

# Focus on *Access to Justice*

For more information, visit [www.lsba.org/atj](http://www.lsba.org/atj).

## ATJ Commission's Building Bridges Committee recruits re-entry court volunteers

The Louisiana Access to Justice Commission's Building Bridges Committee hosted its second CLE on June 29 with Southeast Louisiana Legal Services and the Northshore Pro Bono Project to recruit attorney volunteers for the Re-Entry Court Collaborative Law-yeering Project (Project).

The Re-Entry Court Program was started in 2010 by Judge Arthur L. Hunter, Jr. and Judge Laurie A. White to reduce recidivism and barriers for people leaving prison. The program, now in 13 jurisdictions throughout the state, and expanding, provides moral rehabilitation and vocational training through the Offender Rehabilitation & Workforce Development Program at the Louisiana State Penitentiary and, more recently, at the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women.

The Project, launched in January 2017,




Judge William J. (Rusty) Knight with the 22nd Judicial District Court discussed the Re-Entry Court Program with prospective attorney volunteers at the June 29 CLE.

works with re-entry courts, civil legal aid providers and attorney volunteers to address the gap in legal services available to people sentenced to Louisiana re-entry courts in Orleans, Jefferson, St. Tammany and Washing-

ton parishes.

The CLE training is the first step in recruitment, in which prospective attorney volunteers learn about the highest priority legal needs of re-entry court participants and how they can help. Those interested are connected with the administrating legal aid organization — Justice and Accountability Center of Louisiana for the Orleans and 24th Judicial District Court, and Northshore Pro Bono Project for the 22nd Judicial District. From there, they are matched with a participant to address a particular legal need. The legal needs range from driver's license reinstatements, child support, consumer or tax matters. Attorneys are eligible to receive CLE credit for the pro bono representation provided.

For information about this program and how to get involved, email [amy.duncan@lsba.org](mailto:amy.duncan@lsba.org). 



## LAWYERS IN LIBRARIES

### October 23-28, 2017



*Louisiana lawyers are proud to partner with Louisiana libraries to help address the legal needs of our communities.*

On October 23-28, 2017, the Louisiana Library Association and the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) will sponsor "Lawyers in Libraries" events across the state in support of the National Pro Bono Celebration. Attorney volunteers will provide "Ask-a-Lawyer" sessions, or educational presentations, free of charge to library patrons.

**WE NEED YOUR HELP to be the Lawyer in your local Library.**

To participate in a "Lawyers in Libraries" event, contact the LSBA Access to Justice Department at (504)619-0106 or (800)421-5722, ext. 106, or email [Nicole.Louque@lsba.org](mailto:Nicole.Louque@lsba.org). More info on the project can be found at: [www.LouisianaLawyersinLibraries.org](http://www.LouisianaLawyersinLibraries.org)

Special thanks to all the participating attorneys helping to make this project a success.

# LIFT Immigration Bond Project recognizes first program graduate

Alexandria attorney Tinashe E. Chimwaza received a Certificate of Completion for his work in the LIFT (Legal Innovators for Tomorrow) Immigration Bond Project. Launched in collaboration with The Pro Bono Project and the Louisiana Immigration Working Group in January 2016, the Immigration Bond Project was created based on the need for access to legal representation in bond cases in central Louisiana.

The centrally located immigration court, Oakdale, ranks second for the highest number of detainee adjudications in the country, yet the detainees are reported as having the third lowest representation rate in the country at 6 percent. Access to representation greatly impacts a detainee's case. With an attorney, 44 percent get released on bond versus the 11 percent released without an attorney.

LIFT, a legal incubator program, was launched in April 2014 to support new lawyers who develop solo or small-firm practices that provide legal services to underserved communities. The LIFT program matches public-interest solo legal practitioners with clients who have critical unmet legal needs and provides new attorneys with the support and resources to develop a viable and sustainable public-interest solo practice.

During the 18-month program, Chimwaza



Alexandria attorney Tinashe E. Chimwaza, center, received a Certificate of Completion for his work in the LIFT (Legal Innovators for Tomorrow) Immigration Bond Project. From left, Amy E. Duncan, Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) Access to Justice Department; Kathleen M. Legendre, The Pro Bono Project; Chimwaza; LSBA President-Elect Barry H. Grodsky; and Jennifer Rizzo-Choi, The Pro Bono Project.

za provided more than 150 hours of pro bono representation in 21 bond cases while developing his immigration law practice, Tinashe Law, L.L.C. He took advantage of the technology trainings and free resources provided by incorporating these tools into his practice early on to increase efficiency and the quality of the services he provides his clients.

Although the program has ended for him, Chimwaza has agreed to pay it forward by offering mentorship to the incoming LIFT attorney participant. The Louisiana State Bar Association and the Pro Bono Project are currently in discussions about continuing the program based on the unmet need for critical legal representation in the central area. 📌

## More LSBA attorney volunteers sought for participation in LA.FreeLegalAnswers.org

The online pro bono website *LA.FreeLegalAnswers.org* connects low-income individuals with attorneys. Through the website, attorney volunteers are able to log in whenever and wherever they like and anonymously respond to legal questions submitted by individuals who could not otherwise afford to consult an attorney.

The Louisiana State Bar Association is seeking more attorney volunteers.

The American Bar Association provides malpractice insurance for any legal advice given through the site.

In order to qualify for the site, users



must meet certain income eligibility requirements — must be age 18 or older; not currently in jail or prison; have a household income within 250 percent of the federal poverty guidelines; and have less than \$6,000 in assets.

The LSBA is partnering in this initiative as another means to expand legal ser-

vices to the poor or working poor in the state who currently cannot be assisted by the established civil legal aid community for various reasons — federal restrictions on income eligibility; restrictions on accepted case types; and/or logistical challenges in accessing legal services.

To volunteer or learn more, go to the LSBA's Access to Justice webpage, [www.lsba.org/atj](http://www.lsba.org/atj). Or contact Rachael Mills with the Access to Justice Department at (504)619-0104 or email [rachael.mills@lsba.org](mailto:rachael.mills@lsba.org). 📌