bono service

– William J. “Bill” Whalen  
Mountain Area Volunteer Lawyers Program, 1999 recipient

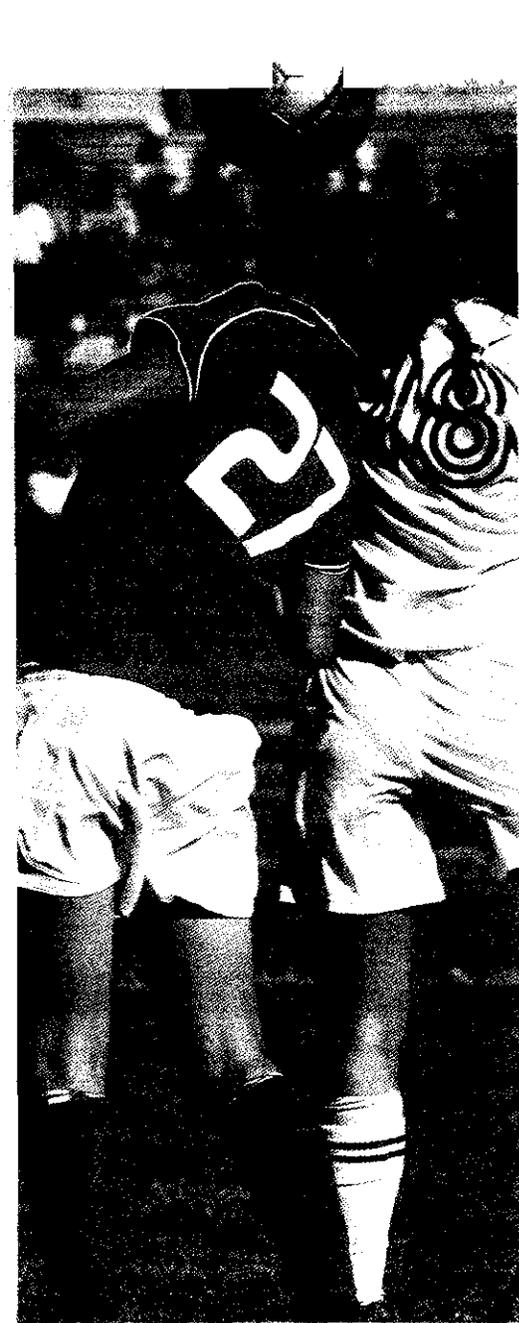
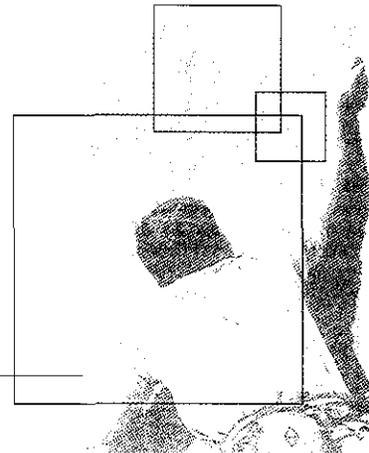
## Intellectual Property Pro Bono Award Recipients

As an intellectual property attorney, I was afraid that there would be few opportunities for me to provide meaningful pro bono work to people in my community. I could not have been more wrong. I have been able to assist local groups in obtaining trademark and copyright protection, but have also been able to step outside of my comfort zone and assist domestic violence victims, death row inmates, and children who are caught in the middle of custody disputes. My firm does a wonderful job of providing me with a variety of pro bono opportunities and I try to take advantage of as many as time permits. When I am able to assist an individual or local group with a problem on a pro bono basis, I find it refreshing to help solve a problem where the results are truly valuable to individuals and the benefits are immediate.

– **Laura C. Miller, 2007 recipient**  
Kilpatrick Stockton LLP

My primary practice involves creating high-dollar value for businesses. Yet some of the most valuable work I have had the privilege of undertaking as a lawyer involves significant events in the lives of individuals. Helping a person deal with a landlord so that they can have a place to live, gain protection against domestic violence, obtain custody of a child, or adopt a child are not just important professional activities, but the right thing to do to help those who need it the most. There is no greater personal reward than assisting folks with these kinds of successes.

– **James M. “Mike” Boggs, 2005 recipient**  
Kilpatrick Stockton LLP



## YLD Younger Lawyers Pro Bono Service Award Recipients



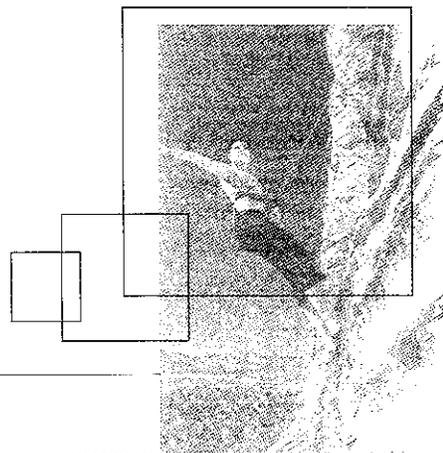
There are many good reasons to do pro bono work. The first and perhaps most obvious reason is that it's the right thing to do. We lawyers are lucky, gifted, fortunate and uniquely equipped to help meet the tremendous need for legal services in a state like North Carolina where nearly 30 percent of our population lives at or below the poverty line. I think it's a great time to be new to the practice of law in North Carolina. In the past three years, I've seen pro bono activities grow in scope and visibility. Law firms, law schools, corporate counsel and legal service providers seem to increasingly incorporate pro bono programs into routine work responsibilities. It's not hard to envision a time in the coming years when pro bono will be accepted as part of the practice of law, as the shared responsibility of every member of the North Carolina Bar, and recognized as work of equal value to commercial client work. On the personal side, I've found pro bono work to be some of the most challenging, interesting and meaningful work I do as a lawyer. Pro bono work reminds me of why I chose the legal profession—it's creative, it's optimistic, and it matters. Finally, and most fundamentally, pro bono work is a professional responsibility that is a joy to fulfill.

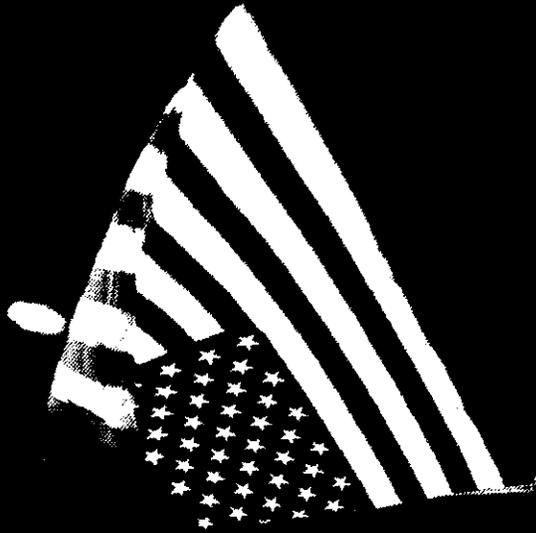
– Georgiana "Georgi" Yonuschot, 2008 recipient  
Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice, PLLC



I wish I could say I started doing pro bono work for particularly noble reasons. In fact, although I appreciated the service lawyers could provide in doing pro bono work, I took on as many pro bono cases as I did early in my career because it gave me consistent opportunities to appear in court and make arguments. The habits formed early in my career have held me in good stead, and I have continued to try and perform pro bono work because I find the work itself so rewarding. It means so much to the clients that I try to serve when we get a domestic violence protective order entered, or thwart a wrongful eviction, or even vacate a death sentence. I firmly believe that we are at our best as lawyers when we advocate and protect the rights of those who otherwise might not have a voice in our system of justice. I applaud the work of the Pro Bono Project, and I hope to be able to work with it for years to come.

– Julian Wright, 2001 recipient  
Robinson Bradshaw & Hinson PA





[www.4allnc.org](http://www.4allnc.org)  
[www.ncbar.org/probono](http://www.ncbar.org/probono)