

THE THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT 2017 PRO BONO SERVICE AWARD WINNERS

Pro Bono Committee, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit

Chair: Hon. Christopher C. Nash - Thirteenth Judicial Circuit



The tenth annual Circuit Pro Bono Services Awards Ceremony was held on April 20, 2017. The ceremony was dedicated to the memory of attorney Blaise Gamba, whose long-term commitment to pro bono legal services and leadership in recruiting other attorneys helped to ensure that poor residents of Hillsborough County had access to the judicial system and legal recourse for their problems. The following were honored for their outstanding contributions of pro bono legal

services for the poor: attorneys Harley Herman, Lisa Beggs, Mark Wolfson, and Ella Shenhav; Parwani Law, P.A.; and the George Edgecomb Bar Association. Circuit practitioners who donated more than twenty hours of pro bono legal work also were recognized. The award nominations were submitted to the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit Pro Bono Committee, chaired by Judge Christopher C. Nash. The ceremony was hosted by the Committee, the Bay Area Legal Services' Volunteer Lawyers Program (BAVLP), and the HCBA, and was sponsored by

"Government is supposed to serve everyone equally, regardless of income or race. At least that's what youngsters are taught in civics class. It's a good thing there are people like Harley Herman around to make that happen in the real world, even if it takes a lawsuit."
— Mike Archer

Carlton Fields P.A., Foley Lardner LLP, Zuckerman Spaeder LLP, Shutts & Bowen LLP, and Vaka Law Group. **The Hillsborough County Bar Association's Jimmy Kynes Pro Bono Service Award** Harley Herman has been leading by example for more than 40 years. Based out of Plant City, where he served as the 2015 president of the Plant City Bar Association, Mr. Herman practices

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Award winners (left to right): Rinky Parwani, Parwani Law, P.A.; Ella Shenhav; Harley Herman; Mark Wolfson; Theresa Jean-Pierre Coy, George Edgecomb Bar Association; and Lisa Beggs.

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in the areas of elder law, estate planning, landlord-tenant, and small business formations and disputes. While attending the University of Florida Levin School of Law, he represented more than 30 pro bono clients. He was just getting started. Since law school, Mr. Herman has served poor clients as a lawyer, administrator, and board member of legal services organizations throughout Florida. In a small firm practice, he has continued to seek justice for poor people through his pro bono representation of individuals and organizations.

In 1991, Mr. Herman took on City Hall. The NAACP requested his assistance in trying to preserve an African-American residential and business district. The historical district was to be demolished to make room for a hospital. The minority businesses would be closed, and no alternative housing was proposed for the residents. The case ended up taking nearly a decade of extremely hard work, as well as personal and professional sacrifices. Mr. Herman never complained, and after he obtained a successful resolution, he did not gloat. Rather, as he explained in 1999 to a newspaper reporter, he simply hoped other local governments took note that their decisions should consider the situations of all citizens — not just developers and the affluent.²

In 2013, Mr. Herman moved his practice to Hillsborough County and began volunteering for the BAVLP by assisting low-income clients in foreclosure proceedings, probate matters, real property disputes, and tort litigation. In the last two years alone, he has devoted

hundreds of hours to the program. In addition to his pro bono service with the BAVLP, Mr. Herman is a contributor to programs run by the George Edgecomb Bar Association and the Tampa Hispanic Bar Association. He mentored younger Spanish-speaking attorneys in pro bono cases involving Spanish-speaking clients, allowing those attorneys to take on more complex cases. Recently, he organized an event honoring the UF Levin School of Law's Cuban Lawyers Program, which assisted Cuban exiles who were attorneys in Cuba to pass the Florida Bar. He also has served in leadership roles for the Florida Bar, including as chair of the Equal Opportunity Law Section, and assisted with the Lawyers Helping Lawyers program.

Outstanding Pro Bono Service by a Lawyer

Lisa Beggs, an attorney with Zuckerman Spaeder LLP for nearly twelve years, practices in the area of white collar criminal defense litigation. Ms. Beggs has shown extraordinary dedication to pursuing equal access and zealous representation for dependent children through Crossroads for Florida Kids. In less than four years, Ms. Beggs has dedicated approximately 800 pro bono hours (350 in 2016) of service to her young clients and their difficult and complex issues. She has advocated for her young clients in dependency, delinquency, criminal, and Baker Act proceedings, as well as to education officials, medical professionals, and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities.

Ms. Beggs has represented some of the most vulnerable children in our community's foster care system. She strives to make those children

feel just a little bit better about their current circumstances by showing them that they have a true advocate and that she will not abandon them. She does so with her legal acumen and her time. That involves courtroom proceedings and adversarial meetings, as well as staying the night in the hospital with a frightened client or connecting over Starburst candies and a game of UNO.

When asked about her pro bono service, Ms. Beggs referenced a quote by Maya Angelou: "Do the best you can until you know better, then when you know better, do better." Ms. Beggs noted that she applies that principle in her roles as a lawyer and a working mother. When it comes to her child clients, Ms. Beggs hopes that, through the justice system, she can provide them with a fair shot at a life of stability, success, hope, and, most importantly, happiness.

Outstanding Pro Bono Service by a Lawyer

Mark Wolfson, an attorney with Foley & Lardner, P.A., has 34 years of legal experience and serves as the firm's pro bono chair. He practices in the area of corporate bankruptcy and complex commercial litigation. Mr. Wolfson has been lead counsel on multiple complex workouts which collectively involved well over a billion dollars in real estate and corporate loans. Throughout his career, he has applied the same ingenuity and passion to his countless pro bono clients, including individuals and non-profit organizations.

Mr. Wolfson has consistently shown creativity, a willingness to

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help when others will not, and an ability to obtain successful resolutions. While serving on the BAVLP pro bono panel (where he has volunteered since 1995), Mr. Wolfson noticed that there were multiple guardianship matters needing pro bono counsel. After learning that it was difficult to find pro bono counsel for those matters, Mr. Wolfson took every case on the list. In a probate case, Mr. Wolfson's unprecedented procedural due process argument won the day, and a deceased's child was able to afford braces.

Through BALS' Judge Don Castor Community Law Center's Community Counsel Program, he provides pro bono transactional legal assistance involving complex real estate and contractual matters to nonprofit organizations in Hillsborough and Pasco Counties that serve the poor and distressed communities. In conjunction with the ABA's Military Pro Bono Project, he obtained a successful resolution for a soldier facing a lien on his real property. In another matter through the ABA's Project H.E.L.P. (Homeless Experience Legal Protection) clinic at Metropolitan Ministries, where he provides legal counsel to homeless individuals, Mr. Wolfson successfully fought for the return of his client's dogs. The client thanked him profusely, saying, "my dogs are my only real comfort other than my faith." Mr. Wolfson also continuously mentors less experienced pro bono attorneys within and outside of his firm.

When asked about his pro bono service, Mr. Wolfson explained that he enjoys complex cases with unusual legal issues and high

emotions, because that is where he can do the most good. He noted that a recent hug from his clients' son — a 21-year-old non-verbal, severely disabled young man — inspired him to take his next case. It is clear that Mr. Wolfson makes a difference wherever he places his energy, and our community would not be the same without him.

Outstanding Pro Bono Service by a Young Lawyer

Ella Shenhav is an attorney at Shutts & Bowen LLP, where she is a member of the Business Litigation Practice Group and the firm's Pro Bono Committee, and the head of the Tampa office's Pro Bono Committee. Ms. Shenhav focuses her practice on complex multi-faceted commercial litigation, in both state and federal courts.

Ms. Shenhav has handled well over thirty pro bono cases in her seven years of practice. Those cases included domestic violence restraining orders, bankruptcy, housing/landlord-tenant disputes, complex immigration, veteran re-integration issues, and human trafficking victims. Additionally, Ms. Shenhav has performed extensive research for a non-profit organization seeking to eradicate forced marriage in the United States, and for a non-profit that sought the prosecution of a Salvadorian ex-officer who was eventually charged with crimes against humanity and state terrorism. Ms. Shenhav also is the director of the Tampa chapter of Project H.E.L.P., a pro bono weekly clinic that offers legal advice and services to homeless and indigent clients. Recently, Ms. Shenhav led Shutts in staffing the clinic for an entire month.

Outstanding Pro Bono Service by a Law Firm

To paraphrase Shakespeare, although **Parwani Law** is a small firm, it has shown fierce dedication to pro bono legal work since opening its doors in Tampa in 2008. Most recently, the firm agreed to represent a woman and her son in seeking the termination of the young boy's father's parental rights. The father was incarcerated for the attempted murder of the boy's mother after brutally beating her in a public parking lot. The boy witnessed the attack from his car seat, and was found splattered with his mother's blood. The woman suffered devastating injuries to her eyeball, orbital bones, nasal cavity, and teeth, and required extensive surgery. For two years, Parwani Law dedicated its resources to ensuring the man's parental rights were terminated. Following a three-day trial, the petition was granted.

The firm, led by nineteen-year practitioner Rinky S. Parwani, consistently takes pro bono cases every year and contributes legal services through the BAVLP, Wills for Heroes, Ask-a-Lawyer, the Nativity Legal Ministry, and the Tampa Bay Bankruptcy Bar Association's Bankruptcy Clinic.

Outstanding Pro Bono Service by an Organization

The **George Edgecomb Bar Association** (GEBA) was founded by local attorneys in 1982 to promote the development of African-American lawyers and to improve legal services for the community. GEBA has a strong tradition of assisting, educating, and empowering individuals and

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families who do not know where to turn when facing legal and financial crises. For more than a decade, GEBA has hosted Legal Redress Workshops in churches and community centers located in predominately minority neighborhoods throughout Hillsborough County, to do just that.

Through its workshops, GEBA has provided opportunities for diverse attorneys to interact with the community by providing legal education and pro bono legal services. The attorneys provide the community with targeted information regarding timely and relevant topics, including immigration, criminal law, employment and housing discrimination, tenant rights, wrongful termination, bankruptcy, property and foreclosure law, and family law. The workshops also connect citizens with existing pro bono resources designed to assist with legal disputes or issues.

The attorneys lead classes lasting 60 to 90 minutes on a legal topic with a portion of the time dedicated to answering questions from the audience. GEBA also provides complimentary breakfast and lunch at the workshops, and the lunch usually features a presentation on a topic with broad appeal to the audience. Examples of past presentations include an overview of assistance available through Bay Area Legal Services and a viewing of "Before the Law Was Equal," a documentary produced by the Hillsborough County Bar Association's Young Lawyers Division that recounts the racial and gender inequality existing in the local bar in the 1960s and the great strides towards that diversity that have been made since then.

GEBA has been hosting the workshops at least once a year since 2004, and GEBA's attorneys have contributed nearly 2,000 hours of time.

¹ Mike Archer, "Pine Street Case Teaches Lessons," The Lake Sentinel (Mar. 21, 1999).

² *Id.* "When government is approached by a group of people who honestly believe they have been mistreated, don't make them feel like a band of con artists trying to nail the city").



Author: Rachel May Zysk - The Suarez Law Firm

The Thirteenth Judicial Circuit Pro Bono Committee commends the extraordinary service of the 2017 award recipients.

Lapel Pin Recipients 20-49 Pro Bono Hours in 2016

Deborah Adles
Stephanie Ambis
Wallace Anderson
Dale Appell
Jordan August
Razvan Axente
Deborah Baker
Thomas Baker
Amy Bandow
Jason Baruch
Zachary Bayne
Sean Becker
George Bedell
David Befeler
Cecilia Bidwell
Stacy Blank
Dane Blunt
Robyn Bonivich
Alan Borden
Yova Borovska
Christopher Branton

Cathleen Bremmer
Michael Broadus
Heather Brock
Courtney Bueno
Karen Buesing
Robert Buesing
Aubrey Burris
O. Kim Byrd
Patricia Calhoun
Amanda Chazal
John Clabby
Shannon Clancy-Kimball
Justin Cochran
Matthew Cogburn
Jeanne Coleman
Chris Coutroulis
Curt Creely
G. Thomas Curran, Jr.
Jamil Daoud
Blake Delaney
Wendy DePaul
Katelyn Desrosiers
Michelle Drab
Nicole Duga
Marc Edelman
Zara Elias
Kathryn Everlove-Stone
Keith Fendrick
Roxanne Fixsen
Megan Flatt
Robert Freedman
Richard Fueyo
Brannon Gary
Jon Gatto
Karen Gatto
Daniel Genet
James Giardina
Leonard Gilbert
William Giltinan
John Grandoff
Frank Greco
G. Gregory Green
Rachael Greenstein
Christopher Griffin
Jacob Hanson
Amy Denton Harris
Barbara Hart
Jourdan Haynes

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Erica Healey
Ryan Hedstrom
Sara Hellman
Dane Heptner
Elizabeth Herd
S. Gordon Hill
Michael Hooi
Jessica Hoyer
Frank Hu
Stacey Hudon
Tyler Hudson
Lauren Humphries
Thomas Hyde
Klodiana Hysenlika
Joryn Jenkins
Nehemiah Jefferson
Michael Kangas
Derek Kantaskas
Roy Kielich
Latour Lafferty
John Lamoureux
Robert Lang
George Matthew Lastinger
Conrad Lazo
Haksoo Stephen Lee
Edgel C. Lester, Jr.
Jack Levine
Richard Linqunti
Jamila Little
Thomas Little
Walter Little
Laurel Lockett
Erica Mallon
Fred C. "Kip" Marshall
Richard Martin
Erin McCormick
Andrew McCumber
Paul McDermott
Honorable Catherine McEwen
Brenda McMeekin
Elizabeth McRae
Stephanie Miles
Michael Millett
Dennis Morganstern
John Mulvihill
W. Edwards Muniz
Karan Nayee
Victoria Oguntoye

Laura Panaggio
Starr Parker
Terri Parker
Andrew Peluso
Kelley Petry
Jon Philipson
David Punzak
Jason Quintero
Robert Rainey
Susan Renne
Lee Rightmyer
Daphne Robinson-Shaw
Lawrence H. Samaha
Gary Sasso
Elizabeth Scarola
William Schwarz
Allison Selby
Susan Sharp
Kevin Shuler
Kenneth Siegel
Allison Singer
Jonathan Siragusa
Lori Skipper
Christopher Smart
Jane Sobotta
Marty Solomon
Traci Stevenson
Scott Stichter
Amy Stoll
Lauren Stricker
Charles Stutts
Kevin Sutton
Lauren Taylor
Kenneth Tinkler
Ashley Trehan
Sunjay Trehan
Matthew Tyson
Lauren Valiente
Joseph Varner
Naalti Vats
Steven Vazquez
John Vento
Edward Waller, Jr.
Roland Waller
Robert Walton
Morris "Sandy" Weinberg, Jr.
Randolph Wolfe
Barbara Yadley
Gwynne Young

50-99 Pro Bono Hours in 2016

Adam Alae
Michael Barnett
Erica Bartimmo
Judd Bean, II
Jason Brant
Nicholas Brown
Amanda Chafin
Marina Choundas
Louis Conti
Kamala Corbett
L. Carina Cutter
Fentrice Driskell
Nancy Faggianelli
Elizabeth Fontugne
Helen Fouse
Oxalis Garcia
Michelle Gilbert
Paige Greenlee
Caycee Hampton
Lynn Hanshaw
Melody Harness
Marcos Hasbun
R. Alan Higbee
Hugh Higgins
John Hittel
Erin Hoyle
Kiahhn' Jackson
Lorien Johnson
Suzanna Johnson
Cathy Kamm
Cristin Keane
Donald Kirk
David Knight
Edward Koren
Dominic Kouffman
Amber Kourofsky
Nathaniel Lacktman
Sarah Lahlou-Amine
Domenick Lazzara
Jordan Lee
Anne Leonard
Dallas LePierre
Lesly Longa
Robert Lovett
Ellen Lyons
William Malachowski
Stephanie Martin

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Morris Massey
Erik Matheney
Michael Matthews
Lily McCarty
Megan Odroniec
Omar Ojeda
Kristin Padgett
Anthony Palermo
Rinky Parwani
Maria Pavlidis
Kathryn Peluso
Scott Pence
Colton Peterson
Lauren Pizzo
Anitra Raiford
Michael Rothfeldt
Kelly Ruoff
Christopher Sacco
Albert Silva
Lakeisha Simms
David Singer
Debra Smietanski
Nicole Soto
Joseph Swanson
James J. Thorpe, Jr.
Lavinia Vaughn
Dirk Weed
James Wiley

Thomas Ferrante
Michelle Gervais
Paul Godfrey
Frederick Grady
Tami Lyn Gryns
Matthew Hall
Christopher Hamilton
Elizabeth Hapner
Melinda Harris
Harley Herman
Benjamin H. Hill, III
Nicholas Horner
George B. Howell, III
Jenay Iurato
Sarah Kay
Jennifer Lada
Joseph H. Lang, Jr.
David Lisko
Timothy Martin
Kathleen McLeroy
K. Patrick Meehan
A.J. "Stan" Musial

Mariko Outman
Edward Page
Jo Ann Palchak
Mark Rankin
Ryan Reinert
Mark Robens
Craig Rothburt
Isabel "Cissy" Boza Sevelin
Ella Shenhav
Olin Shivers
Tori Simmons
Patrick Skelton
Michael Stuckey
Kendyl Tash
Stephen Todd
Sylvia Walbolt
Nicholas Williams
Mamie Wise
Mark Wolfson
Brent Woody
Katherine Yanes
Rachel May Zysk

100 or more Pro Bono Hours in 2016

Jacqueline Acosta
Alison Allman
Chris Altenbernd
Stacy Appleton
Rosemary Armstrong
Lisa Beggs
Adam Bild
E. Kelly Bittick, Jr.
Donald Bly
Noel Boeke
Fredrique "Dika" Boire
Rachael Bushey
Matthew Conigliaro
Lawrence Dougherty
Brandon Faulkner
Scott Feather
James Felman

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