

# “Lawyers in Libraries” Celebrates 10 Years of Pro Bono Services

By Stephanie M. Beaugh,  
LSBA Access to Justice Department



From left, attorneys John C. Ginart, Michael F. Adou, A. Scott Tillery, Daniel W. Nodurft, Lisa Borne, Matt Tillery, J. Van Robichaux, Jr. and Paul A. Tabary III at the St. Bernard Parish Library.





Attorney Temia P. Griffin speaking with a patron at the Belle Terre Library Branch in Jefferson Parish.



Attorney Herman L. Bastian, Jr. and Tatyana Aubert, North Kenner Library staff, in Jefferson Parish.



Charles D. Elliott and Eugene P. Cicardo, Jr. at Rapides Parish Library.

For the 10th year in a row, the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) coordinated its “Lawyers in Libraries” week of service during which attorneys volunteered to provide limited, free legal services via libraries across the state. Held on Oct. 23-28, 2023, in conjunction with the American Bar Association’s “National Celebrate Pro Bono Week,” the program included Ask-A-Lawyer consultation events — both in person and by phone — as well as live presentations streamed through social media. During this week, Lawyers in Libraries’ attorney volunteers successfully connected hundreds of patrons with free legal assistance that likely would not have been available to them otherwise. Over the last 10 years, nearly a thousand attorneys have volunteered and assisted more than 7,500 Louisianans in public libraries.

Since its launch in October 2014, the Lawyers in Libraries Program has consistently grown each year to meet patrons where they are — in libraries. In 2020, the program adapted to the cancellation of all in-person events due to COVID-19 shutdowns and introduced a virtual format of Ask-A-Lawyer consultation by phone and webinars on legal topics that are streamed daily throughout Pro Bono Week on the Lawyers in Libraries Facebook page. In

2023, the Lawyers in Libraries Program instituted an On-Call List to attempt to resolve cancellations. Opting to be an “on-call” volunteer meant volunteers agreed to be contacted to possibly cover any Ask-A-Lawyer sessions that had a last-minute cancellation by their attorney volunteer. Although this was its first year, on-call volunteers successfully rescheduled multiple events, helping ensure dozens of patrons were able to speak to attorneys about their legal issues.

LSBA President Shayna L. Sonnier believes this program “demonstrates the LSBA’s commitment to helping the courts and our members to better serve the public.” She also noted, “Lawyers in Libraries makes Louisiana attorneys directly available to the public. Because libraries are a natural starting point for people with legal questions, the Lawyers in Libraries Program enables the Bar to reach more people more effectively and better achieve our goal of serving the public in addition to attorneys.” As part of the effort to ensure fairness in the justice system, Lawyers in Libraries and other Access to Justice initiatives are vital for people to receive justice, identify their legal options and have access to the court system, regardless of financial circumstance.

The Lawyers in Libraries Program is

part of the Legal Education & Assistance Program (LEAP), an ongoing collaboration between the LSBA’s Access to Justice Department, the Law Library of Louisiana and Louisiana public libraries statewide. LEAP aims to provide support to public librarians throughout the state by providing them with appropriate training and resources to help patrons with their legal questions. Although librarians are unable to provide legal advice, they are well placed to provide critical legal information for people in search of legal assistance, including referrals to attorneys and legal aid organizations. Accordingly, LEAP provides in-person training at libraries across Louisiana and the Louisiana Library Association Annual Conference. During the trainings, which were also developed into a series of educational videos, LEAP staff offer librarians practical information and best practices for assisting patrons with legal questions, as well as information detailing statewide legal resources, reference materials and referral information.

The LSBA would like to acknowledge the LSBA members who volunteered in their communities, and the pro bono agencies, local bar associations and legal service providers who helped to coordinate events in individual parishes.





**Ranee L. Haynes at the Bossier Parish Library in Benton.**



**Attorney Kenyatta J. Barthelemy helping a library patron.**



**Ander M. Boggs at the Bossier Parish Library in Benton.**

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**From left, Samantha Bonnette, marketing and development manager, Shreve Memorial Library; attorney Felicia M. Hamilton; and Sheryll J. Anderson, branch manager, Shreve Memorial Library-West Shreveport Branch.**

The LSBA also would like to recognize the State Library of Louisiana, the Louisiana Library Association, the Law Library of Louisiana and the countless dedicated staff members of libraries across Louisiana who helped coordinate and promote events.

*Stephanie M. Beagh is the Louisiana State Bar Association's Access to Justice projects counsel. She is the liaison to the Children's Law, Legal Services for Persons with Disabilities and ATJ Commission's Self-Represented Litigation Committees. She assists in the development and implementation of Self-Help Resource Centers for litigants without attorneys. (stephanie.beagh@lsba.org; 601 St. Charles Ave., New Orleans, LA 70130)*

