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Louisiana Lawyers Serve the Public and the Public Should Know It

There are literally thousands of Louisiana lawyers engaged in service to the public and the profession. These are services for which the lawyers receive little or no monetary compensation. While I am writing this message, there are lawyers throughout the state volunteering their time and effort to represent the legal interests of less fortunate Louisiana citizens who could not afford an attorney and have no other source of representation.

There are still other lawyers who are participating in the work of committees, councils, foundations and boards to enhance the development of our communities, to improve access to justice, to self-regulate the ethical conduct of attorneys, to provide assistance to those who suffer from debilitating conditions that adversely affect the lives and practices of attorneys and their families, to provide care for children who have been abused or mistreated, and to enhance the educational opportunities provided through our schools, to name just a few. According to Albert Schweitzer, “The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.” As a profession, we should be proud that so many of our fellow attorneys “get it!”

The Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA), along with the Louisiana Bar Foundation, our courts and many local and specialty bars, provides members of our profession with numerous opportunities to join together in the organized pursuit of worthy projects designed to serve the public and the profession. The opportunities provided by the LSBA alone are countless — ranging from professionalism programs in the law schools to the Young Lawyers Division’s Wills for Heroes Program and the Community Action Committee’s Secret Santa Project, from committees on Access to Justice and Diversity and Outreach to a Committee on the Profession, from the Lawyers Assistance Program, Inc. (LAP) to the Louisiana Center for Law and Civic

Education. There are hundreds of lawyers who take advantage of these opportunities.

It is unfortunate that the general public does not know how much the legal profession does for the citizens of Louisiana. For the most part, the substantial efforts of the thousands of Louisiana lawyers who do the tens of thousands of hours of good work go unsung except within the profession itself. I have attended legal gatherings throughout the state where we have acknowledged lawyers for their outstanding contributions to the betterment of the public, their communities and the profession, but little has been reported outside of those meetings. For example, back in May of this year, I had the personal privilege of participating in a ceremony at the Louisiana Supreme Court in a courtroom full of attorneys who were being honored for their many hours of pro bono service. It was a great event for the participants and their families but it received little or no fanfare by the media or the public. That is a shame!

A recent survey by the Pew Research Center continues to show lawyers at the bottom of professions in terms of public appreciation for their contributions to society. However, the more the public knows about the good works of our profession, the more likely it is that the public’s perception of lawyers will improve. While there may be a view of some in the media that good news does not make for good headlines, there are those of us who believe that such a viewpoint can

be overcome with perseverance. Wayne Gretzky once said, "Statistically, you miss 100% of the shots you don't take." So, let's take a shot or two.

Our first shot is the establishment of LSBA Regional Panels and Citizen Lawyer Awards. Each panel will be headed by your Board of Governors' representative and will consist of lawyers within each region. One of the primary objectives of these panels is to identify the exceptional Citizen Lawyers throughout the state whose contributions to their communities deserve special recognition. The LSBA will make every effort to see that the accomplishments of those lawyers are rewarded and publicized, not just within the profession but within the communities


that have benefitted from their efforts.

Our second shot is a Louisiana Day of Service on Thursday, Oct. 23. The LSBA, in conjunction with local bars, pro bono organizations and civil legal aid organizations, will seek to mobilize lawyers across the state to support and advance the Legal Education and Assistance Program (LEAP) that has been developed in cooperation with the Louisiana Library Association. The program itself is designed to deliver legal resources and information via public libraries. An important aspect of the LEAP project is the "lawyers in libraries" component pursuant to which the libraries will provide a venue for lawyers to address the public on specific legal issues about which patrons have inquired. On

our Day of Service, the LSBA's objective is to have at least one lawyer in a library serving the public in every parish of our great state.

Join with your fellow attorneys on the Day of Service and choose to serve. Give it a shot. Based on Dr. Schweitzer's opinion, you will "be really happy" you did.

To volunteer for Day of Service events, contact LSBA Access to Justice Administrative Assistant Nicole Louque at (800)421-5722, ext. 106, or (504)619-0106; or email nicole.louque@lsba.org. Or go to: www.LouisianaLawyersinLibraries.org.



LSBA Member Services

The mission of the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) is to assist and serve its members in the practice of law.

To this end, the LSBA offers many worthwhile programs and services designed to complement your career, the legal profession and the community. In the past several years, the legal profession has experienced many changes. The LSBA has kept up with those changes by maturing in structure and stature and becoming more diverse and competitive. As the premier organization serving Louisiana's legal profession, the LSBA is working to advance its members' goals and interests through unparalleled programming and a comprehensive benefits package. Listed below are a few benefits of membership:

Lawyers' Assistance Program

www.louisianalap.com • (866)354-9334

LAP provides confidential assistance to members of the Bar and their families who experience problems with alcohol, drugs, gambling and other addictions, as well as mental health issues. Call 1(866)354-9334 for assistance.

LSBA Professional Programs Department Services

Client Assistance Fund

cgrodsky@lsba.org

This program helps consumers by providing compensation to clients who have been defrauded by their lawyers. For more information, contact Associate Executive Director Cheri Cotogno Grodsky at cgrodsky@lsba.org or (504)619-0107.

Fastcase

www.lsba.org/fastcase

In 2005, the LSBA launched Fastcase, a free web-based legal research product that provides unlimited access to all state and federal court cases. To access the program, go to www.lsba.org and click on the Fastcase icon. For more information, contact Practice Management Counsel Shawn L. Holahan at shawn.holahan@lsba.org or (504)619-0153.

Lawyer Advertising Filing and Evaluation • rlemmler@lsba.org

This program provides screening of proposed lawyer advertising to confirm compliance with the Supreme Court's advertising rules. For information/inquiries, contact LSBA Ethics Counsel Richard P. Lemmler, Jr. at rlemmler@lsba.org or (504)619-0144.

Practice Assistance and Improvement • bking@lsba.org

As mandated by the Louisiana Supreme Court, the Bar's Practice Assistance and Improvement Program offers alternatives to discipline via its Attorney-Client Assistance Program and the Diversion Program. The Office of Disciplinary Counsel diverts eligible matters enabling these members to avoid disciplinary proceedings. For more information, contact Professional Programs Counsel for Practice Assistance William N. King at bking@lsba.org or (504)619-0109.



For more information,
visit www.lsba.org