

Community Law Program



The Community Law Program, Inc.

is a non-profit corporation formed in 1989 by members of the St. Petersburg Bar Association concerned about the civil legal needs of low income residents of Southern Pinellas County, Florida. Over the years, the CLP has recruited a panel of approximately 400 St. Petersburg area attorneys who provide free assistance to thousands of people in need of civil legal assistance each year. To volunteer for pro bono service, contact the Community Law Program at 727-582-7480.



By Kim Rodgers

“We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.” – Sir Winston Churchill

As the St. Petersburg Bar Association celebrates leadership, the word that most immediately comes to my mind is service. No other trait of a good leader is more universal. In no other local forum is this borne out more dramatically than at Community Law Program, which has been extremely fortunate to have been the recipient of strong and effective leadership from many past presidents of the St. Petersburg Bar Association. Many past presidents of the bar have provided remarkable service to CLP through leadership on the board of trustees, participation in CLP's pro bono activities, providing philanthropic support for CLP's programs, and/or a combination thereof.

I apologize in advance if I leave anyone out, as I am attempting the mighty task of highlighting a few individuals primarily from memory. As I peruse the list of past presidents of the St. Petersburg Bar, which dates back to 1925, the first person whose name stands out on this list is Louie N. Adcock, Jr., who was president of the SPBA in 1977. Mr. Adcock, along with his entire firm of Fisher & Sauls, P.A., has shown tremendous leadership to CLP through his many years of participation in our civil legal advice clinics, through acceptance of pro bono cases involving wills, advance directives, guardianships, and probate, and through support of

CLP's many fundraising efforts over the years.

Another leader, Martin Rice, president of the SPBA in 1985, exhibited extraordinary leadership through community service by helping to coordinate one of the SPBA's first pro bono legal



services efforts, which ultimately was the precursor to the formation of CLP. Mr. Rice remains a staunch supporter of CLP through his philanthropic support.

Jack Helinger, president of the SPBA in 1991, has been a long-time leader of pro bono involvement in our community through participation with CLP. Specifically, he has represented nearly 20

individual clients, including a significant number of difficult to place family law cases. He continues to be a resource to CLP when we need assistance creating materials for clients and training materials for attorneys. He also serves as a mentor for many attorneys who handle pro bono cases on behalf of CLP. In 2004, he received The Florida Bar's Tobias Simon Pro Bono Award, which is presented annually to only one attorney in the state by the Chief Justice of the Florida Supreme Court. If you have not had an opportunity to witness this momentous ceremony in Tallahassee, I strongly urge you to do so.

The past SPBA president who has exhibited the most exemplary leadership through pro bono community service is Karen Lopez, who served as president of the SPBA in 1993. One of the founding members of Community Law Program, Karen Lopez served on our board of trustees from our inception in 1989 until 2006. She also provided a great deal of philanthropic support to CLP over the years, and she actively participated in many of CLP's legal advice clinics and provided pro bono representation to countless clients. Like Jack Helinger, Karen is also a past recipient of The Florida Bar's Tobias Simon Award.

The remaining SPBA past presidents, including, but not limited to, Kent G. Whittmore ('96), Robert Decker ('97), Thomas Masterson ('99), Eric Ludin ('00), John Tucker ('02), David Abbey ('03), William Walker ('04), Seymour Gordon ('05), Lee Rightmyer ('06), and Camille Iurillo ('07) have individually and collectively exhibited strong leadership their involvement with CLP over the years. This involvement has included providing financial support and representation of clients pro bono. In addition, each one of them have been instrumental in encouraging other members

of the bar to get involved in CLP. Lee Rightmyer even served on CLP's board of trustees from 2002 until 2005.

Lastly, but certainly not least, Jeannine Williams, SPBA's current President, has been involved with CLP since 2000. Jeannine began her involvement with CLP as a volunteer participating in our family law advice clinics. In 2003, she became a member of our board of trustees and served as our president for two terms. No other attorney I've had the pleasure of working with has done more to encourage other attorneys to participate with CLP. Jeannine

has received several CLP awards for her outstanding pro bono leadership. This year, she received Stetson's William Reece Smith, Jr. Public Service Award.

All of these leaders, along with countless others within the St. Pete Bar community, are the epitome of the words embodied by Sir Winston Churchill. Their leadership not only makes my job easier, but their individual and collective contributions enable our organization to make a real difference in our community as we strive to provide equal access to justice for all! Won't you join them and us?

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JEFFREY W. HENSLEY, P.A.
 ATTORNEY at LAW

2600 Tampa Road, Palm Harbor, Florida 34684
(727) 781-3433

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