



A history of helping. A future of hope.

VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROGRAM

News from the VLP

VLP Student Update

Law Students > January saw a record number of law students turn out to register to participate in VLP programs. The staff placed 43 students in VLP programs, the most ever in a spring semester. In anticipation of the ever increasing interest by law students in VLP, staff launched two new initiatives this spring. These include an intake project that assists clients with domestic and landlord/tenant matters and a child support assessment project being piloted at juvenile court. Although in their initial states, the feedback from both the students and the courts involved in these projects has been overwhelmingly positive.

Undergraduate Students > This semester the VLP expanded student programs to include opportunities for undergraduates. By enlisting the help of three pre-law students at the University of Arizona the VLP was able to launch a new community education and outreach program. The program, a pilot in its infancy, works with community agencies including the Tucson Center for Women and Children and New Beginnings. The students, trained March 2, will meet with groups of potential clients at the agencies and offer presentations about the legal services available through SALA's VLP. At the conclusion of the presentation, clients will have an opportunity to apply for services on site. The technology necessary for the success of this program was provided by a grant from the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education.

Student Recognition > On April 23, the VLP will sponsor a recognition luncheon for all students involved in the program this semester. The luncheon will take place at the law school. Dean Massaro is scheduled to speak as well as several members of the judiciary. More information about this event will become available in the near future.



helping clients

During the first two months of 2007, the VLP opened 411 new cases. Of these, 329 were from Pima County and 82 were rural cases. Currently, the VLP has 960 open cases.

VLPArizona.org

VLP in the News

Tucson Citizen Article > Recently the VLP was featured on the front page of the Tucson Citizen. The VLP is grateful for the opportunity to highlight the exceptional work of volunteer attorneys in the community. The positive publicity has been a boost to the recruitment of new volunteers. To read the article in its entirety please follow this link:

www.vlparizona.org/CitizenArticleFeb2007.htm



Channel 13 > Reporters interviewed VLP attorneys during March for a story scheduled to air on Channel 13 at the end of the month. More information will follow.

Arizona Attorney > The January issue of the Arizona Attorney features an article regarding the VLP's 25th Anniversary celebration. To read the article, please follow this link:

www.vlparizona.org/VLPNewsArizonaAttorney25.pdf

Upcoming CLEs

Cochise County > **On Friday, April 13th the VLP will welcome former Ethics Bar Counsel, Lynda Shely, to Bisbee. Lynda will travel to Bisbee to present a two hour ethics CLE.** Lynda will focus her presentation on confidentiality, screening for conflicts, how to avoid client complaints, communication tips, and managing overload. Lynda will also discuss the ethical role of non-lawyer assistants. The CLE will be offered at no cost to volunteer attorneys or to those who register to become new volunteers prior to the seminar. [Register online!](#)

Tucson > **On Thursday, April 19th, Lynda Shely will travel to Tucson to present a two hour ethics CLE.** Lynda's presentation will replicate the seminar she presents in Bisbee as described above. [Register online!](#)

Navajo County > **On May 11th the VLP will sponsor a three hour CLE in Show Low.** Volunteer attorneys Tom Roberts and Luis Ochoa have agreed to travel from Tucson to Navajo County to present the CLE. The program will be offered at no cost to volunteers or to those who register with the program. More details will follow soon.

For the most up to date information regarding VLP sponsored CLEs as well as other events please check the VLP website at VLPArizona.org.

Awards & Recognition

On June 28th, the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education will honor sixteen SALA VLP attorneys as part of the Top 50 Pro Bono Attorneys in Arizona . Many of the attorneys nominated by the VLP will be recognized by the Foundation for their work with victims of domestic violence. The awards were first instituted in 2001 by the Foundation. The 2007 honorees were selected for giving tirelessly to provide legal services to low-income clients. Their selection was based on such factors as the number of pro bono cases accepted and hours donated, indicators of overall commitment to pro bono work. SALA VLP attorneys to be honored include **Ron Allen, Tom Bayham, Bryan Daum, Rob Ferrier, Les Gilbertson, Johnny Helenbolt, Tom Hippert, Kurt Kroese, Lisa Lewis, Jim Penny, Denneen Peterson, Steve Portell, Bill Poorten, and Heather Strickland**. SALA VLP attorneys in Cochise and Navajo Counties will also be recognized by the Foundation. These attorneys include **F. Morgan Brown and Ed Matchett**.

Arizona Supreme Court Approves New Pro Bono Recognition

In an effort to increase the stature and visibility of pro bono, Arizona 's three VLP directors joined together last fall to propose that the Arizona Supreme Court establish a new annual award for one outstanding volunteer attorney each year. In December 2006, the VLP staff was notified that the Court had reviewed the proposal and agreed that this type of statewide recognition would provide a new way to honor attorneys who have demonstrated outstanding and continuing commitment to pro bono, similar to a lifetime achievement award. The new recognition will also increase the retention of current volunteers and encourage more attorneys to donate their time and expertise. The first recipient of this award will be recognized at the Annual Judicial Conference to be held in Carefree, Arizona in May.

Client Success Story - VLP Attorney Rob Ferrier

In 2005, shortly after she moved to Arizona for health reasons, a fifty-three year old woman purchased a mobile home and land from a local seller. Three months after her assumed purchase, Pima County inspectors informed the buyer that an addition on her home had been built without the requisite construction permits and would need to be torn down, reducing the amount of livable space in her home by approximately half. She attempted to address the issue with the seller and he told her to ignore Pima County 's warnings. The client then contacted Southern Arizona Legal Aid (SALA) where her case was reviewed by the attorneys and referred to the VLP for placement with a volunteer. It was at this point that the VLP contacted Rob Ferrier who jumped in and welcomed the opportunity to assist the client.

A quick review of her contract documents by Rob revealed serious irregularities. The contract called for several repairs to be made to the mobile home, none of which had been made. Calls to the Pima County Recorder's Office confirmed that no interest in the land or mobile home had ever been noted in the client's name. The client also related that the seller had instructed her to

make payments to him in cash, to a specific bank account. Fortunately, the client made her payments via check, otherwise, there would have been no evidence that she owned any interest in the property, or that she had made any payments under her contract.

The mobile home was in a nearly uninhabitable state. There were holes in the floor. The front door could not be locked and there was no hot water. The client expressed her desire to recover the payments she had made to the seller and her down payment in exchange for releasing any interest in the land or mobile home. Put simply, she wanted her \$4,000.00 back.

[Read the rest of this client story here!](#)

Questions or comments? E-mail Michele Mirto at mmirto@sazlegalaid.org or call 520.623.9465, ext. 4171.

The VLP is a joint program of Southern Arizona Legal Aid and the Pima County Bar Association.

25
years | **volunteer
lawyers
program**

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