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LSBA Recognizes Legal Professionals, Law Students, Law Firm and Public-Interest Group for Pro Bono Achievements

NEW ORLEANS — The Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA), in conjunction with the Louisiana Supreme Court, recognized the outstanding pro bono accomplishments of 13 legal professionals, four law students, a law firm and a public-interest legal organization at the 25th annual Pro Bono and Children's Law Awards Ceremony on May 25 at the Louisiana Supreme Court Building in New Orleans.

Louisiana Department of Labor Chief Judge Sheral C. Kellar and LSBA Access to Justice Committee Vice Chair Sachida R. Raman presented the awards to the 2010 award recipients.

The 2010 awards were presented in several categories. (*Award explanations and recipient profiles follow.*)

- **Friend of Pro Bono Award:** Mathile W. Abramson, Baton Rouge; Donna D. Fraiche, New Orleans; the late JoEdna P. Roberts, Baton Rouge; and Louisiana Appleseed.
- **Pro Bono Publico Award:** Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, P.C., New Orleans office; Marianna Broussard, Lafayette; Caroline McSherry "Sherry" Dolan, New Orleans; Don K. Haycraft, New Orleans; Lauren B. McKnight, New Orleans; Malcolm A. Meyer, New Orleans; Cynthia N. Reed, Baton Rouge; and Monica C. Sanchez, Metairie.
- **Career Public Interest Award:** Clifton "Cliff" R. Jackson, Jr., Lafayette.
- **David A. Hamilton Lifetime Achievement Award:** Marta-Ann Schnabel, New Orleans.
- **Children's Law Award:** Kären A. Hallstrom, River Ridge.
- **Law Student Pro Bono Award:** Lynn Austin, Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center; Nikki D. Thanos, Loyola University College of Law; Ebony N. Williams, Southern University Law Center; and Homero López, Jr., Tulane University Law School.

New to this year's awards ceremony was the presentation of the **Pro Bono Century Award**, recognizing attorneys who have shown consummate pro bono leadership by completing 100 hours of service from January 2009 through December 2009. The 2010 recipients are: **Suzanne Ecuyer Bayle**, New Orleans; **William G. Cherbonnier, Jr.**, Gretna; **Mark A. Cunningham**, New Orleans; **Caroline McSherry "Sherry" Dolan**, New Orleans; **Don K. Haycraft**, New Orleans; **Kindall Chauffe James**, New Orleans; **Catherine Elena Lasky**, New Orleans; **Simone Manuel**, New Orleans; **Lauren B. McKnight**, New Orleans; **Malcolm A. Meyer**, New Orleans; **Kerry Ann Murphy**, New Orleans; and **Mark C. Surprenant**, New Orleans.

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First conducted in 1986, the Pro Bono Awards Ceremony honors attorneys and other public-interest legal professionals who provided exceptional pro bono services to Louisiana's indigent, a population who may not otherwise have received adequate representation or access to the legal system.

"The annual Pro Bono Awards Ceremony gives the Louisiana State Bar Association the opportunity to recognize those individuals who demonstrate a passion for service," said 2009-10 LSBA President Kim M. Boyle. "With these award recipients setting a standard, justice for all in Louisiana is possible."

The **Friend of Pro Bono Award** recognizes individuals (attorneys or non-attorneys), law firms or organizations making major contributions to the enhancement and promotion of pro bono legal services to the poor.

- **2010 Recipient: Mathile W. Abramson**

Mathile W. Abramson, a partner at Kean Miller Law Firm in **Baton Rouge**, spent countless hours representing the Louisiana Bar Foundation in developing and instituting the Child In Need of Care Program for Louisiana. She is passionate in ensuring that children in the foster care system have diligent representation to protect their interests in the legal system.

- **2010 Recipient: Donna D. Fraiche**

Donna D. Fraiche practices in the health care and public policy departments of Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, P.C., New Orleans office. She manifested her commitment to health care issues and pro bono service by dedicating thousands of volunteer hours on the board of the Louisiana Recovery Authority from 2005-08, as chair of the Louisiana Health Care Commission and as a member of the Legislative Task Force on the Working Uninsured.

- **2010 Recipient: the late JoEdna P. Roberts**

The late JoEdna P. Roberts was an active member of the Baton Rouge Bar Association's Pro Bono Committee, taking cases whenever needed and volunteering at for the Thirst for Justice, Ask-A-Lawyer and Wills for Heroes programs. In total, she provided 50 hours of pro bono service for 2009 (January to May) when her health would no longer permit her to continue. She died on Nov. 14, 2009.

- **2010 Recipient: Louisiana Appleseed**

Louisiana Appleseed recruits professionals to donate pro bono time to solve problems at the root cause. The goal is to advance social justice by effecting change at the policy, or systemic, level. Louisiana Appleseed's projects seek to increase access to justice, education and opportunity.

The **Pro Bono Publico Award** recognizes attorneys or law firms providing pro bono legal services to Louisiana citizens that meet or exceed the aspirational goal of 50 hours of pro bono services per year, as established in Rule 6.1 of Louisiana's Rules of Professional Conduct.

- **2010 Recipient: Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, P.C.**

Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, P.C., with its more than 570 attorneys and public policy advisors in 15 offices throughout the southeast and in Washington, D.C., is committed to pro bono service. The firm's efforts include advocating for the homeless and organizations that serve the homeless, death penalty litigation, and providing corporate legal services to non-profit organizations.

- **2010 Recipient: Marianna Broussard**

Marianna Broussard, an associate in the Hill & Beyer, A.P.L.C., law firm in Lafayette, accepted 16 pro bono family law cases in 2009. Over the past five years, she has litigated 51 other cases involving the care and custody of children, donating an estimated 800 pro bono hours. For eight years, she received the Outstanding

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Lafayette Volunteer Lawyer (LVL) Award. She was named Outstanding Attorney in 2008, the Lafayette Bar Foundation's top honor for excellence in pro bono practice.

- **2010 Recipient: Caroline McSherry "Sherry" Dolan**

Caroline McSherry "Sherry" Dolan is the pro bono liaison in Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, P.C.'s Louisiana offices. She works closely with The Pro Bono Project in New Orleans, coordinating Baker Donelson staffing of the Homeless Experience Legal Protection (H.E.L.P.) Program, which offers legal services to the homeless.

- **2010 Recipient: Don K. Haycraft**

Don K. Haycraft is a partner in the New Orleans office of Liskow & Lewis, P.L.C. As Liskow's pro bono coordinator, he mentors several young attorneys in their pro bono endeavors. He also serves on the board of directors of The Pro Bono Project in New Orleans.

- **2010 Recipient: Lauren B. McKnight**

Lauren B. McKnight, an associate in the New Orleans office of Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, P.C., provides pro bono services to various public interest and non-profit institutes in the community, including The Pro Bono Project in New Orleans and the Metropolitan Center for Women and Children, which provides assistance to victims of domestic violence.

- **2010 Recipient: Malcolm A. Meyer**

Malcolm A. Meyer, a partner at Adams and Reese, L.L.P., in New Orleans, has devoted hundreds of hours of pro bono work focusing on heirship property issues in Louisiana. This work led to the enactment of a new law, Act No. 81, lowering probate and title-clearing costs for many low-income homeowners and protecting heir property owners from land loss, affording them better disaster recovery options, and increasing access to the wealth-generating tools commonly associated with home ownership.

- **2010 Recipient: Cynthia N. Reed**

Cynthia N. Reed, director of Alumni Affairs and Continuing Legal Education at Southern University Law Center, serves as a pro bono attorney to the Baton Rouge Bar Association, where each year she handles 25 or more free divorce, child support and custody cases.

- **2010 Recipient: Monica C. Sanchez**

Monica C. Sanchez, managing partner of The Sanchez Firm in **Metairie**, assists various local organizations that provide free legal advice to the Hispanic community, including wage clinics, local festivals and sporting events, church events and live radio messages.

The **Career Public Interest Award** recognizes individuals (attorneys or non-attorneys) in Louisiana who have devoted at least 10 years of his/her career to public-interest legal work; demonstrated excellence in his or her work; demonstrated leadership within his/her organization; and provided significant service on behalf of the poor and disenfranchised.

- **2010 Recipient: Clifton "Cliff" R. Jackson, Jr.**

Clifton "Cliff" R. Jackson, Jr. was hired in 1978 by the newly formed board of directors of Acadiana Legal Service Corporation (ALSC) in Lafayette as the firm's first administrative director, a position he held for the next 31 years before retiring in June 2009. During his exemplary tenure, the firm grew from one small office in donated space to ownership of a central office building. He oversaw the design, construction and every detail regarding the 10,000-square-foot space. ALSC's property ownership resulted in huge savings and allowed the firm to shift funds to expand legal services to the disadvantaged.

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The **David A. Hamilton Lifetime Achievement Award** recognizes a Louisiana attorney who demonstrates a commitment to the provision of legal services to the poor, has made significant contributions to enhance the pro bono movement in Louisiana over his/her lifetime, and has shown significant leadership and service on behalf of the poor and disenfranchised.

• **2010 Recipient: Marta-Ann Schnabel**

Marta-Ann Schnabel is a member of the firm O'Bryon & Schnabel, P.L.C., in New Orleans. A former LSBA president, Schnabel's contributions to access to justice issues span her entire legal career and include efforts at the local, state and national levels. A longtime member and current chair of the LSBA's Access to Justice Committee, she exhibited leadership by forming an ATJ Executive Committee to examine how the LSBA can best facilitate delivery of legal services to the indigent.

The **Children's Law Award** was developed by the LSBA's Children's Law Committee to recognize Louisiana attorneys who have provided outstanding services in the field of children's law.

• **2010 Recipient: Kären A. Hallstrom**

Kären A. Hallstrom is currently the Deputy Judicial Administrator for Children and Families with the Louisiana Supreme Court, after working for nearly 13 years as an attorney for Jefferson Parish Juvenile Court. She supervises the Supreme Court's Court Improvement Program, CASA Assistance Program and FINS Assistance Program.

The **Law Student Pro Bono Award** recognizes law students from American Bar Association- accredited law schools in Louisiana who have demonstrated dedication to providing legal services to the poor.

• **2010 Recipient: Lynn Austin**

Lynn Austin received her law degree from Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center in May 2010. She served as secretary/treasurer of the LSU Public Interest Law Society for the past two years. This past spring, she organized the first PILS Public Interest Conference and Career Fair at LSU Law Center.

• **2010 Recipient: Nikki D. Thanos**

Nikki D. Thanos is a 2010 graduate of Loyola University College of Law. She organized events to discuss the future of Charity Hospital, the legality of Israel's 2008 offensive in the Gaza strip, and the role of race in the criminal justice system. In 2008, she helped to coordinate an interpreter network to support immigrants detained in Laurel, Miss. — the largest workplace raid in U.S. history.

• **2010 Recipient: Ebony N. Williams**

Ebony N. Williams is a recent graduate of Southern University Law Center (SULC). While at SULC, she was a member of the Southern Recruitment Committee, was a volunteer coach for the Marshal Brennan high school mock trial team, and a member of the Student Bar Association Executive Committee.

• **2010 Recipient: Homero López, Jr.**

Homero López, Jr. is a third-year law student at Tulane University Law School. From the moment he arrived in New Orleans, he embraced the opportunities to help the community through pro bono legal services. He became a role model at school, recruiting students and promoting pro bono opportunities.

The Louisiana State Bar Association assists its more than 21,000 members in the practice of law. The statewide association, as part of its multi-faceted mission, promotes and maintains access to justice initiatives for the state's residents, assists the Louisiana Supreme Court in its regulation of the practice of law, upholds the honor of the courts and the profession, and supports programs that increase public understanding of and respect for the law.