

NEWS FOR YOU THE VOLUNTEER



Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service - Legal Assistance for People In Need **Fall 2011**

Executive Director Letter **Bonnie Sullivan**



MVLS is 30 years old this year. Those of us from the Boomer Generation remember when 30-year-olds were no longer to be trusted. Fortunately, our clients don't share that view. Over those 30 years, MVLS has built an organization whose volunteers have a positive, and frequently life altering, impact on our clients' lives. While statistics can't tell the whole story, our volunteers have helped 65,000 Marylanders since we opened our doors in 1981. And our future looks brighter than ever, especially because we can count on the support of so many generous donors and volunteers.

It's important to remember that our volunteers not only help individuals, but also their families. Read the story about MVLS volunteer Kristy Boon in Elkton, Md. She took on a father's tough contested custody fight, even though he suffers from a serious illness that could have been a barrier. Due to Kristy's advocacy, he was able to overcome this obstacle.

We would be unable to serve as many Marylanders as we do without the private bar and business communities' generous 30-year investment in MVLS programs. We recognize our exceptionally generous 30th Anniversary sponsors and donors in this issue and feature highlights of our sell-out benefit at CenterStage. Without this support, we would be unable to address the ever increasing demand for legal services by Marylanders who have lost jobs, homes, and all too often, hope. As we begin our 31st year, we know our clients trust that we can restore some semblance of order to their troubled lives. We're confident that with your support we'll keep that trust.



Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service

invites you to attend our annual

RECEPTION to CELEBRATE PRO BONO

and honor our volunteer lawyers, law students, and supporters

Keynote Address

The Honorable Anthony G. Brown, Lieutenant Governor of Maryland

Wednesday, October 19, 2011 at 6:00 pm

Westminster Hall (University of Maryland School of Law)
519 West Fayette Street, Baltimore

Co-hosted by Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service and
the University of Maryland School of Law's Leadership in Public Service and Maryland Public Interest Law Project

Kindly RSVP by October 7, 2011 to jamie@mvslaw.org or 443.451.4062

MVLS Welcomes Five New Board Members

At its June annual meeting, the MVLS Board of Directors elected five new members from leading law firms in Baltimore. MVLS is proud to welcome these new members!



Anthony P. Ashton, Partner, DLA Piper LLP (US)

Anthony Ashton represents individuals and local, national and multi-national corporations in actions involving contract disputes, shareholder's rights and fiduciary duties of officers and directors. He is a graduate of Howard University and the University of Maryland School of Law.



Edward J. Baines, Partner, Saul Ewing LLP

Ted Baines is a partner and head of the Litigation Department in Saul Ewing's Baltimore office. He focuses his litigation practice on commercial contract, insurance, real estate, construction, environmental, and defense of tort claims involving death or catastrophic injury. He is a graduate of Salisbury University and the University of Maryland School of Law.



Jonathan Z. May, Partner, Whiteford, Taylor and Preston

Jonathan May represents nonprofit organizations on corporate, tax, licensing and regulatory and related matters. He is a graduate of the University of Maryland, the University of Baltimore School of Law, Georgetown University Law Center, LL.M., and University of Maryland, Baltimore County, MA.



Charles J. Morton, Jr., Partner, Venable

Chuck Morton co-chairs Venable's Business Transactions Practice, as well as the firm's Junior Capital/Mezzanine Practice Group. He has a national practice representing entrepreneurs and the people who invest in them. He is a graduate of the University of Vermont and the University of Maryland School of Law.



E. Hutchinson Robbins, Jr., Principal, Miles & Stockbridge

Hutch heads the firm's Commercial and Business Litigation practice group. He represents a broad array of businesses and individuals in all facets of state and federal trial and appellate practice. Hutch is a graduate of Trinity College and Duke University School of Law.

NEW FACES AT MVLS



JESSICA RICH

joined our paralegal staff in May, 2011. Her focus will be on our non-domestic program, particularly

landlord/tenant and collections cases. Jessica brings a wealth of experience in consumer debt litigation that she wants to use to help our clients struggling with debt. Jessica has a B.A. in Legal Studies from the University of Maryland, University College, and an Associate's Degree in Paralegal Studies from Frederick Community College.



RACHEL STAFFORD

joined MVLS' as a staff attorney for Project HEAL at Kennedy Krieger Institute in February, 2011. Ms. Stafford came

to MVLS after five years in private practice at Ferguson, Schetelich & Ballew, in Baltimore where she represented clients in family law matters. She also served on MVLS' volunteer panel and developed an interest in special education law. Her interest soon grew to a passionate commitment to help children with disabilities access educational services. MVLS is fortunate to count her as its newest lawyer. Ms. Stafford is a graduate of Washington & Lee University School of Law in Lexington, Virginia. Upon graduation from law school, Ms. Stafford clerked for the Honorable J. Frederick Price (Retired) in Kent County, Maryland.

MVLS Celebrates 30 Years of Making PRO BONO COUNT



30th Anniversary Benefit Committee Co-Chair and Members Caroline Ciralo and Jerry Kelly



Board Member Kerry Staton, Board President Larry Coppel, Danielle Brown, Gregg L. Bernstein, and Warren A. Brown, Esq.



New Board Member Anthony Ashton, Keisha Ashton, Rachel Stafford

More than 300 guests filled CENTERSTAGE on May 11, 2011 to celebrate MVLS' 30th Anniversary. Attendees included friends of MVLS from the business and legal communities. Sascha's Catering provided delicious h'ors d'oeuvres that guests enjoyed while shopping for silent auction items. Benefit Honorary Chair, Gregg L. Bernstein, Baltimore City State's Attorney, offered brief remarks that recognized the important contribution the private bar makes in helping to ensure access to the courts for all Marylanders.

A special thanks to benefit co-chairs Robert Brennen and Caroline Ciralo as well as the entire 30th Anniversary Benefit Committee for their hard work over the past year.

We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to the 63 sponsors and many prize donors who gave so generously. They helped us exceed our fundraising goal by 100%, for which we are truly grateful.

Benefit Co-Chair Caroline Ciralo and Executive Director Bonnie Sullivan



Mary Keating, Sandy Gordon, Bonnie Sullivan and Michael Gordon



MVLS Board Members Larry Coppel, Mary Keating and Kerry Staton



Board Member Chris Rahl and Libby Rahl.



Sascha's Table



Board Member Susan Preston, Judge Pam White, Board and 30th Anniv. Benefit Committee Member Kerry Staton and Donna Staton.



Winnie Borden, Jerry Lurie, Paul Carlin



Honorary Chair Gregg Bernstein



Silent Auction Shoppers

MVLS Hosts National Medical-Legal Partnership Summit

In March 2011, Baltimore welcomed the National Center for Medical-Legal Partnerships (NCMLP) annual Summit. More than 300 doctors, lawyers, and social workers from the medical-legal partnership (MLP) network attended. MVLS showcased Project HEAL (Health, Education, Advocacy & Law), its medical-legal partnership with The Johns Hopkins Children's Center and Kennedy Krieger Institute and Ober|Kaler, Project HEAL's pro bono partner, hosted the Summit's Welcome Reception at Baltimore's Center Club. Seven Project HEAL professionals (an unprecedented number) conducted workshops at the conference, including Project HEAL Directors Hope Tipton and Maureen van Stone. Inspiring keynote addresses by Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and James J. Sandman, President of the Legal Services Corporation, capped the Summit. Thank you to everyone who helped MVLS host this year's successful Summit!

NVLS 30th Anniversary Celebration

Thank You to our Supporters!

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MVLS VOLUNTEER HELPS DAD GAIN CUSTODY

Kristy Boon is one of those volunteer attorneys that MVLS simply cannot do without. For over a decade, she has handled pro bono and reduced-fee family law cases in Cecil County, an area of the state with high levels of poverty, and a small pool of available lawyers. In February, Kristy accepted another MVLS family law case, one that proved to be particularly compelling. The client was a man named Jason B. and his story was one to remember.

Jason's life in rural Maryland was much like that of his neighbors. He worked hard trying to raise his kids and get by in a tough economy. He came to MVLS for help at a particularly rough time. "I was having trouble with my wife and I needed to end the marriage, but I didn't have the money to pay for a lawyer," he says. "At the same time, I was diagnosed with a rare blood circulation disease. It was tough." Life soon got even tougher for Jason when he needed surgery and lost portions of his hands and feet.

As is often the case in Cecil County, Kristy was the first person MVLS called for help. "I've handled many pro bono divorce cases, but Jason was one of the most responsible and pleasant clients I have ever dealt with," says Kristy. "Despite his debilitating disease, his only concern was for his kids." Indeed, it's his children – ages 11 and 6 – that keep Jason's spirits up. "They are great kids," Jason says; "They're always great!"

Gaining custody of his children was not going to be easy. "I had been the main caregiver and I felt like I deserved full custody," says Jason. "Even though I was sick, I knew they needed to be with me." Kristy was undaunted and fought for Jason's primary goal – keeping his kids. When the case ended, Jason had been awarded sole custody of his children, and the divorce (which looked as if it may become contested before MVLS became involved) was finalized with no further problems.

Although Jason and his children were the big winners, the case also deeply moved our volunteer. "Jason is a real 'father of the year' type," says Kristy. "Working with him and helping him succeed was just heartwarming."

"None of this would have happened without MVLS and Kristy," says Jason, who has maintained his positive attitude through all of his recent struggles. "When I needed a lawyer, she stepped up. That changed everything for me and the kids."

Volunteer Stu Simms

Represents MVLS Client in Court of Appeals

Last spring we reported that a court-appointed MVLS staff attorney successfully argued against the appointment of a guardian for a homeless client who had made repeated trips to a local hospital's emergency room for complications related to his diabetes. The hospital filed a guardianship petition asserting that the patient was unable to maintain his medication regimen and was disabled under the guardianship statute. Our client opposed the petition, saying that he would not follow any decision made by a guardian.

The hospital appealed the Circuit Court's denial of guardianship to the Court of Special Appeals. In an unreported decision, Judge James Eyler affirmed the Circuit Court's ruling. The hospital, again, appealed and the Court of Appeals granted certiorari.

MVLS cases typically never reach the Court of Appeals. We knew we needed an expert appellate advocate to effectively respond. Executive Director Bonnie Sullivan sought pro bono help from Brown, Goldstein, & Levy, a respected Baltimore litigation firm known for its advocacy on behalf of people with disabilities. Without hesitation, firm partner Stu Simms volunteered to handle briefing and oral argument.

Stu invested many hours of work on the appeal and was a zealous advocate for our client during oral argument. He achieved an unusual-but successful-result when the Court of Appeals ruled that certiorari was improvidently granted. Thanks in large part to his efforts, this important precedent in guardianship law was upheld. More important, Stu's advocacy helped an indigent client maintain his independence



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Legal assistance for people in need



MVLS Free Tax Training for LAWYERS

On Tuesday, September 13th, MVLS will hold its second – and final – attorney tax training of the year. This training will cover both IRS and Maryland tax controversies. Each attorney who attends agrees to accept a pro bono tax case from MVLS. **The event will run from 10AM until 4PM at the offices of Rosenberg, Martin & Greenberg at 25 South Charles Street in Baltimore.** If you plan to attend, please email Jamie Lee Fontaine at jfontaine@mvlslaw.org or call 443-451-4062.

MVLS & UB Civil Advocacy Clinic to Partner

In September, MVLS will begin placing clients with the University of Baltimore School of Law's Civil Advocacy Clinic. Law students under the supervision of professor-attorneys will represent our clients in a variety of matters, such as landlord/tenant disputes, foreclosures, and collection cases. This new collaboration brings a great benefit to both the UB clinical law students looking for real-world experience and our clients who need legal assistance. Special thanks go to Katie Loncarich, UB Law's Civil Advocacy Fellow, for spearheading efforts to establish this partnership.