

The COMMISSION QUARTERLY

News from the New Jersey Commission on Professionalism in the Law

The Bar's Compassionate Response to Tragedy

Liberty State Park in Jersey City is not a site we think of when contemplating the legal profession and those who toil within it. However, the tragic events of September 11 transformed the waterfront park into a center for New Jersey relief efforts. Through the coordinated efforts of the New Jersey Attorney General's Office, the New Jersey State Bar Association (NJSBA) and other interested organizations, the Family Assistance Center was established at the park.

A key component of the assistance offered there has been the work of volunteer lawyers. Since mid-September these attorneys met with victim's families and friends to help them navigate intimidating bureaucratic and legal shoals. Hundreds of volunteers participated in the effort at the Family Assistance Center. Others did similar work by telephone as part of disaster response programs established by bar associations.

The volunteer efforts continue today, even though work at the Liberty Park facility has been curtailed. Training programs coordinated by the State Bar Association, the Essex County Bar, Rutgers Law School—Newark, a number of law firms and public interest groups have enlisted over 300 volunteer lawyers who are activated through a computerized assignment system that tracks callers seeking help and matches them with available lawyers in the caller's county or region. The system also permits callers to be routed to specialists in particular legal fields. To date, the system has handled hundreds of calls and provided help to clients throughout the state. Ray Noble, coordinator of NJSBA efforts says "I have never seen anything like the way lawyers are contributing their time and talent to assist those suffering in the aftermath of this disaster. Their efforts certainly counter a thousand greedy lawyer jokes".

Rutgers Law School Dean, and member of the Commission, Stuart Deutsch calls the

volunteer lawyers "real heroes and role models, not only for other lawyers, but for the public." One hundred fifty law school students from Rutgers and Seton Hall were trained to assist the lawyers who provide counseling. Deutsch says that "at a time when we are seeking ways to encourage professionalism, it is exemplified in the selfless contributions of hundreds of lawyers and students. We should make sure that future generations of lawyers know about their efforts".

Legal relief efforts have involved a number of bar associations. The New Jersey State Bar Association worked with the state Attorney General's Office, the New York State Bar Association, and the Association of the Bar of the City of New York in providing assistance to next-of-kin of New Jersey victims seeking New York death certificates. This streamlined procedure eliminated red tape and permitted timely filing of probate proceedings. The NJSBA and county bar associations also provided *pro bono* assistance at Surrogate's Offices.

The Essex County Bar Association (ECBA) utilized its Volunteer Lawyers for Justice program to meet demands for legal advice and counseling. Program coordinator Karen Saks says that the ECBA was thrilled with the favorable response of its members who have handled inquiries about estate, employment, guardianship and family law related problems. ECBA members also helped compile a legal information handbook and six law firms in the county donated their copying facilities to reproduce the report and other materials. The ECBA, as well as the NJSBA, maintains a telephone hotline available to the victims, spouses and families of the September 11 tragedy.

The Bergen County Bar Association has also had an active team of lawyers who are providing support to disaster victims and families. Other county bar associations have responded by producing scores of volunteers.

The New Jersey branch of the Association of Trial Lawyers of America, through its affiliate Trial Lawyers Care, Inc., provides free legal advice for disaster victims considering registering for the new federal Compensation Fund for September 11 Victims.

The work of the volunteers has not gone unnoticed. Chief Justice Deborah T. Poritz stopped at Liberty State Park and toured the World Trade Center site with Attorney General John Farmer. She is "proud of the lawyers who have selflessly given their time to help the families of this terrible tragedy. Their effort shows the profession at its very best." ☞

New Jersey Commission on Professionalism in the Law

Chair

Hon. Deborah T. Poritz, Chair

Joseph A. Bottitta, Esq.

Elizabeth Logan Buff

Hon. Rudy B. Coleman

Denise M. Crump, Esq.

Dean Stuart Deutsch

Alan I. Gould, Esq.

Dean Patrick E. Hobbs

Professor Douglas N. Husak

Joel A. Leyner, Esq.

Hon. Sybil R. Moses

Deborah Metzger Mulvey, Esq.

Hon. Stephen M. Orlofsky

Ronald J. Riccio, Esq.

Dean Rayman L. Solomon

Hon. Edwin H. Stern

James Youngelson, Esq.

Advisers

Hon. Virginia Long

Hon. Daniel J. O'Hern

Executive Director

Charles J. Hollenbeck, Esq.

Award Winners Hailed at Annual Symposium

The Commission held its sixth annual Symposium on Professionalism at the Law Center on October 5, 2001. Lawyers and judges packed the auditorium to "Celebrate the Profession", the theme of the half-day event.

The audience heard from a distinguished opening discussion panel moderated by Professor Paula Franzese of Seton Hall Law School. The panel included New Jersey Supreme Court Justice Virginia Long, Chief Judge John Bissell of the United States District Court, Ronald J. Riccio and Paul A. Rowe. During a wide-ranging discussion, they revealed their "heroes" in the law, proudest moments as lawyers, and hopes for the future of the profession.

The Commission presented its Daniel J. O'Hern Award to Matthias D. Dileo of Wilentz, Goldman & Spitzer in Woodbridge. The award, for career achievement and commitment to professionalism, was presented by retired Justice O'Hern who served as an advisor to the Commission since its inception in 1995. Dileo, long active in bar activities, is a past president of the State Bar Association and the Middlesex County Bar Association. It was during his term as NJSBA president that a proposal for a professionalism commission was formulated and endorsed by association leaders. He also was a guiding force behind the creation of the Lawyers Assistance Program that provides counseling assistance for lawyers suffering from substance abuse and compulsive gambling. Justice Virginia Long, who presented the award along with Justice O'Hern said "Matt is an example of a real professional, one who has succeeded as a lawyer and a leader because he respects the values that have long defined our profession."

One of the highlights of the day was the presentation of Professional Lawyer of the Year awards to lawyers from bar associations across the state. These outstanding practitioners were selected by county and specialty bar associations because of their competence, character, and commitment to the highest standards of the profession. This year's class of award winners represents a true cross section of the bar, including three gentlemen who have been in practice for over fifty years. The award winners, and their sponsoring bar associations, are as follows:

ATLANTIC COUNTY	Phillip H. Schick
BERGEN COUNTY	Allen M. Bell
BURLINGTON COUNTY	William H. Buckman
CAMDEN COUNTY	Warren W. Faulk



Oakford Acton Jr. and Chief Judge John Bissell at "Celebrate the Profession" at the Commission's sixth annual symposium.

CAPE MAY COUNTY	William R. Serber
CUMBERLAND COUNTY	John A. Casarow Jr.
ESSEX COUNTY	Alan V. Lowenstein
GLOUCESTER COUNTY	Eugene P. Chell
HUDSON COUNTY	George R. Wiggs
HUNTERDON COUNTY	Richard P. Cushing
MERCER COUNTY	Barry D. Szaferman
MIDDLESEX COUNTY	E. Ronald Wright
MONMOUTH COUNTY	Stafford W. Thompson
MORRIS COUNTY	Anita R. Hotchkiss
OCEAN COUNTY	Joan L. Murphy



Matthias D. Dileo, recipient of the 2001 Daniel J. O'Hern Award is joined by Justice Virginia Long and retired Justice O'Hern.

PASSAIC COUNTY	Thomas R. DeVita
SALEM COUNTY	Oakford W. Acton
SOMERSET COUNTY	Raymond R. Trombadore
SUSSEX COUNTY	Harold T. McGovern
UNION COUNTY	Lawrence A. Woodruff
WARREN COUNTY	William J. Bizub
ASIAN PACIFIC LAWYERS	Calvin P. Wong
GARDEN STATE BAR	Regina Waynes Joseph
HISPANIC BAR	Peter A. Garcia
NJ STATE BAR	William J. Kane
NJ WOMEN LAWYERS	Norma Rosenblum

Chief Justice Sets Commission Agenda

Chief Justice Deborah T. Poritz has assumed leadership of the Commission, succeeding as chair former Seton Hall Law School Dean Ronald J. Riccio. The Chief Justice met with the Commission for the first time on November 15. She indicated that one of the top priorities of the Commission will be to encourage and undertake educational efforts for lawyers and judges. She said "education is the key component in improving professional behavior. Professionalism cannot be mandated, but rather must be encouraged and nurtured."

In this regard, the Commission and the Institute for Continuing Legal Education (ICLE) cosponsored seminars in December. The seminars, *Playing By the Rules*, focused on professional responsibility in everyday practice and attempted to bring home a simple but important message – adherence to ethics rules and professional standards breeds success in law practice. The seminars focused on professional responsibility issues that arise in daily

practice situations and the feedback from attendees was very positive.

The judiciary has now made it clear that judges as well as lawyers will benefit from professionalism courses. The Chief Justice announced that judges attending the annual Judicial College would be asked to attend at least one program that deals with professionalism issues. She stated that "the judiciary must do all it can to promote professionalism and encourage judges to serve as positive examples." The judiciary will also include a session on professionalism in its training course for newly appointed judges.

The Commission is planning a working conference for county bar association leaders that will explore the organized bar's role in promoting professionalism. The conference will facilitate a sharing of information about successful professionalism programs and initiatives. It is expected that the conference will be held in early Spring 2002 at the Law Center in New Brunswick. ☞