

Focus on *Access to Justice*

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Civil legal aid advocates participate in annual Louisiana Justice Community Conference

The Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) hosted the Louisiana Justice Community Conference in Baton Rouge on Oct. 18-19, where civil legal aid attorneys and advocates from across the state gathered to gain relevant poverty law training and to network and collaborate. In its 15th year, the conference focused on ways in which the justice community is “Fighting for Justice” and working to protect the rights of Louisianians, regardless of income, through the provision of critical civil legal aid.

“I think that the choice you have made to serve others and be in service of others through your professional career is something that is absolutely paramount in terms of us being able to change our role. First, [as stated by Bryan Stevenson] we need to think about getting proximate to the people and places where problems exist. You folks know better than anyone else that directly impacted people also hold within them the answers to the problems we are trying to solve. Folks that are most closely and intimately impacted by a problem are those who are the best able to solve it,” said ACLU Louisiana Executive Director Alannah Odoms Hebert in her keynote address.

Following the powerful keynote address, a diverse group of local and national presenters delivered relevant training on topics ranging from emerging issues in housing law to equal protection rights for LGBTQ+ people. 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 Louisiana Bar Foundation also hosted its training for Grantee Board members and users of the statewide case management program.

During the conference, two awards were presented. The Legal Service Excellence in Advocacy Award was presented,



Louisiana State Bar Association President-Elect Robert A. (Bob) Kutcher, far left, presented Laura Tuggle, fourth from left, with the Legal Service Innovation Award for Southeast Louisiana Legal Services’ Flood Proof Project. Partners of the project, from left, Associate Dean Andrea B. Carroll, Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center; Gerren Sias, Louisiana Appleseed; Robin Kay, Baton Rouge Bar Association; and Judy Perry Martinez, American Bar Association’s Center for Innovation.



Rev. James R. Edwards accepted the Legal Service for Excellence in Advocacy Award on behalf of his wife, the late Mrs. Phill Edwards, who dedicated 26 years of service with Acadiana Legal Services Corp.

posthumously, to Mrs. Phill M. Edwards for her 26 years of service with Acadiana Legal Services Corp. and her commitment to helping poor, elderly, rural and disabled citizens. Rev. James R. Edwards, Phill Edwards’ husband, accepted the award on her behalf.

The Legal Service Innovation Award was presented to Southeast Louisiana Legal Services and partners of the Flood Proof Project. The Flood Proof Project is a five-partner collaborative program that helps homeowners affected by the 2016 flood in Baton Rouge, who are living in their property, with successions and clear



ACLU Louisiana Executive Director Alannah Odoms Hebert delivered a powerful keynote address to 150 public interest advocates.

title legal matters. Since its inception, the project has recovered \$7.5 million in economic benefits for nearly 300 disaster-affected homeowners.

The conference hosted participants from the state’s legal service programs and nonprofit public interest firms, including Acadiana Legal Service Corp., Advocacy Center, Crescent Care, Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center, Legal Aid of North Louisiana, Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Mental Health Advocacy Center, Pro Bono Project, Project Save and Southeast Louisiana Legal Services. 

LIFT accepting applications for Flood Proof Project in Baton Rouge

The Louisiana State Bar Association's (LSBA) Legal Innovators for Tomorrow (LIFT) Incubator Program is accepting applications through Nov. 30 for a new collaborative project — the Flood Proof Project in Baton Rouge.

The purpose of the project is to increase access to civil legal help for low-income disaster victims to resolve their property problems and home ownership disputes in the wake of Louisiana's catastrophic flooding in August 2016.

To meet the continued demand for heirship and property title work by disaster survivors, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services, Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center, Southern University Law Center, the ABA Center for Innovation and LSBA's LIFT have partnered to offer two attorneys the opportunity to develop and grow their

own solo practices that address the need for disaster-related legal services.

The attorneys will develop their practices in a supported and collaborative environment.

During the 18-month project, attorneys receive a \$10,000 stipend, free access to case management software and legal research programs, training, mentorship and court shadowing opportunities.

Louisiana licensed attorneys with zero-five years' practice experience who plan to develop or have begun to develop a sustainable solo law practice providing free and cost-effective legal solutions to disaster survivors are encouraged to apply. The program is looking for two attorneys. Email the application in one PDF document to Amy Duncan at amy.duncan@lsba.org. To learn more about the LIFT program, go online: www.lsba.org/lift.





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The Directory is open to all active Louisiana attorneys in good standing who offer reduced-fee legal services to people falling at or below 400% of the Federal Poverty Line. Many attorneys already offer reduced fees by way of a sliding scale based on the client's income, flat fees, or limited scope representation.

FIND OUT MORE! CONTACT Amy Duncan, LSBA Access to Justice Training & Projects Counsel, at amy.duncan@lsba.org with any questions. Or for more information online, visit www.lsba.org/ATJCommission/ModestMeans.aspx.



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