

Focus on *Access to Justice*

For more information, visit www.lsba.org/atj.

14th annual Louisiana Justice Community Conference focuses on “ATJ Heroes”

The Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) hosted the 14th annual Louisiana Justice Community Conference in October in Baton Rouge. The two-day event offers time to focus on supporting access to justice through relevant poverty law training, networking and collaborations for public interest attorneys throughout the state.

This year’s conference theme was “Access to Justice Heroes.” The conference showcased those “heroes,” often unrecognized, who work to change the lives of Louisiana’s indigent population through their efforts of providing critical civil legal aid. Leading up to the conference, the LSBA ran a social media campaign to spotlight individ-



The Legal Service Innovation Award was presented to Sexual Trauma Awareness & Response (STAR) for its legal program. From left, Brittany M. Tassin, Cherita R. McNeal, Morgan P. Lamandre and Alainna R. Mire.

ual attorneys from civil legal aid providers who are dedicated and passionate about their work. Lewis M. Gladney, an attorney with Acadiana Legal Services Corp. and one of the heroes highlighted, has dedicated more than 35 years to a career in public interest.

LSBA President Dona Kay Renegar delivered a powerful keynote address to kick off the conference. As a former legal aid attorney, she spoke about her experience representing survivors of domestic violence in Acadiana Legal Service Corp.’s Alexandria office right after graduating law school. In her remarks, she recognized the vital role legal aid attorneys play in meeting the needs of residents and the ways in which the access to justice community are working to ensure stable funding for legal aid programs in Louisiana. She encouraged attendees to remain actively involved in the bar association activities to bring a voice to the voiceless.

The Justice Conference is also a time to highlight the exceptional work of individual attorneys and programs that have increased access to legal representation through excellent advocacy or innovative programming. To this end, two civil legal aid awards were presented.

The Legal Service Excellence in Advocacy Award was presented to Hannah D. Adams, staff attorney in the housing unit at Southeast Louisiana Legal Services, for her work preventing evictions, avoiding subsidy termination and representing low-



Hannah D. Adams, staff attorney in the housing unit at Southeast Louisiana Legal Services, received the Legal Service Excellence in Advocacy Award.

income and disabled clients, resulting in an economic impact of nearly \$1.3 million.

The Legal Service Innovation Award was presented to Sexual Trauma Awareness & Response (STAR) for its legal program. The program was established in 2015 to provide holistic and comprehensive legal services to sexual assault survivors, free of charge.

In addition to the regularly scheduled programming, the Child in Need of Care (CINC) Task Force, chaired by Danika A. Benjamin of Legal Aid of North Louisiana, hosted a six-hour pre-conference CLE program for CINC professionals.

The LSBA hosted a networking event that included door prizes and stand-up comedy performed by Southeast Louisiana Legal Services attorneys Amanda J. Golob and Hardell H. Ward.

The conference hosted participants from the state’s legal service programs and non-profit public interest firms, including the Advocacy Center, Greater New Orleans Fair Housing, Louisiana Civil Justice Center, Pro Bono Project, the Baton Rouge Bar Association, Crescent Care, Southwest Louisiana Law Center, Mental Health Advocacy Center and Project Save. 📌



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LIFT welcomes two Shreveport attorneys in new collaborative program

The Louisiana State Bar Association's legal incubator program, Legal Innovators for Tomorrow (LIFT), welcomes Felicia M. Hamilton and Ebonee Rhodes Norris to the new program launched, in partnership with the Justice and Accountability Center (JAC), in Shreveport.

LIFT is designed to address the legal needs of underserved and underrepresented populations in Louisiana by supporting new attorneys in building viable and sustainable public interest solo practices. This project, in particular, focuses on reducing barriers for youth (ages 18-24) who are reintegrating to their communities after incarceration. Through their work, Hamilton and Norris will provide representation in expungements, public benefits and housing law that will ultimately reduce recidivism, promote public safety, and create positive results in communities.

While in LIFT, Hamilton and Norris will receive free tools, training, resources and a stipend to provide pro bono representation for those eligible. JAC leads this project under a program called Juvenile Re-Entry



**Ebonee Rhodes
Norris**



**Felicia M.
Hamilton**

Assistance Program (JRAP) and provides mentorship with substantive law training to the participating attorneys. Throughout the 15-month program, JAC and the new LIFT Fellows will host five legal clinics, in which individuals aged 24 and under who live or could live in public or Section 8 housing will have an opportunity for all expungement costs to be covered by a generous grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Housing Authority for the City of Shreveport.

To learn more about the events, go to: www.jaclouisiana.org. 📱

Online Modest Means Directory coming soon!

The Louisiana State Bar Association's (LSBA) Access to Justice Commission formed the Modest Means Committee in 2016 to examine ways in which the legal profession can meet the growing need for affordable legal services for those falling into the "justice gap" — *i.e.*, ineligible for free legal services but below 400 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.

After researching national and local modest means programs and surveying Louisiana lawyers to determine the availability of affordable legal services, the committee proposed an Online Modest Means Directory to connect attorneys offering discounted legal services with people who need them. This directory will provide a listing of attorneys who offer affordable legal services — in the form of sliding scale, reduced hourly, flat fees or other alternative fee arrangements — by parish and practice area on a page on the LSBA's website.

Attorneys who wish to be listed on the website will be required to complete a one-hour, on-demand CLE through the LSBA's online CLE programming and agree to the terms and conditions listed.

The public interested in accessing the list also must agree to certain terms and conditions and must verify that household income falls below 400 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.

The directory is scheduled for launch at the end of 2017. To learn more about this directory, go to: www.lsba.org/ATJCommission/Modest-Means.aspx. 📱

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Providing Justice for ALL

“Volunteering sharpens my skills because I face new issues that I do not deal with on a daily basis in my practice. Volunteers' help is appreciated by the patron participants of Lawyers in Libraries. Lawyer volunteers make laypeople less fearful and worried about legal issues by pointing them in the right direction. It is so rewarding to reduce people's stress on an altruistic basis.”

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