

Pro Bono attorneys to be honored for service Oct. 27

October 26, 2010

Mississippi Supreme Court Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. and Mississippi Bar President Nina Stubblefield Tollison will speak Wednesday, Oct. 27, at a reception honoring attorneys, law firms and students who have given free legal services to assist low-income people. The reception is from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the Mississippi Bar Center at 643 North State Street in Jackson.

The reception is part of the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project's celebration of National Pro Bono Week.

Former Supreme Court Justice and Bar President Reuben V. Anderson and Capital Area Bar Association President Roy D. Campbell III will announce the Annual Fund Campaign to benefit the Volunteer Lawyers Project. Anderson and Campbell are co-chairs of the fund raising campaign, which has a goal of \$50,000.

The funds will be used to help recruit more volunteer lawyers, sustain and support MVLP as it responds to increasing numbers of people needing legal assistance, provide MVLP legal clinics across the state, provide "Know Your Rights" presentations, and assist poor people whose inability to pay filing fees could impede their access to the courts.

The Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project is a non-profit, cooperative effort of the Mississippi Bar, Mississippi Center for Legal Services and North Mississippi Rural Legal Services. Low income Mississippians whose civil legal needs cannot be met by the two Legal Services entities are referred to the Volunteer Lawyers Project, where staff attempt to match them to private lawyers who are willing to provide pro bono legal representation.

Volunteer lawyers handle civil cases including divorce, child custody, child support, guardianships, bankruptcy matters and landlord tenant issues, among others.

In 2009, MVLP assisted almost 11,500 poor people. More volunteer attorneys are needed. The case volume has increased about 40 percent. This year, about 275 volunteer lawyers are actively engaged in cases referred through MVLP. MVLP currently has about 200 more cases awaiting assignment to attorneys, said MVLP General Counsel A. La'Verne Edney.

"This year we have more cases to be placed than ever before. There is an increasing need because of the economy," Edney said.

The reception will honor attorneys, law firms, law students and organizations which have made extraordinary efforts in pro bono service. Law firms being honored include Adams and Reese LLP; Brunini, Grantham, Grower and Hewes, PLLC; Butler, Snow, O'Mara, Stevens and Cannada, PLLC; Robinson, Biggs, Ingram, Solop and Farris, PLLC; and Wise Carter Child and Caraway, P.A. Individual attorneys being honored are Mississippi Bar Immediate Past President George Fair, Patricia Herlihy, Bradley C. Moody, Eleanor Faye Peterson, Ermea J. Russell, Leigh Vernon, and T. Murry Whalen, all of Jackson. Young lawyers recognized for their service include Debra Giles of Madison and Jackson attorneys Zandrea Yvette King, Dellwyn Smith and Damon Ramon Stevenson. Law students honored for their work are Damian Crooks and Cody Gibson, both of Mississippi College School of Law. Organizations which will be recognized are the Capital Area Bar Association and Jackson Young Lawyers.

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