

MINUTES

THE BUSINESS LAW SECTION OF THE FLORIDA BAR PRO BONO COMMITTEE

September 3, 2011
Naples, Florida

Our mission statement: To achieve 100% participation in pro bono services by Business Law Section members and the other attorneys in their firms.

Attendance: Judge Bill Van Nortwick, Melanie Damian, Judge Laurel Isicoff, Russell Landy, Jennifer Morando, Susan Sharp, John Macdonald, Gwynne Young, Maxine Long, Paul Singerman, Jeffrey Hirsch, Cori Lopez-Castro, Daniel Benavides

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JUNE 2011 MEETING

- A. Sam Lewis moved to approve the minutes, Paul Singerman seconded the motion and approval was unanimous.

II. MISSION STATEMENT –

- A. We reminded everyone of the Mission Statement that we adopted last year.

III. UPDATE ON PRO BONO PROJECTS

- A. Legal Advice Clinics for Non Profits (Jax, Tampa, Miami)
 - 1. Jacksonville – John MacDonald is working on this clinic with Sheila Meehan of Florida Legal Services. The Jacksonville Clinic – scheduled for October 6 - will be the “test baby” for the Legal Advice Clinics. Sheila is reaching out to non-profits in the area regarding their legal needs. John is reaching out to BLS members and managing partners of firms in town. Jeffrey Hirsch suggested contacting the local community foundation. John said Sheila had already done that. Melanie said we received a tremendous amount of materials from the ABA. Sheila and John are working on reducing and adapting the materials. We then had a general discussion with the exchange of possibilities and ideas including partnership with other sections.
 - 2. Tampa - Susan Sharp reported that Tampa will target for a clinic in late January or early February and see how John’s formula works in Jacksonville.

3. Miami – Melanie Damian – Mark is working with the Dade County Bar Association and the Pro Bono Committee of the Chamber of Commerce. They anticipate something in March.
- C. ABA Financial Literacy in Schools – partnering with Junior Achievement
1. Jennifer Morando explained the curriculum for this pilot program with Junior Achievement. The program is designed for High Schools and Middle Schools and lasts one day a week (1/2 day at a time) for 5 or 6 weeks. They already did a test run in Boston. It will be focusing for now in the Middle District of Florida – in Tampa and Orlando. They are looking for volunteers. Junior Achievement has already made the arrangements with the school districts. LMI noted this is nice compliment to CARE and programs like CARE that are designed for short presentations.

IV. BEST PRACTICES FOR FIRM PRO BONO POLICY

- A. Laurel Isicoff reviewed the survey that Cathy McEwen initiated. We discussed the survey and the information we are gathering and our hope to develop a best practices guide.

IVA. LEADERSHIP INTRODUCTIONS -

Our fearless leaders introduced themselves (in case anyone on the BLS planet doesn't know Mindy and Brian). Mindy introduced Mr. Pettis who is running for Florida Bar President-Elect.

V. INCREASING INTEREST IN PRO BONO BY OUR MEMBERSHIP

- A. Jeff suggested that even if we cannot get everyone involved with, or get enough, legal representation opportunities, we should push monetary donations because the money is so desperately needed. Cori agreed we need to work on this – we need money to support the Legal Aid offices who have had an 85% drop in funding. We discussed the possibility of having a link to a donation to various legal services groups. We also discussed having some kind of description of what the money donated is used for. Jeff talked about the Greenberg Traurig Foundation and how they use money to fund a young lawyer or two to do a special pro bono project. We discussed the possibility of funding a BLS fellow who we would place at a Legal Aid office somewhere in Florida.
- B. Paul Singerman suggested that each firm should have a pro bono designee. Start with 100% participation by EC members. We also discussed creating information – “tips for pro bono” to circulate to the firm pro bono designees.
- C. Paul suggested an auction at the Section Retreat. Russell said he will put it together for next year.

- D. We discussed having a monthly article in the Florida Bar News or Florida Bar Journal and to have a link to our website. Sam Lewis agreed to do a “Top Ten Reasons to do Pro Bono”.

IV. PRO BONO PROMOTION

- A. One Campaign Posters – Judge McEwen has been working with Adrienne Davis to get frames and posters to all the judges that want them (or not) for their chambers or outside their courtrooms. The frames have been generously funded by the BLS
- B. CLE Reminders on videos and prior to CLE presentations – prior to any BLS CLE presentation there is to be a two to three minute announcement/pronouncement regarding pro bono and the BLS mission statement on pro bono.
- C. Emails and articles – we continue to solicit “pro bono” stories of the month. In the past year we didn’t have any.

VII. OPEN DISCUSSION

We really didn’t have time to discuss anything. We all decided we need more time for our meetings because there is so much we want to accomplish.

Submitted by:

Laurel M. Isicoff