

President's Corner



By Allen M. Terrell, Jr., Esquire

It is time to take care of business if you haven't already done so—the business of making your annual contribution to the Combined Campaign for Justice (“CCJ”). It is the responsibility of every member of our Bar to contribute to CCJ, since it is the only coordinated annual fundraising effort for the three non-profit agencies that provide legal services to those Delawareans who cannot afford it.

As members of the Bar, we have a responsibility to do our part to insure that the judicial system is accessible to those who could not otherwise afford to have their rights and interests protected. This is true regardless of your political and philosophical beliefs, whether you are liberal or conservative, a blue party or red party supporter. If you have been admitted to the Bar, you have sworn to support the legal system that is the cornerstone of our democracy. Our legal system is a hollow promise to those who cannot afford it, unless we help provide them with the means to access the law.

By way of reminder, Combined Campaign for Justice is led by dedicated members of the Bar and volunteers throughout the Bar, up-state and down-state, in private and public practice, large firms and solo practitioners. All the monies contributed go directly to the three agencies.

Three agencies are supported by the Combined Campaign for Justice: The Community Legal Aid Society, Inc. (“CLASI”); Delaware Volunteer Legal Services (“DVLS”); and the Legal Services Corporation of Delaware (“LSCD”). CLASI was founded in 1946, and has through the years provided civil legal services to thousands of Delawareans in matters of basic need, including landlord/

tenant disputes, welfare rights, consumer protection, domestic violence and family law cases. The mission of DVLS is to provide quality legal services to indigent Delaware residents with meritorious civil legal problems, including Protection from Abuse actions, divorce and custody cases involving domestic violence, guardianships, housing, landlord/tenant disputes, wills, government benefits, home ownership and consumer issues. LSCD's mission is also to provide legal advice and assistance to persons who cannot afford a private attorney. LSCD handles a variety of legal problems, including bankruptcy petitions and advice, consumer protection issues, housing problems (including eviction, foreclosure and unsafe housing), tax/IRS problems, and unemployment/benefit problems.

Don't think that your contributing, or lack thereof, does not make a difference. Over the last few years, the Campaign has raised annually over \$500,000.00 from members of the Bar, law firms, and legal departments of corporations and institutions. Since 2005, the Campaign has raised over \$750,000 per year (more than \$750,000 in 2005, more than \$900,000 in 2006, and more than \$775,000 in 2007). Delaware can be proud that it has the highest per capita contribution by any Bar Association.

The statistics above don't tell the story of what the Campaign does. For example (and this is only one of many), CLASI recently assisted a client with a Protection From Abuse order (PFA), custody and divorce. The woman came to CLASI for assistance after her husband was arrested and charged with 106 cases of sexual assault against her oldest daughter. Her youngest daughter had witnessed many

of the acts against her older sister. CLASI assisted the mother in obtaining a PFA against her husband. While he was in jail, the husband filed for custody and visitation rights to the youngest daughter. CLASI assisted the mother in filing for divorce against her husband, who had sent her several harassing letters from jail during the process. Despite being sentenced to prison for 15 years without the possibility of parole/probation or release for good behavior, the abuser sent her a letter requesting visitation with his daughter. Because of his criminal behavior to her older daughter, the mother was adamantly against any arrangement that would allow him visitation. CLASI helped her file for sole custody of their daughter. The judge granted full custody, denying the father visitation, and allowing him to send the daughter cards and letters to be reviewed by a therapist. The entire family are receiving counseling working to recover from this man's abusive actions.

In conclusion, I urge you to make your contribution to the Combined Campaign for Justice before the Campaign closes on December 31, 2008. There are three ways to make a donation. You can make an online pledge (for a one-time payment, monthly payments, or quarterly payments) at: <http://www.declasi.org/campaign/campaignpledge.html>, and you will receive a reminder in the mail when each payment is due. You can donate via telephone (VISA or Mastercard accepted) by calling (302)575-0660 ext. 235. You can also mail your donation directly to the following address: Combined Campaign for Justice 2008, P.O. Box 2113, Wilmington, DE 19899. For those who have already given or pledged your support, thank you. ☪