

Minutes of the Pro Bono Committee June 24, 2011

The Pro Bono Committee of the Business Law Section of the Florida Bar met on June 24, 2011 in Orlando, Florida during the Annual Meeting of the Florida Bar. The following people were in attendance: Melanie Damian, Chair, Judge William Van Nortwick Jr. Judicial Co-Chair, Maxine Long, Sam Lewis, Mark Stein, Vice-Chair, Judge Catherine McEwen, Jeffery Hirsch, Jennifer Morando.

Sheila Meehan, Pro Bono Director and Adrienne Davis, from Florida Legal Services, Inc. attended the meeting as guests.

Judge Van Nortwick moved to approve the minutes from the January 2011 meeting and Sam Lewis seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

The meeting began with introductions and the reaffirmation of the committee Mission Statement.

The Committee then discussed the projects the Committee plans to work on for the year. The first project centers on providing legal advice to not-for-profit entities. Sheila Meehan made a presentation on a legal aid clinic style program to help not-for-profits. The Committee discussed looking for attorneys with expertise in assisting not-for-profits to help at the clinics. The Committee agreed there would be three (3) clinics, in Jacksonville, Tampa and Miami. The coordinators are to be John McDonald in Jacksonville, Mark Stein in Miami and the Committee is seeking someone to be the coordinator in Tampa. Judge McEwen suggested Susan Sharp and agreed to contact her to ask her to take on the project (Susan Sharp has agreed to be the Tampa liaison). The Jacksonville clinic will be first and can be used as a model for Tampa and Miami. The Committee discussed creating materials for the clinics and agreed the materials should be simple and short, not like the ABA materials, which are long and complicated. Other ideas were to utilize law firm round tables and in Miami to encourage the Dade County Bar Association Business Outreach Committee and the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce Not-for-Profit committee to participate in the clinic and perhaps to work with the Committee on future projects.

The Committee then discussed, the second project, which is an ABA project to teach financial literacy in schools through the Junior Achievement organization. Attorneys would visit the schools to carry out the program. Carlton Fields is already leading the program in Florida. Jennifer Morando agreed to take charge of this program on behalf of the Committee and be the liaison for the Section.

Next the Committee agreed to ask the Executive Council for \$300 in order to have enough money to have the "ONE Campaign" poster placed in the courtroom or chambers of all Florida trial judges.

The Committee also decided to gather the Pro Bono Policies of law firms. Jeff Hirsch volunteered to secure the Greenberg Trauig policy and Maxine Long volunteered to secure the Shutts & Bowen policy. The Committee agreed it would ask attorneys at the Executive Council meeting to provide their firm policies and all of the policies would be sent to Judge Van Nortwick and/or Judge McEwen. The goal is to create a single “best practices” policy. This would include information like the hourly pro bono goal per year, whether firms allow attorneys to count pro bono hours towards their annual goal and similar details.

The Committee then discussed a variety of ideas to increase lawyer pro bono. These included, (i) adding a Pro Bono reminder at the beginning of CLE tapes; (ii) updating and improving Pro Bono information and materials on the BLS website, including possibly adding a link to websites that provide for free CLEs to attorneys offering Pro Bono legal services; (iii) trying to create a competition between voluntary bar associations to provide the most Pro Bono legal services; (iv) soliciting Pro Bono stories from the BLS and sponsoring a contest in which the winner gets a fifty percent (50%) discount on the retreat and including a Pro Bono story of the month and lawyer testimonials on the BLS website. (Note: This was already approved by the Executive Council)

Jennifer Morando agreed to prepare a blast email announcing the contest and soliciting stories each month from BLS members. The Committee agreed the email would request stories about cases during the last eighteen (18) months and would be due by the fifteen (15th) of each month. The Committee also discussed various prizes for the monthly and annual winner of the contest.

The Committee had a discussion about how it could work with Legal Services to get a list of all BLS CLE programs offer one or more programs for free to any BLS members that takes on one (1) pro bono case.

Michael Higer, BLS Chair, Mindy Mora, BLS Chair-Elect and Brian Gart, BLS Chair-Elect for next year visited the Committee, provided the Committee with updates and discussed their thoughts on Pro Bono issues the Committee should consider. Ideas for the future included working with Pro Bono Clinics at law schools. Mindy Mora agreed to coordinate with Peter Valori to include a pitch to take on a Pro Bono case as part of her BLS Chair person message.

Prepared by Mark E. Stein, August 22, 2011.