

LA Justice Community Conference Report

October 25, 2013

To: ATJ Policy Committee
From: Jonathan Rhodes, ATJ Projects Counsel

October 18, 2013

The Louisiana Justice Community Conference is an annual statewide conference that provides substantive legal training for those attorneys providing legal services to the poor. The event provides these legal service and public interest attorneys with the opportunity to obtain comprehensive education, otherwise unavailable through most CLE providers. It encourages strengthening of partnerships among the key players in the civil justice system. Through plenary sessions, training workshops and special programs the conference has for ten years provided a wide range of important learning and networking experiences for all attendees.

For the 10th annual conference, our programming recognized the past decade of legal service work while looking ahead to the future of our justice community. The “Looking Ahead” track focused on where our legal service community is going, with sessions on Innovative Delivery Systems, Justice Community Collaborations, Technology and how lawyers can manage their educational debt as they embark on what we hope will be long careers in public interest law. Trainings were also developed by six substantive law task forces, and practice skills sessions were taught by leading members of the American College of Trial Lawyers and the National Institute for Trial Advocacy. At the request of the Legal Services Children in Need of Care attorneys we included a one day track on CINC issues to help satisfy 6 accreditation hours. Additionally, Louisiana Appleseed organized a Mortgage Services Settlement training pre-conference for attorneys providing services under that program.

Each year the conference grows bigger and better, both in terms of attendance and programs offered. This year was no exception, with 139 attorneys registered for two days of training, networking, meetings and pre-conferences. We had participants from the three legal service programs, as well as a variety of nonprofit public interest firms such as the Advocacy Center, Greater New Orleans Fair Housing, AIDS Law and Mental Health Advocates.

The conference kicked off with a welcome from the Presidents of the Louisiana Bar Foundation and the Louisiana State Bar Association, followed by an inspiring keynote address from Donald North, former director of clinical programs at Southern University Law Center. A networking reception on Thursday evening allowed participants the opportunity to unwind and get to know each other. On Friday, we recognized the careers of services of the many dedicated advocates

in our justice community during a lunchtime presentation and discussion with long time program directors about the future of legal services.