



A history of helping. A future of hope.

VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROGRAM

Fall 2006 News from the VLP

VLP Celebrates 25 Years of Service



On October 25, 2006, nearly three hundred attorneys and guests attended the Volunteer Lawyers Program Annual Awards Luncheon at the newly restored and renovated Fox Theatre in downtown Tucson to celebrate the attorneys who have contributed to the Volunteer Lawyers Program since its inception 25 years ago. The silver anniversary celebration was kicked off by a visit from former United States

Senator John Edwards, a long-time advocate for equal justice and legal access for America's indigent population. Edwards currently serves as the Director of the University of North Carolina's Center on Poverty, Work and Opportunity. He appeared at the VLP Awards Luncheon to extend his personal thanks to the many attorneys and law students who volunteer their time to provide legal assistance to those who otherwise could not afford it.

A special presentation on the Fox's silver screen celebrated the tremendous growth of the program over the past twenty-five years. In 2006, over 1,200 attorneys will volunteer their services with the VLP, serving an estimated 3,200 clients in need. Law students began participating in VLP programs in 2001; this year, 150 students will participate in VLP clinics, assisting more than 1,000 clients. Since its establishment, VLP has helped more than 22,000 clients.

For more information, please visit [the VLP's website](http://theVLPswebsite.com).

Thank you to the generous sponsors of this event:

- » Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education
- » Arizona Jury Research
- » Hon. Gus Aragon
- » Tom Berning & Nancy O'Neill
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- » Waterfall, Economidis, Caldwell, Hanshaw & Villamana, P.C.



helping clients

During the third quarter of 2006, the VLP opened 699 new cases. Of these, 582 were from Pima County and 117 were rural cases. Currently, the VLP has 1,104 open cases.

VLPArizona.org



Cochise County VLP 25th Anniversary Celebration

This year the Volunteer Lawyers Program (VLP) will celebrate 25 years of bringing hope and justice to the low-income residents of Cochise County. This milestone will be commemorated at the Annual Cochise County Bar Holiday Party, which is co-hosted by the Bar and the VLP. Awards will be presented at the event by Cochise County Superior Court Presiding Judge Wallace R. Hoggatt to the attorneys and community organizations who have made a significant contribution to the delivery of free legal services to the poor. The party will take place from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. on Friday, December 8, 2006, at Café Roka in Bisbee.

VLP Advocates News

The spring semester will be busy for the VLP Advocates Program. As the pool of law student volunteers grows, so does our dedication to finding exciting opportunities in which they can participate. In addition to the existing student programs, the VLP will launch three new pilot projects for student volunteers during the spring of 2007.

New Pilot Projects

- » **Community Education Outreach Pilot** The VLP will launch a community education and outreach program in early 2007. Students and volunteer attorneys will visit local agencies that serve populations that qualify for legal services. The students will give a presentation outlining the services offered by the VLP. After the presentation, an administrative intake specialist will gather information from the attendees and open files for potential clients on site. Students will also hand out a wealth of resource information. If there are situations in which we can help attendees further, VLP staff will follow up with whatever may be required.

- » **Intake & Interviewing Pilot** Under the supervision of an attorney, law students will interview clients who walk in to the office and have a domestic relations or landlord tenant matter. The students will gain valuable interviewing skills and learn how an attorney determines where to direct a client based on the factual background of the case. Students will be the first contact with legal services that these individuals have and will offer hope where there has been little to none.

- » **Juvenile Court** The VLP is working with the staff at Juvenile Court to determine whether a child support pilot will be possible. Next semester, law students will take part in 4 or 5 sessions where they will interview litigants who may qualify for child support orders as a result of being involved in a dependency or delinquency matter. The sessions will serve as an assessment tool to determine need, client base and pilot potential. We look forward to a positive outcome and continued program planning with Juvenile Court.

Child Support Project

After a brief hiatus, the VLP is very excited to restart the Child Support Project at Superior Court in its new incarnation. Beginning January 29, 2007, and each Monday, Wednesday and Friday thereafter, law students, under the supervision of a volunteer attorney, will meet with self-represented litigants to assist with the calculation of child support. Eighty percent of pro per litigants seen at the Child Support Project have calculated their child support incorrectly. On average, participation in the Project increases a client's child support by \$200 per month.

New Grant Applications

Earlier this month the VLP submitted a grant request to the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education. The VLP submitted the request in the Law Related Education category. If awarded, the grant funds would cover the technology and equipment costs associated with the VLP's new Community Education Program.

In December, the VLP will also submit an application for funds from the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona. If granted, the funds will support the VLP student programs.

Statewide VLP Work

In an effort to increase the stature and visibility of pro bono, the three VLP directors in Arizona have joined together to propose that the Arizona Supreme Court establish a new annual award for one outstanding volunteer attorney each year beginning in 2007. An award from the Supreme Court will provide a new way to recognize an exceptional volunteer attorney who may have already received all currently available honors, will encourage more attorneys to volunteer, and will increase retention of volunteer attorneys by increasing the visibility and stature of pro bono in the state. If accepted, the proposal calls for the new award to be announced in April 2007 during Access to Justice Month and be presented at the Supreme Court during Law Week in May.

VLP Bids A Fond Farewell

The staff of the VLP would like to extend their thanks and best wishes to SALA Executive Director Tom Berning who will leave the program at the end of the month to begin his new position as a City Court Magistrate.

Many Thanks!

The staff of the VLP would like to thank all of our volunteers, funders, board members, and supporters for making 2006 the most successful year in VLP history. We wish you and your families a happy holiday season and a hopeful new year. We look forward to working with you all in 2007!



Questions or comments? E-mail Michele Mirto at mmirto@sazlegalaid.org or call 520.623.9465, ext. 4171.

The VLP is a joint program of Southern Arizona Legal Aid and the Pima County Bar Association.