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LSBA Honors Exceptional Louisiana Pro Bono Work

NEW ORLEANS—The Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) held its 38th annual Pro Bono Publico & Children’s Law Awards Ceremony on May 17 at the Louisiana Supreme Court in New Orleans. Louisiana’s seven Supreme Court Justices presided over the ceremony in an official court session to demonstrate their fervent support for pro bono and the efforts of the volunteers being honored.

Opening remarks were given by LSBA 2022-23 President Stephen I. Dwyer, Louisiana Bar Foundation 2022-23 President Alan G. Brackett and Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice John L. Weimer, who commended the award recipients for going above and beyond their professional duties to ensure access to legal services for low-income Louisianans, calling them “shining stars in the galaxy of the legal profession.”

Pro bono service is essential to ensuring that all people have access to the legal system in Louisiana, where the number of people eligible for free legal services outnumbers legal aid attorneys by 11,250 to 1. These annual awards recognize members of the legal profession who are leading the charge in closing the gap between needed legal services and available legal help.

Award recipients are listed below. (Profiles of all award recipients follow the listing.)

2023 David A. Hamilton Lifetime Achievement Award
Catherine E. Lasky, New Orleans

2023 Career Public Interest Award
Douglas F. Carey, New Orleans

2023 Children’s Law Award
Victor M. Jones, New Orleans
Loyola Law Clinic, New Orleans

2023 Pro Bono Publico Award
Cornelius Troy Hall, Baton Rouge
J. Edward McAuliffe III, New Orleans
Cynthia Mauroner Petry, Covington
Stacey D. Williams, Shreveport

**2023 LAFreeLegalAnswers.org Award**
Kathleen M. Legendre, Mandeville

**2023 Friend of Pro Bono Award**
R. Gary Higgins, Jr., Covington
Jones Walker, LLP, New Orleans
Lafayette Bar Association Young Lawyers Section, Lafayette
Dorothy C. Oliver, Harrisonburg
Lawrence W. Pettiette, Jr., Shreveport
Krishanda H. Sanders, Lake Providence
Maggie Trahan Simar, St. Martinville
Amanda T. Taylor, Ferriday
Tulane Medicolegal Partnership, New Orleans
David E. Verlander III, Monroe

**2023 Law Student Pro Bono Award**
Madeline N. Meyer, Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center
Max John, Loyola University College of Law
Theophile N. Kadia, Southern University Law Center
Raquel D. White, Tulane University Law School

**2023 Pro Bono Century Club Award**
W. Scott Brown, New Orleans
Erinn W. Neyrey, Mandeville
Amber C. Sheppard, Slidell
James F. Shuey, New Orleans
Hugh R. Straub, New Orleans
Christie L. Tournet, Mandeville

*Award recipients’ profiles by award category:*

**2023 David A. Hamilton Lifetime Achievement Award**
The David A. Hamilton Lifetime Achievement Award is the most prestigious LSBA Pro Bono Award. Nominees have demonstrated their ongoing pro bono activities through prior receipt of LSBA or other statewide pro bono awards or recognition. Only one individual is recognized each year.

**Recipient: Catherine E. (Katie) Lasky, New Orleans**

Catherine E. Lasky is the founder of Katie Lasky Law, a boutique law firm that represents businesses in litigation and provides legal advice on building a strong legal foundation. Her passion for pro bono work dates back to her early days as a lawyer, and her extensive experience in this area has enriched her personally and helped her hone her professional skills. She has accepted dozens of cases through the Pro Bono Project, represented numerous children in obtaining legal immigration status through the PB&J: Pro Bono & Juveniles Initiative, and
volunteered with various legal organizations in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Her commitment to pro bono work led her to serve on the board of directors and as chair of the Pro Bono Project. She received the 2013 LSBA Leah Hipple McKay Award for outstanding volunteerism.

2023 Career Public Interest Award

The Career Public Interest Award recognizes an individual in the state of Louisiana who has devoted at least 10 years of his/her career to public interest legal work; demonstrated excellence in the work; demonstrated leadership within the organization; and provided significant service on behalf of the poor and disenfranchised.

Recipient: Douglas F. Carey, New Orleans

Douglas F. Carey began working at New Orleans Legal Assistance Corporation (NOLAC) as a summer intern while a student at St. Augustine High School. He returned to NOLAC to intern as a law clerk after his first year of law school. In 1996, he joined Southeast Louisiana Legal Services (SLLS). He has been employed at SLLS for more than 25 years and has served as a staff attorney, managing attorney of the Family Law Unit and interim supervising attorney for the New Orleans office. He currently is the director of pro bono programs for SLLS and co-chair of the firm’s Professional Development Committee. He chaired the Louisiana Legal Services Statewide Task Force on Family Law. He served on the LSBA’s Reentry Court Task Force and co-chaired the Reentry Court Subcommittee on Child Support Issues. He is a member of the American Bar Association’s Legal Impact Network for Kin (LINK). He received a BA degree in political economy in 1991 from Tulane University and his JD degree in 1994 from Tulane Law School.

2023 Children’s Law Award

The Children’s Law Award recognizes a Louisiana attorney or Louisiana-based organization that has provided outstanding services in the field of Children’s Law.

Recipient: Victor M. Jones, New Orleans

Victor M. Jones is education counsel at the Legal Defense Fund (LDF), litigating school desegregation and other education-related civil rights cases in federal courts throughout the Deep South. Prior to his work at LDF, he was a senior supervising attorney for children’s rights at the Southern Poverty Law Center. He drafted legislation to improve the lives of disadvantaged children in Louisiana. Before becoming a public interest attorney, he was a litigation associate at multi-disciplinary law firms in New Orleans. He received a BA degree in literature from Xavier University of Louisiana, a master’s degree in education from Harvard University and a JD degree from Loyola University College of Law.

Recipient: Loyola Law Clinic, New Orleans

The Loyola Law Clinic has trained the next generation of justice lawyers for more than 50 years. Within the clinic’s children’s rights, family and youth justice sections, Professors Ramona Fernandez, Cheryl Buchert and Héctor Linares, along with clinic staff attorneys Sara Godchaux and Tobie Tranchina, train student practitioners to fiercely advocate for the interests of income-qualified youth and their families across a range of legal issues. Together, these sections provide a wide range of services, including child in need of care (CINC) cases, adoptions, unaccompanied minors, special education, delinquency representation, child support and continuing tutorship of minors.
2023 Pro Bono Publico Award

The Pro Bono Publico Award recognizes an attorney or law firm that has provided pro bono legal services to the citizens of Louisiana in excess of the aspirational goal of 50 hours of pro bono services per year, and who has demonstrated exceptional support of the ideal of access to justice.

**Recipient: Cornelius Troy Hall, Baton Rouge**

Cornelius Troy Hall is a staff attorney for Judge Gail H. Ray, 19th Judicial District Court Criminal Division. He formerly served as staff attorney for Judge Trudy M. White, 19th JDC Civil Division. He received his JD degree from Southern University Law Center and his MPA from Louisiana State University. He volunteers his time with the Baton Rouge Bar Association’s (BRBA) Pro Bono Project, drafting and notarizing small wills and answering questions about the succession process. He is a member of the 2023 BRBA Young Lawyers Section Council and 2023 vice chair of the Belly Up with the Bar Committee.

**Recipient: J. Edward McAuliffe III, New Orleans**

J. Edward McAuliffe III is an attorney in the New Orleans law firm of Mouledoux, Bland, Legrand & Brackett, LLC. His practice focuses on trucking, transportation and insurance defense. Previously, he was a prosecutor with the Orleans Parish District Attorney’s Office and worked with the Governor’s Sentencing Commission, the Louisiana State Law Institute and the Louisiana District Attorneys Association. He remains involved in the criminal justice system and recently represented a victim in obtaining maximum restitution and a civil judgment against the driver responsible for her daughter’s hit-and-run death. He also has organized programs focused on victims’ rights, including a CLE presentation aimed at educating the legal community about the rights of crime victims and witnesses.

**Recipient: Cynthia Mauroner Petry, Covington**

Cynthia Mauroner Petry maintains a private practice, providing legal representation in family law, succession and criminal cases. She is currently serving as the magistrate for the City of Covington. She has volunteered with the Pro Bono Project and continues to volunteer with Southeast Louisiana Legal Services in family law matters. She has extended her services to clients completing the 22nd JDC reentry program and volunteers with the LSBA’s Lawyers in Libraries Program. She earned a bachelor’s degree in accounting from Louisiana State University and her JD degree from LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center.

**Recipient: Stacey D. Williams, Shreveport**

Stacey D. Williams practices at the Shreveport law firm of Blanchard, Walker, O’Quin & Roberts, primarily in litigation, including appellate matters. She graduated from Duke University, then obtained her law degree from Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center. Her dedication to pro bono began with her involvement as an ex-officio member of the Shreveport Bar Foundation board, later serving as president. She is an active volunteer for the Pro Bono Project, primarily handling divorce cases. One of her achievements was in an interdiction case where she successfully had her client appointed as the administratrix of her adult brother, who has Down’s Syndrome.

2023 LA.FreeLegalAnswers.org Award

LA.FreeLegalAnswers.org is a website which allows low-income Louisianans to submit civil legal questions online which are then answered anonymously and for free by attorney volunteers. The award recognizes volunteers who have answered numerous questions through the site.

**Recipient: Kathleen M. Legendre, Mandeville**
Kathleen M. Legendre began volunteering with La.FreeLegalAnswers.org in 2017. She is in training to be a CASA volunteer and volunteers with Southeast Louisiana Legal Services’ Northshore location. She is an associate attorney for Zeringue & Associates Law Firm in Covington, practicing primarily family and estate law. She was managing attorney for The Pro Bono Project, outreach coordinator for the Louisiana Bar Foundation (LBF) and an Equal Justice Works Fellow for LBF. She received her undergraduate degree from Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Mass., and her law degree from Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center.

2023 Friend of Pro Bono Award

The Friend of Pro Bono Award recognizes individuals, law firms or organizations that have made a major contribution to the enhancement and promotion of pro bono, outside of direct legal services.

Recipient: R. Gary Higgins, Jr., Covington

Attorney R. Gary Higgins, Jr. has volunteered with the Northshore Pro Bono Project and the Southeast Louisiana Legal Services for many years. He received a BA degree from Southeastern Louisiana University and his JD degree, magna cum laude, from Southern University Law Center. He practices in the areas of commercial litigation, family law, personal injury and real estate law. He has worked with the LSBA’s Wills for Heroes Project and has conducted training for attorneys volunteering for the program that assists first responders.

Recipient: Jones Walker LLP, New Orleans

The law firm of Jones Walker LLP was recognized for significant contributions to pro bono activities and access to justice initiatives in Louisiana. The law firm was named “Pro Bono Law Firm of the Year” by the Pro Bono Project for its commitment to helping the Louisiana community through pro bono work. Jones Walker’s leadership team has been a key advocate for the pro bono model used by the Pro Bono Project since its inception, and the firm has provided financial support to local and statewide access to justice initiatives.

Recipient: Lafayette Bar Association Young Lawyers Section, Lafayette

The Lafayette Bar Association Young Lawyers Section’s pro bono initiatives include the Birdie with the Bar Golf Tournament, the Clay Shoot, the Law Day program for college students aspiring to join law school, the Wills for Heroes program and the annual mock trial tournament. The Young Lawyers Section is also dedicated to charitable work.

Recipient: Dorothy C. Oliver, Harrisonburg

Dorothy C. Oliver has served as executive director of the LaSalle Community Action Association, Inc. since 1994. She served two consecutive terms as the first female president of the state association representing 42 Community Action agencies in Louisiana. She was instrumental in securing funding from the Louisiana Workforce Commission, Community Services Block Grant Division, to offer pro bono legal services to area residents. Her work with the Louisiana Access to Justice Commission helped provide a private space for the Legal Help Access Point.

Recipient: Lawrence W. Pettiette, Jr., Shreveport

Lawrence W. (Larry) Pettiette, Jr. is a founding member of the Shreveport law firm of Pettiette, Armand, Dunkelman, Woodley & Cromwell, LLP. He graduated, summa cum laude, in 1975 from Northeast Louisiana University and received his law degree in 1978 from Emory University Law School. He served on the board of the Northwest Legal Services Corp. and has provided pro bono work for various not-for-profit organizations in the Shreveport-Bossier area.
He is a former president of the Shreveport Bar Association and the immediate past president of the Shreveport Bar Foundation. In 2022, he was awarded the Shreveport Bar Association Professionalism Award.

**Recipient: Krishanda H. Sanders, Lake Providence**

Krishanda H. Sanders is the director of the East Carroll Parish Library. She received a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice from Grambling State University and a master’s degree in library and information science from Louisiana State University. She expanded access to legal resources in Lake Providence and East Carroll Parish by working to have a Legal Help Access Point incorporated into library services.

**Recipient: Maggie Trahan Simar, St. Martinville**

Maggie Trahan Simar has demonstrated her commitment to promoting access to justice through volunteer efforts and in her position as the 16th Judicial District Family Court hearing officer. She is a faculty member for the Louisiana Supreme Court Protective Order Registry and a board member for the Louisiana Bar Foundation. She currently serves as the president of the Association for Family and Conciliatory Courts, Louisiana Chapter. She has consistently shown her commitment to pro bono work, most recently through efforts focused on strengthening domestic violence organizations in rural areas of the state.

**Recipient: Amanda T. Taylor, Ferriday**

Amanda T. Taylor has served as director of the Concordia Parish Library for more than 40 years. Her leadership has been instrumental in providing resources and support to the community, particularly in ensuring access to information and education to those who face barriers due to their economic status or literacy skills. She worked to add legal resources to her area by helping establish a Legal Help Access Point in the library.

**Recipient: Tulane Medicolegal Partnership, New Orleans**

Dr. Helen E. Pope, Dr. Jessica M. DeBord, Dr. Vinay L. Krupadev and Dr. Nicholas D. Tolat, all physicians at Tulane School of Medicine and lawyers from Tulane Law School, accepted the award on behalf of the Tulane Medicolegal Partnership in New Orleans. Established in 2020, the partnership was created to identify legal barriers that prevent vulnerable groups in New Orleans from accessing housing, healthcare and employment. The program provides support to individuals by connecting them with no or low-cost legal assistance.

**Recipient: David E. Verlander III, Monroe**

Attorney David E. Verlander III practices law in Monroe. He received his bachelor’s degree in 1972 from Tulane University and his JD degree in 1974. He is a mentor in the LSBA Transition Into Practice (TIP) Mentoring Program. He is a charter fellow of the Louisiana Bar Foundation. He is the president of the Northeast Louisiana Bar Foundation. This year his efforts have helped move forward the reality of Northeast Louisiana’s 14-parish pro bono project.

**2023 Law Student Pro Bono Award**

*The Law Student Pro Bono Award recognizes one law student from each of Louisiana’s four law schools who has demonstrated a dedication to providing legal services or other community service to the poor.*

**Recipient: Madeline N. Meyer, Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center**

Madeline N. Meyer, a native of Mandeville, entered LSU Law Center in the fall of 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdown. Working in several leadership positions with the Law Center’s Public Interest Law Society (PILS) after the pandemic, she revived several PILS projects, including the Family Court Self-Help Desk and the Street Law Program. She created new initiatives, including
a Name Change Project (assisting trans individuals to obtain corrected documents) and new programs with the New Orleans Pro Bono Project and the Parole Project. She plans to work with Southeast Louisiana Legal Services after graduation.

**Recipient: Max John, Loyola University College of Law**
Max John, originally from Crowley, graduated, *cum laude*, from Loyola University New Orleans College of Law, while also earning a certificate in tax law. He is pursuing a tax LL.M. degree and will practice in the areas of trusts and estates, and state and local tax. At Loyola, he volunteered at Southeast Louisiana Legal Services helping individuals navigate the complex tax system. He also helped lead Loyola’s Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Clinic.

**Recipient: Theophile N. Kadia, Southern University Law Center**
Theophile N. Kadia, born in Cameroon in Africa, is a 3L student at Southern University Law Center, with an interest in the legal fields of immigration, family, criminal and injury law. During his internship with the Baton Rouge Bar Foundation, he provided civil legal assistance in English and Spanish to indigent and low-income individuals. He assists the Family Court Self-Help Resource Center and volunteers at the Baton Rouge Bar Association’s Ask-A-Lawyer events.

**Recipient: Raquel D. White, Tulane University Law School**
Raquel D. White, originally from Monroe, attends Tulane Law School and is planning for a career in public service through criminal prosecution. She has interned at the Orleans Parish Criminal District Court and handled pro bono work with the Orleans Parish District Attorney’s Office, working primarily with issues of sex crimes and homicides.

**2023 Pro Bono Century Club Award**
*The Pro Bono Century Club Awards recognize attorneys who have demonstrated exemplary commitment to the ideals of their profession by providing over 100 hours of volunteer pro bono services during the past calendar year through an established pro bono organization.*

**Recipients:**
W. Scott Brown, New Orleans
Erinn W. Neyrey, Mandeville
Amber C. Sheppard, Slidell
James F. Shuey, New Orleans
Hugh R. Straub, New Orleans
Christie L. Tournet, Mandeville

Photos of award recipients and other event photos are available online at: https://www.lsba.org/NewsAndPublications/PressPhotos.aspx?PRPA=109.

The Louisiana State Bar Association assists its more than 23,000 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.