



A history of helping. A future of hope.

VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROGRAM

September 2008

News from the VLP

New Space

After 16 years, Southern Arizona Legal Aid, Inc., better known as SALA, has moved its main office and administrative center, including the Volunteer Lawyers Program. The new offices are located at **2343 East Broadway Blvd., Suite 200 on the second floor of the Continental Building.**

The new space is on a bus line and also provides ample free parking for clients and volunteers alike (available in the building parking lot, as well as in the church parking lot behind the building). The new building also offers additional conference room space for VLP clinics and meetings.



helping clients

In the first eight months of 2008, the VLP opened 1,700 new cases. Of these, 1,301 were for clients who reside in Pima County. 399 were for clients who reside in the eight rural counties served by SALA. In addition, the VLP closed 1,505 cases during this same time period.

VLPArizona.org

Upcoming Events

SALA Open House

Southern Arizona Legal Aid, Inc. (SALA) is holding an Open House at their new location on **Thursday, September 18, 2008 from 3:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m.** Please join us for food and refreshments at:

The Continental Building

2343 E. Broadway Blvd., Suite 200 | Tucson, AZ 85719

Please RSVP to Norma at 520.623.9465 Ex. 4131 or

nmackenzie@salegalaid.org.



Ethics CLE

Creating Leadership: A Guide to Ethics, Honor and Personal Leadership

Presented by James J. Belanger, Of Counsel Cheifetz Iannitelli Marcolini, PC

Friday, November 7, 2008

Tucson » 10:00 – 11:30

Casa Grande » 1:30 – 3:00

For more information or to sign up please view VLP website at <http://www.vlparizona.org/CLE.htm>

VLP Awards Luncheon

Thursday, November 20, 2008 at the Marriott University Park with Elliot Glicksman, Master of Ceremonies. Look for more information soon!

Your Own Super-Power

By Stacy Rupprecht Butler

Iron Man, Batman, Hancock. Think you have nothing in common with the caped crusaders storming the movie theaters this summer? Think again. As an attorney, you have a special power that you share with only a few: the power to use your skill and talent to make a difference in the lives of impoverished Arizonans who have nowhere to turn for legal assistance.



Every day in Pima County, hundreds of people seek assistance from civil legal aid programs: a woman lost in the legal process of divorcing her abusive spouse; a grandparent struggling to obtain guardianship over his or her grandchild; a single parent unsure of his or her rights in a landlord-tenant issue. They are people who need heroes.

Some of these people are rescued just in time. Currently, more than 1,200 attorneys volunteer their time with the Volunteer Lawyers Program, a division of Southern Arizona Legal Aid. VLP manages intake and screening for Pima County residents living below poverty level who seek legal assistance but cannot be assisted through Southern Arizona Legal Aid. The VLP then matches clients with volunteer attorneys willing to provide *pro bono* legal assistance. These volunteer lawyers are larger-than-life heroes to their clients – for a person feeling lost in the civil legal system, a volunteer lawyer is stronger, faster ... and able to leap legal hurdles in a single bound.

Unfortunately, as Arizona's population grows, so does the number of Pima County residents living in poverty. Many people in need are turned away due to inadequate resources and lack of volunteers.

So VLP is looking for a few new superheroes this fall. In September, all three of Arizona's Volunteer Lawyers Programs will participate in Arizona's first statewide recruitment campaign in more than five years. The campaign will target attorneys who practice in Arizona, but who do not currently participate in the VLP.

And like any true superhero, a volunteer attorney need not quit his or her day job to find time for acts of derring-do. VLP offer an expansive range of opportunities to assist indigent clients. Through VLP, volunteers can donate a few hours at a clinic, supervise law students as they assist clients or represent a client from beginning to end. VLP offers training, mentoring and encouragement (capas and tights are not included).

So if you remember the mighty success achieved when Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Flash and the Green Lantern all teamed up on the Justice League of America, take this opportunity to join an elite fighting force. You are already qualified just by doing what you do. Go ahead, be a hero. Just by being a lawyer.

To join the Volunteer Lawyers Program today, contact:

Michele Mirto,

Volunteer Lawyers Program | 2343 E. Broadway Blvd., #200 | Tucson, AZ 85719
(520) 623-9465, ext. 4171 | mmirto@sazlegalaid.org



Volunteer: Lisa Schriener Lewis

Firm: DeConcini McDonald Yetwin & Lacy, P.C.

Location: Tucson , Arizona.

What she does: She first became involved with VLP as a law student. Now an experienced attorney, she supervises and mentors current students working in VLP domestic-relations and child-support clinics. She also accepts family law and domestic violence cases herself.

Awards & Recognition

On June 18th, the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education honored eighteen SALA VLP attorneys as part of the **Top 50 Pro Bono Attorneys in Arizona**. The awards were presented by Chief Justice McGregor during a reception at La Paloma in Tucson as part of the state bar convention. Many of the attorneys nominated by the VLP were recognized by the Foundation for their work with victims of domestic violence.

The awards were first instituted in 2001 by the Foundation. The 2008 honorees were selected for giving tirelessly to provide legal services to low-income clients. Their selection was based on such factors as the number of pro bono cases accepted and hours donated, indicators of overall commitment to pro bono work. SALA VLP attorneys honored include **Larry Adamson, Juan Flores, Jeannie Geiser, Charles George, Anne Graham-Bergin, Steve Itkin, Barry Kirschner, Albert Lassen, Patrick Ledger, Kate McMillan, Jim Sakrison (pictured above right), Skip Skinner, Tom Slutes, Spencer Smith, Alan Solot, Ron Sommer, Merle Turchik, and David West.**



Commissioner Frederic Dardis, a long time supporter of the VLP and current co-chair of the VLP's Advisory Board, was also honored at the reception as the recipient of the **Foundation for Justice Award**. The award is presented to the attorney who has devoted expertise and time to changing the justice system to promote access and opportunity for those most vulnerable. Commissioner Dardis has devoted his career to assuring that the courts are available to all who need them. Immediately after his swearing in, Comm. Dardis began work on many innovative pro bono initiatives that have since become permanent fixtures in our legal community. These initiatives link vital partners including the court, the law school, the VLP, and funders. The first of these initiatives, the Child Support Project, was launched in 2001. Through the project, volunteer attorneys supervise law students as they meet with unrepresented litigants prior to final divorce hearings in Superior Court. Comm. Dardis and the Family Law Bench volunteer their time to train law students for the Child Support Project. He then set his sights on probate court and in 2005 launched a Guardianship of Minor Project. Under the supervision of a volunteer attorney, students meet with unrepresented clients at their guardianship hearings and offered their recommendations to court as to whether the client should be awarded a guardianship. In addition to his tangible contributions in the fields of pro bono and access to the courts, Comm. Dardis also provides strength, wisdom, and support to the VLP staff on a daily basis. These immeasurable gifts are treasured assets and the secret to the program's success.



Student Update

Summer Wrap Up

On Saturday, August 23rd, Judge Fred Dardis opened his home and along with Lily Shafer hosted the VLP's end of summer event. The event, with a Mexican Luau theme, was held to thank all of the law students who volunteered their time with the VLP during the summer of 2008. The festivities were attended by students, volunteer attorneys, judges, friends and family.

Fall Volunteers

The VLP recruited and trained 57 law students during the first week of September. The students will volunteer with the VLP Advocates program during September, October and November. The students will participate in a variety of clinics that include the Bankruptcy Reaffirmation Clinic, the Domestic Relations Follow Up Clinic, the Child Support Clinic, and the Guardianship of Minor Court Project. Over the course of the fall, the VLP anticipates that the students, supervised by volunteer attorneys, will assist several hundred clients.

In addition to the law student volunteers, the VLP recruited and trained four undergraduate students will participate in the VLP's Outreach Clinic. Under the supervision of a volunteer attorney, undergraduate pre-law students will give informative presentations to agencies that serve the poor in Tucson. The presentations consist of valuable information regarding the type of services offered by the Volunteer Lawyers Program and Southern Arizona Legal Aid.

The VLP would like to thank all of the students for their interest in the program and all of those attorneys and judges who participated in the training of the new volunteers, including Heather Strickland, Scott Gan, Hon. Lori Jones, Hon. Amy Hubbel, Skip Skinner, and Lisa Lewis.

Mileage Deduction for Volunteers

Did you know that the IRS allows volunteers to deduct **14 cents per mile** when they use their vehicle to support a charitable mission? The SALA VLP is recognized by the IRS as a charitable organization. So please, keep track of your mileage when traveling to and from the VLP for clinics or seminars.

Staff Corner

Anniversaries

Michele Ellis

Michele joined the VLP team in July of 2006. On July 17th, she celebrated two years with the program. Michele coordinates the VLP's Divorce with Children, Divorce without Children, Paternity, and Domestic Relations Follow-Up Clinics.

Baude de Ramirez

September 17, 2008, will mark the end of Baude's first year with the VLP. As an Administrative Assistant and Outreach Coordinator, Baude runs the VLP's Child Support Clinic, Bankruptcy Reaffirmation Clinic, Guardianship Clinic, Intake Clinic, Guardianship Court Project, Community Outreach Program, and the new Wills Project.

Randi Burnett

On September 24, 2008, Randi will celebrate one year with the VLP. As the VLP's Student Coordinator and Staff Attorney, Randi manages the student based clinics which gives her the opportunity to get to know the over 100 students that volunteer with the VLP each year. With her guidance, the VLP has developed several new clinic opportunities and continued the success of the student program.

David McDaniel

The VLP welcomes David McDaniel. David is an attorney who recently relocated to Tucson. He is volunteering in the VLP office several days a week. David is providing direct representation to clients and will participate in the supervision of law students in VLP clinics. Welcome, David!



Welcome New Intern, Joseph Yee

The VLP welcomes new volunteer, Joseph Yee. Joseph will volunteer with the VLP on Thursdays and will assist staff with a variety of projects. Joseph comes to the VLP as a graduate of the University of Arizona where he received a B.S. in Molecular Cellular Biology. Joseph plans to attend law school in the future. In his spare time, he enjoys sports, graphic novels, reading and singing. Welcome, Joseph!

Welcome Back VLP Volunteer, Linda Huffman

The VLP extends a warm welcome back to Linda Huffman! Linda has volunteered with the VLP for a number of years helping staff with administrative tasks and project work. Linda was unable to volunteer during the course of the summer, but has returned this fall. The staff is thrilled to have her back. Welcome back, Linda!

Goodbye & Thank you to Summer Interns

In addition to the many attorney and law student volunteers that worked so hard to help so many clients in need this summer, the VLP was especially fortunate to have two outstanding student interns who dedicated their summers to helping those most in need in our communities. It's fall now and the interns have returned to their studies, but their impact on staff and clients will not soon be forgotten.



Christine Poorten

Christine worked with the VLP for four weeks over the course of the summer. She dedicated her time to assisting program staff with its upcoming recruitment campaign, organizing marketing materials as well as a variety of other projects for VLP. Christine was hardworking and a pleasure to work with. Although she has returned to high school for her senior year, the VLP is hopeful that we will be able to persuade Christine to volunteer again soon. She is missed!

Max Wedel

Max Wedel worked as a student volunteer for the VLP on a full time basis for twelve weeks during the summer of 2008. Max was the VLP's go-to guy for high tech projects. Max also performed child support calculations for divorce and paternity clients, entered client data into databases and produced Excel reports, assisted VLP staff and volunteer attorneys in all student based clinics, created a professional PowerPoint presentation that will be used for volunteer recruitment, helped the VLP prepare for its recruitment campaign, created a large domestic relations forms database that is well organized and easily accessible to staff members, and researched website payment software that the VLP can utilize in accepting donations via our website. Max also created a brochure bank for the VLP. This bank contains all of the programs brochures, and several brochures from other organizations, in one organized and easily accessible location. He also recreated many of the brochures on the computer so that they can be easily updated in the future.

Max was a godsend. His work was of the highest quality. He was incredibly efficient, and was an absolute pleasure to work with. The work Max performed this summer will have a lasting impact on the program and will help the VLP unit better serve our clients in the future.

Special Thanks

The VLP would like to send out a special thank you to the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education. The Foundation sponsored the VLP's statewide recruitment campaign that will be launched on September 15th. But in addition to their financial support, the Foundation has partnered with the VLP to assist the program and ensure that the campaign is a success. All



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.



Volunteer Lawyers Program of Southern Arizona Legal Aid, Inc.
2343 E. Broadway Blvd., Suite 200
Tucson, Arizona 85719
520.623.9465