

Defining Superstars

by Alfred M. Randolph Jr., Co-Chair, VBA Community Service Program Council

The VBA's Community Service Program was founded to encourage Virginia lawyers to engage in community service and to recognize lawyers who devote a certain amount of time to such service. The efforts of our Community Service Program Council in the first half of the inaugural year of our Program have been focused principally upon encouraging lawyers to sign up to become 2004 VBA Community Servants and/or VBA Pro Bono Servants.

However, an important message should be gleaned from the work of those who designed and are promoting this Program. While extraordinary commitments of time and resources by those who are positioned to make such commitments certainly merit universal acclaim, it is the quiet, persistent, albeit more modest, devotion of time and resources by those engaged in the delicate balancing act of family, career and community that is just as worthy of recognition and praise.

When the Community Service Subgroup of the VBA's Strategic Group on New Dimensions of Professionalism was charged in 2001 with designing a program to promote community service and pro bono publico legal work, we nearly fell prey to the temptation to define noteworthy commitment to community service and pro bono publico legal work as commitments of extraordinary numbers of hours to this work. In addition, I even suggested to our later-formed Community Service Program Council that we bestow an annual award upon a Virginia lawyer who had demonstrated the most

extraordinary commitment of hours to community service and pro bono publico legal work in a given year. Thankfully, my fellow subgroup and Council members quickly grounded those ideas and focused our work on the fact that community service and pro bono publico legal work by lawyers, even at modest levels, are worthy of our praise and, in many instances, truly constitute commitments of superstar proportions.

My own understanding of and appreciation for this perspective has come slowly but has been forged by my own, personal experience. My wife and I now have three young boys (9, 4 and 2), I have a busy and demanding law practice, and, yes, I have made many commitments to community service work. Each time we added a child to our family, the number of hours in the day seemed to shrink. Juggling family, career and community service became increasingly difficult. The bottom line of this growth curve has been my gradual development of the realization that it's okay to say "no" to requests to give of time or resources to community service which unduly infringe upon other priorities in our lives. In other words, the juggling act in which we're all engaged is truly a remarkable feat, particularly when all the balls happen to stay in the air for a sustained period of time! In short, don't measure your work by the magnitude of your commitment, but rather by its quality. Engage in community service work, but avoid over-commitment that prevents you from meeting previously made commitments.

This summer, I attended the Pro Bono Awards Luncheon at the Virginia State Bar Annual Meeting in Virginia Beach and sat next to an attorney from another part of the state who had returned to law school after rearing several children. She had opened her own law practice a few years ago and had developed a thriving practice in domestic relations. As we talked during lunch, she shared with me her schedule and that of her husband. She typically arrives at the office at 8 a.m. after driving her granddaughter (for whom she cares) to school, she works until 6 p.m., returns home, prepares dinner for her family, returns to the office at 8 p.m., and works until midnight. Her husband rises at 4 a.m., commutes two hours to work, returns home at 4 p.m. to pick up his granddaughter from school and care for her. He goes to sleep at 8 p.m. In sharing this with me, she also shared with me her commitment to pro bono publico legal work. Albeit modest in magnitude, she somehow fits pro bono publico legal work into her amazing schedule. To me, even though her commitment of hours is modest in magnitude, she is a pro bono "superstar" in every sense of the word, clearly worthy of our recognition and praise.

It was examples like this which led our subgroup to design a Community Service Program which established relatively modest hour thresholds (50 hours) for recognition. Some will dedicate many more than 50 hours, but we recognized that many who dedicate 50 are making tremendous sacrifices to do so.

The point is that the practice of

law is a jealous mistress, as is raising and providing for a family. But Virginia lawyers have always found a way to give something back while somehow “keeping all the balls in the air.” Our Council’s message is simple; if we all do our part, even if modest in magnitude, we can accomplish some remarkable things.

So be secure in knowing that a commitment of 50 hours a year to community service and/or pro bono publico legal work for many constitutes a superstar effort in and of itself, worthy of recognition. And that’s precisely what your Community Service Program is designed to do, even if your hourly commitment is modest in magnitude, because even your modest commitment is remarkable in its own right.

There is still time to become a VBA Community Servant or Pro Bono Servant! Forms and details are available online at www.vba.org. **VBA**

To join the **VBA Community Service Program**, visit the Community Service Program page on the VBA website at www.vba.org, print out a commitment form for “VBA Pro Bono Servant” or “VBA Community Servant” and complete it, then send it to the VBA office.

You’ll commit yourself to **perform 50 hours of pro bono publico legal service or nonlegal community service** this year. Later, you’ll receive a form to report your service to the VBA, and early in 2005 the Association will publicly recognize lawyers who have completed and reported their service.

If you’re looking for service opportunities, the web page includes **links to a number of organizations** which could use your help.

Questions? Just give us a ring at **(804) 644-0041** if you don’t find all the details you need on the website. Make the commitment today!

Look for the yellow buttons: VBA Community Service Program gets more exposure around Virginia



Gant Redmon, chair of the VBA Law Practice Management Division and member of the VBA Board of Governors recently received the Alexandria Bar

Association’s Don Mela Community Service/Pro Bono Award, which is presented to an attorney in recognition of outstanding community service and/or pro bono work.

Redmon, shown at left with then-President Tom Cullen, who presented the award, was chosen for his many community service activities, including VBA Community Service Program

membership, and wore his yellow Community Service Program button to the award presentation (see inset). A past president of the Alexandria Rotary Club and past chair of the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, he was named Alexandria’s Business Leader of the Year for 1995 and chaired a task force which developed a vision for Alexandria in the 21st century. He was special counsel to the Presidential Inaugural Committee in 1981, 1985 and 1989. Two international geological congresses convened in the United States selected him as their general counsel, as did the Desert Storm National Victory Celebration in 1991. An active alumnus of Beta Theta Pi, he currently serves as the fraternity’s vice president. is a past-president of its Washington area alumni association and was active in securing housing for Beta Theta Pi’s Maryland chapter. He chaired the Sigma Rho (University of Illinois chapter) Centennial Fund, a capital campaign to fund chapter house restoration, and has been a facilitator at the Fraternity’s Institute for Men of Principle.

VBA Board of Governors member **Greg St. Ours** of Harrisonburg and Past President **Jeanne Franklin** of Alexandria (right) were among the volunteers who staffed a Community Service Program booth/recruitment center at the Virginia State Bar Annual Meeting in Virginia Beach this summer. A number of VBA/CSP leaders and volunteers have been out and about at various statewide and local bar events this year, promoting the Community Service Program and encouraging lawyers to sign up, and will continue to do so through the end of this year. Attorneys who complete their commitments will be recognized publicly in early 2005.

