LSBA, Supreme Court Recognize Legal Professionals for Pro Bono Achievements

The Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA), in conjunction with the Louisiana Supreme Court, recognized the pro bono accomplishments of attorneys, public interest professionals and law students during the Pro Bono Publico and Children’s Law Awards Ceremony on May 22 at the Louisiana Supreme Court Building in New Orleans. (Access full profiles and more photos of award recipients online at: www.lsba.org/ProBono/ProBonoAwards.aspx.)

2018 David A. Hamilton Lifetime Achievement Award

Catharine Ohlsson Gracia, assistant general counsel in the Legal Department of Entergy Services, Inc., received the Lifetime Achievement Award, recognizing an attorney who demonstrates a commitment to the provision of legal services to the poor and has made significant contributions to enhance the pro bono movement in Louisiana. Gracia serves on the Legal Department’s committee managing employee involvement in pro bono legal service. She serves as a liaison to local pro bono organizations, assists employees in identifying volunteer opportunities, coordinates training and facilitates service projects. She is a frequent volunteer with the Orleans Parish Civil District Court’s Self-Help Resource Center.

2018 Career Public Interest Award

R. Paul Tuttle, director of the Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic at Southeast Louisiana Legal Services (SLLS), received the Career Public Interest Award, recognizing attorneys and non-attorneys devoting at least 10 years to public interest legal work. Tuttle is a 1996 cum laude graduate of Tulane University Law School and began working with SLLS the same year. After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, he helped to recruit, train and supervise pro bono attorneys in a project assisting low-income homeowners to clear title to their properties and become eligible for federal rebuilding funds.

2018 Children’s Law Award

The Louisiana Parole Project and Cherrilynnne W. Thomas received the Children’s Law Award recognizing attorneys or Louisiana-based organizations providing outstanding services in children’s law.

The Louisiana Parole Project (LPP) is a nonprofit organization responding to the needs of individuals sentenced to life without parole for crimes committed...
when they were children. These “juvenile lifers” were made eligible for parole consideration following the Montgomery v. Louisiana decision and Act 277 of the 2017 Louisiana Legislature. LPP provides legal representation before the Committee on Parole and step-down services including intensive re-entry training, transitional housing, employment, medical coverage, driver’s education/licensing, and family reunification. LPP provides continued re-entry coaching. LPP staff members are all formerly incarcerated individuals.

Cherrilyne W. Thomas, an assistant district attorney for Orleans Parish Juvenile Court, has handled criminal and Child in Need of Care cases for the past 10 years. She was a staff attorney for the State of Louisiana, Department of Social Services, Bureau of General Counsel for more than six years representing foster care workers. In 2016, she received her certification from the National Counsel for Children as a child welfare specialist. As co-chair of the LSB's Children's Law Committee from 2010-16, she participated in the development and production of two videos informing children and the community about the Child in Need of Care process.

2018 L.A. Free Legal Answers Award

Peter S. Thrifiley, the principal of Peter S. Thrifiley, A.P.L.C., received the first L.A. Free Legal Answers Award for pro bono work provided through the website. Louisiana is one of 38 participating jurisdictions in the ABA initiative to expand pro bono access nationwide. The site allows attorneys to anonymously answer the civil legal questions submitted by site users while being covered by malpractice insurance provided by the ABA. Thrifiley practices in creditor representation and collections. He began giving pro bono advice on the website after downsizing his practice.

2018 Pro Bono Publico Award

King & Jurgens, L.L.C. — New Orleans
Nancy S. Bousfield — Slidell
W. Scott Brown — New Orleans
Hailie P. Coreil — Lafayette
Morgan A. Druhan — Lafayette

Charles D. Elliot — Alexandria
Marquest J. Meeks — New Orleans
Eric R. Miller — Baton Rouge
Jackey W. South — Lake Charles
James A. Watson — Lake Charles
David L. White — Zachary
Sean E. Williams — Covington

2018 Law Student Pro Bono Award

Ahmed Soussi — LSU
Mary Kate Richardson — Loyola
Fatima Munn — Southern
Kirby Kenny — Tulane

2018 Friend of Pro Bono Award

Jason A. Matt — Lafayette

2018 Century Club Award

The Access to Justice Committee recognized pro bono volunteers who contributed 100 or more hours of pro bono legal services during the 2017 calendar year — Kyle M. Brennan, New Orleans; Tinashe E. Chimwaza, Alexandria; James Craig Diamond, Covington; and Adrejia L. Boutte Swafford, New Orleans.