

As the Legal Access Coordinator for the Vermont Bar Association, I have the rewarding task of promoting pro bono service among our colleagues. Rule 6.1 of the Vermont Rules of Professional Conduct exhorts each of us to volunteer at least 50 hours each year to represent low income clients. While it is a struggle to build pro bono time into a busy practice, the rewards personally and to our system of justice are well worth the effort. I urge you to volunteer with one or more of these established programs:

Vermont Volunteer Lawyer Project is a statewide program matching volunteer attorneys with low-income clients in need of help in civil legal matters. To sign up or to request more information, contact Angele Court, VVLP Coordinator, at 802-863-7153, or e-mail her at acourt@lawlinevt.org.

Chittenden County Small Claims Clinic is held on the first Tuesday of each month in the District and Family Court building on Cherry Street in Burlington. Volunteer attorneys meet with clients to review their cases and prepare them for the upcoming hearing. The attorneys do not provide legal advice. To volunteer, or to receive more information, contact Jeffrey Messina Esq., with Bergeron, Paradis & Fitzpatrick, LLP by calling (802) 879-6304, or e-mail him at jmessina@bpflegal.com.

Chittenden County Rent Escrow Clinic is held at least two times a month on Tuesdays from 8:30AM until noon at Chittenden County Courthouse, 175 Main Street in Burlington. Three attorney volunteers enter limited appearances for clients in rent escrow hearings that morning. To volunteer, or to obtain more information, contact Angele Court with Legal Services Law Line of Vermont at 802-863-7153, or e-mail her at acourt@lawlinevt.org.

County Bar Legal Assistance Projects are low-bono projects providing stipends for attorneys representing low income clients in foreclosure, collections and landlord/tenant cases in civil division, in adult involuntary guardianships in probate divisions, and in child support contempt defense in family division. These low bono projects exist in Addison, Bennington, Rutland, Windham, Windsor/Orange Counties, and are coming soon in Franklin/Grand Isle and Washington Counties. For general information contact me at mashcroft@vtbar.org call me at 802-223-2020. To sign up for the program in your preferred country, here are the contacts:

Addison County: Sarah Star, Esq. 802-385-1023, srs@sarahstarlaw.com

Bennington County: John Lamson, Esq., 802-447-8500, bennington@havejusticewilltravel.org

Orange County: Judge Bernie Lewis at 802-728-9604 or lewis_law@yahoo.com

Rutland County: Mary Ashcroft, Esq., 802-775-5189, mash@sover.net

Windham County: Ellen Kreitmeier, Esq., 802-490-9265, ellen@ellenkreitmeier.com.

Windsor/Orange Counties: Marc Nemeth, Esq. 802-763-2227, marc@royaltonlaw.com

Caledonia County Legal Clinic is offered on Friday afternoon every other month at the Courthouse in St. Johnsbury. Attorney volunteers are needed to visit with clients on a variety of issues for 20 minutes each. For more information or to volunteer, call the court at 748-6600.

St. Johnsbury Community Justice Center offers a free evening legal clinic on the first Monday of every month, and needs volunteer attorneys to meet with each client for 30 minutes, working from 6-8PM. For more information or to volunteer, call Neil Favreau at (802) 748-2977, or e-mail him at neil@communityrjc.org

Washington County Legal Clinic operates two Friday afternoons a month at the Washington Family Court in Barre. Volunteer attorneys see 3-6 clients for 15 minute consultations each. Clients with all types of legal questions are served. To volunteer, please call the Family Court at 479-4205.

The “low bono” projects listed above are funded by grants from the Vermont Bar Foundation. We are starting similar projects in Franklin-Grand Isle and Washington Counties. Watch the VBA website or contact me or your county bar president for more information.

Pro bono opportunities exist in every county in Vermont. Consider volunteering in your local probate or family division, where the pro bono need is especially great. Contact me anytime with ideas about your own pro bono project.

Thank you for volunteering. Mary C. Ashcroft, Esq., VBA Legal Access Coordinator