connecting justice communities

Pro Bono Net 2010 ANNUAL REPORT

probono.net

Letter from the Executive Director

Pro Bono Net was formed in 1998 with a singular mission: use technology to overcome barriers to providing legal services to poor and marginalized populations. And while technology remains central to all that we do and achieve, it is the power of innovation and collaboration that has grown our network, and that keeps it strong, vital and evolving.

As you'll see in the following pages, Pro Bono Net has grown tremendously from its early days as a New York City-based experiment in improving access to justice, to a truly national organization with remarkable reach. Today, hundreds of organizations, thousands of attorneys and millions of people in need across the U.S. and Canada are touched by our programs. In partnership with our collaborators across the United States and Canada, we enable legal advocates to have greater impact, increase volunteer participation, and provide direct assistance to those in need of basic legal services.

As Pro Bono Net has matured and expanded, the need for legal services has also increased, rising sharply most recently as a result of the economic crisis. Legal aid organizations nationwide face severe budget cuts while struggling to help growing numbers of poor and vulnerable people facing eviction, foreclosure, denial of benefits, domestic violence, child custody disputes and other devastating civil legal issues. Against this backdrop, Pro Bono Net allows legal aid organizations to do more with fewer resources and enables collaboration and sharing of best practices; connects pro bono attorneys with opportunities and practice resources; and empowers those in need to help themselves.

Pro Bono Net's successes range in scale, from allowing a domestic violence victim to fill out an online form to obtain an order of protection, to leveraging technology to build collaboration among large, national groups to address an issue like immigration. I am proud to share with you some examples of this work, and to highlight the efforts of our dedicated staff and a few of our partnerships that are the cornerstone of so much of what we do.

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Mark O'Brien Executive Director, Pro Bono Net



Why We Do What We Do

Your family has been unlawfully evicted from your home. Your child has been denied the opportunity for special education. You've lost your job and have been denied unemployment insurance. These situations all represent a turning point where access to legal assistance and information can change the direction of a person's life. Unfortunately, for millions of low income and disadvantaged people across the United States, our justice system remains daunting at best and completely inaccessible at worst. Without access to an attorney, a required form, or basic information about legal rights, the situation of a person in need can rapidly become dire.

Since its founding in 1999, Pro Bono Net has been working to advance and transform the way legal help reaches the underserved, through innovative technology solutions and expertise in building and mobilizing justice networks. Pro Bono Net's programs enable legal advocates to have greater impact, increase volunteer participation, and provide assistance directly to the public.

Every day, Pro Bono Net's programs facilitate thousands of actions that bring justice to those who otherwise wouldn't have access to legal assistance. Its innovative technology platforms and deep collaborative experience help increase the capacity of hundreds of legal aid and pro bono organizations nationwide, enabling these groups to do more with less at a time of widespread budget-cutting. Pro Bono Net encourages and supports partnerships among groups with a common goal, ultimately allowing more clients to receive help.

Pro Bono Net's core programs—probono.net, LawHelp.org, Law Help Interactive, and Pro Bono Manager—address the growing chasm between the need for and availability of highquality, free legal services, and help those who seek them, as well as the legal aid and pro bono community, law firms and courts.

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Nearly 5,000 immigration legal service providers and advocates from across the country are members of the Immigration Advocates Network.

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Mobilizing for Action

In times of public tragedy and widespread hardship, swift and efficient legal advocacy can make the difference between hope and despair for thousands of people. Pro Bono Net's ability to use technology to mobilize a corps of advocates and provide critical information has proven vital when addressing areas of emerging need.

Over the last 12 years, Pro Bono Net has brought together hundreds of partners around shared issues, uniting far-flung groups to exchange resources and best practices, pooling information and advocates, to make a difference in the lives of countless families and individuals across the country.

Immigration Advocates Network

Pro Bono Net partnered with leading national immigration advocacy groups to develop the Immigration Advocates Network (IAN). With pilot funding from the Carnegie Corporation, IAN was launched in 2008 with the goal of fostering collaboration among leading immigration advocacy and legal support providers working to increase access to justice for low-income immigrants. Pro Bono Net provided the technology and the ongoing organizational support necessary to build the platform and ensure its success.

Through its website (www.immigrationadvocates.org), which includes webinars, message boards, podcasts, videos, RSS feeds and social media, IAN facilitates knowledge-sharing among nonprofits, legal advocates, pro bono attorneys and others. An overworked, under-resourced staff member of a nonprofit in rural Oklahoma, for example, can log on to the IAN site to watch training videos with leading experts, gaining valuable insight that will enable her to help her clients. Nominated for a Webby award for Best Law Site the past three years, IAN increases the impact of advocates serving low-income immigrants.

- Nearly 5,000 nonprofit and pro bono advocates representing every state in the country are IAN members.
- IAN offers 12 different libraries coordinated by national immigration experts and includes more than 4,500 resources.
- Forty-six percent of IAN members serve rural areas and fifty-five percent are from programs with fewer than five advocates.

National Disaster Legal Aid Resource Center

Created by Pro Bono Net in collaboration with three partner organizationsthe American Bar Association, Legal Services Corporation and the National Legal Aid & Defender Association-the National Disaster Legal Aid site (www. disasterlegalaid.org) provides critical information for victims of natural disasters and the legal aid attorneys and pro bono volunteers seeking to help them. From guidance on how to file insurance claims to finding volunteer opportunities to locating temporary housing, the site offers detailed and comprehensive resources that would otherwise be spread over dozens of disparate websites.

The site has its origins in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, when it became clear that there was a pressing need for a clearinghouse of legal aid, pro bono and public defender information. Thanks to its unique capability to bring together legal resources quickly and efficiently, Pro Bono Net launched the Katrina Legal Aid Resource Center just over a month after the hurricane first made landfall. That site ultimately evolved into the National Disaster Legal Aid site, and continues to be a crucial resource for thousands of people today.

46% of IAN members are from rural programs and 55% are from small programs with fewer than five advocates.



"We have the largest law firm for poor people in Georgia courtesy of Pro Bono Net."

Mike Monahan, Director, Pro Bono Project, State Bar of Georgia

Empowering Those Who Serve

probono.net

Little is more fulfilling than using your skills to transform the lives of others. For many attorneys, bringing justice to those in need is the most satisfying application of the time and resources invested in pursuing a legal career. Pro bono work allows attorneys to use their skills to better society in a direct and immediate way.

Since 2001, more than 80,000 lawyers from all 50 states have logged onto www.probono.net to join the largest community of pro bono and nonprofit advocates in the United States. There they have access to pro bono opportunities, practice resources, training materials, and more.Their activity in 2010 totaled more than two million site visits, more than five million page views and over a million downloads.

For legal aid and pro bono groups, probono.net provides a central site on which to aggregate practice resources and volunteer opportunities, publish news and training calendars and facilitate communication.

Probono.net has proven to be an indespensible online resource for legal aid nonprofits, pro bono attorneys, law professors and students, connecting them to opportunities, training, mentors and practice areas.

Mike Monahan

Director, Pro Bono Project, State Bar of Georgia

Mike Monahan has served as director of the Georgia State Bar's Pro Bono Project for 14 years, and for nearly that long, he's also been collaborating with Pro Bono Net. Mike worked closely with Pro Bono Net during the development of the probono.net platform, and over the years, has seen it enable a rich and robust pro bono legal community across Georgia.

Mike notes, "The probono.net platform has allowed us to break down silos across the state's many legal services programs and organizations, to share more information and resources on a statewide level."

The site, at www.georgiaadvocates.org, is a joint project of the Georgia Legal Services Program and the Atlanta Legal Aid Society. Like all state sites that use the probono. net platform, GeorgiaAdvocates provides information, training, webinars, an online law library and online legal document templates, among other resources, to attorneys interested in pro bono work. It currently counts about 3,000 volunteer lawyers as members, who download on average between 4,000 and 8,000 legal documents each month.

"There are so many people who need access to justice and in most cases, a volunteer attorney or legal services advocate is their only lifeline. The probono.net platform enables us to easily and efficiently support the legal services community, and continuously update and expand our offering, whether that's a new practice area, like military law, or a new service like LiveHelp," Mike said.

Real Help in Real Time

LawHelp.org

How can I regain custody of my child? What is a fair hearing? As an immigrant, am I entitled to public health insurance? Finding the right answers to these questions can be difficult without the help of an attorney. LawHelp. org (www.LawHelp.org) provides a platform where low- and moderate-income people can find answers to crucial questions affecting their lives, as well as local legal aid referrals, answers to questions about legal rights, court information and self-help tools.

Organized into key areas of law such as workers' rights, health, taxes and family law, among others, and with information written at a fifth to seventh grade reading level, content on the 28 state-based websites in the LawHelp.org network breaks down complicated legal information, making it manageable and understandable. LawHelp.org resources are maintained in partnership with legal aid, pro bono and court-based programs across the country.

LiveHelp

Pro Bono Net and its partners are committed to ensuring that LawHelp.org is accessible to all. In 2009, it helped launch LiveHelp, a real-time, online chat service that allows users who have difficulty navigating the site to chat with a volunteer trained in finding legal resources. LiveHelp is currently available in ten states. In 2010, nearly 10,000 individual acts of help were completed through the LiveHelp program—both live chats and through email, a nearly 200 percent increase in use of the program from the prior year.

- In 2010, more than three million client resources were downloaded from LawHelp.org, a 12% increase from the previous year.
- LawHelp.org averages more than four million annual visitors, representing about 20 million page views.

Sam Alpert AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer, Montana Legal Services Association

During his time as an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer at the Montana Legal Services Association, Sam helped expand LawHelp.org's LiveHelp service by creating guides for program volunteers and troubleshooting technical issues. He saw firsthand how LiveHelp volunteers can help bring justice to disadvantaged people.

"Every LiveHelp encounter is unique. Assisting people who aren't comfortable or familiar with using the Internet to find critically needed legal information and referrals has really brought home the usefulness of the service. Having that human element to explain or guide you can really make the difference between success and failure when you are in a tough situation and trying to figure out how to find help."



iAyuda Gratuita Através de la Red!





"Living in a legal system that seems almost purposely confusing at times, this service is very much appreciated."

LawHelp User, California

Enabling Self-help

Understanding how to complete a legal document can mean the difference between stability and crisis for a family. LawHelp Interactive (www.lawhelpinteractive.org), a free online legal document assembly service, empowers people without access to legal representation to achieve justice on their own. Interactive online interviews, created by legal aid and court access-to-justice programs, enable users to draft complete, properly-formatted legal documents, and increase efficiency for pro bono and legal aid attorneys.

The influx of unrepresented litigants in recent years has put strains on overstretched court staff, reducing efficiency and creating frustration for clerks and judges. LawHelp Interactive has helped address this problem, and has led to the creation of unprecedented partnerships between courts and legal aid organizations. One such partnership is being played out in court-based self-help centers across New York City's Family Court, where thousands of unrepresented litigants are able to successfully access the justice system on Do-It-Yourself computer terminals, aided by volunteer lawyers. Prior to the implementation of the LawHelp Interactive programs, litigants could spend an entire day waiting for court personnel to complete and file a petition and produce a summons or other necessary legal document. With the self-help centers, the entire process can take as little as 15 minutes. Information and documents are available in eight languages; Spanish-speaking litigants are able to print out their documents in Spanish while filing the same document in English with the court.

In 2010, nearly 220,000 documents were completed using LawHelp Interactive, a 48% increase over the previous year. Commonly used forms include those for family law issues such as child support and custody visitation, consumer debt, landlord-tenant issues and wills.

Diane Trunk Staff Attorney, Neighborhood Legal Services Pacoima, CA

Diane Trunk is one of hundreds of legal aid providers across the country who are using LawHelp Interactive to streamline the document preparation process. Ms. Trunk and her colleagues at Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County (NLSLA) use the LawHelp Interactive platform to help domestic violence survivors in their courthouse restraining order clinics. "Based on information obtained in a single interview, we're able to complete every form that a domestic violence survivor will need in their case," Diane noted. "This is a tremendous time saver for us and a lot less demanding for the survivor."

But speed is not the only improvement brought by LawHelp Interactive. The program is designed with an attorney's knowledge "built-in" through features that flag difficult issues that require consultation with a backup attorney. The NLSLA backup attorney is able to review remotely any legal documents on LawHelp Interactive that are produced by any of the agency's four clinics spread over 100 miles.

LawHelp Interactive has helped NLSLA reach out to domestic violence survivors in shelters, police stations and other locations as well. As long as a volunteer has access to a computer, she can work anywhere and have electronic access to a backup attorney for review and approval of forms.



"What a wonderful resource you've provided... this program made me feel a lot safer and calmer about facing the Housing Clerk tomorrow."

LawHelp Interactive User, New York



"Pro Bono Manager helps us deliver on our strategic goals...It makes sure our pro bono program runs efficiently and with continuity."

Cristin Zeisler, Partner & Director of Pro Bono Services, Manatt, Phelps & Phillips

Channeling the Power of Pro Bono

probonomanager

Pro bono work not only enriches our communities by providing much-needed legal services to disadvantaged populations, but also enriches a law firm's own culture and growth. A strong pro bono program at a law firm aids in recruiting talented law school graduates; it allows associates to augment skills outside their practice area and develop mentoring relationships with partners; and it cultivates pride and job satisfaction, all of which enhances a firm's reputation.

Although pro bono work is a crucial tool that pays dividends in a variety of areas, even the smallest amount of time spent organizing pro bono activities can be costly to a firm. Maintaining a pro bono program that matches the right attorneys with the right volunteer opportunities at the right point in their careers can require hundreds of administrative hours a year. In addition to being tasked with bringing cases to the firm, a pro bono administrator is typically responsible for pulling data from a variety of sources for reporting and tracking purposes, as well as fielding email correspondence with attorneys, reporting hours and assignments.

In 2008 Pro Bono Net launched Pro Bono Manager, a customized, hosted web application that allows a firm to better manage and promote its pro bono program. By automating an otherwise labor-intensive process, Pro Bono Manager saves law firms hundreds of administrative hours per year and helps them build their pro bono programs. In turn, revenue generated from licensing the Pro Bono Manager program funds core programs of Pro Bono Net, reducing dependence on grants and other restricted funding. Pro Bono Manager is currently being used by ten leading international firms and, through them, by more than 7,000 lawyers within those firms.

financials

Summarized financial activity for the year ending December 31, 2010.

STATEMENT OF NET ASSETS

	2010		
	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total
Support and Revenue			
Contributions	\$ 710,754	\$ 198,716	\$ 909,470
Corporate sponsorship	167,093	-	167,093
Donated software	16,200	-	16,200
Donated goods and services	313,328	-	313,328
Interest and other income	8,400	-	8,400
Program fees	1,106,709	-	1,106,709
Product subscription fees	435,472	-	435,472
Net assets released from restriction	463,707	(463,707)	-
Total support and revenue	3,221,663	(264,991)	2,956,672
Expenses			
Program services	2,592,245	-	2,592,245
Management and general	262,060	-	262,060
Fund raising	181,270	-	181,270
Total expenses	3,035,575	-	3,035,575
Change in net assets	186,088	(264,991)	(78,903)
Net assets			
Beginning	857,975	563,707	1,421,682
Ending	\$ 1,044,063	\$ 298,716	\$ 1,342,779

financials



REVENUE GROWTH



supporters & partners

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTERS

Ambrose Monell Foundation Booth Ferris Foundation Carnegie Corporation of New York Four Freedoms Fund Hyde & Watson Foundation Legal Services Corporation New York Bar Foundation New York Community Trust New York State IOLA Fund Silicon Valley Community Foundation Taproot Foundation Zellerbach Family Foundation

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IN-KIND SUPPORT

These organizations provided donated goods or services in 2010. Davis Polk & Wardwell Fish & Richardson HotDocs Microsoft

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Those listed below contributed \$1,000 or more in 2010. John Alber Frank Azzopardi LeeAnn Black Michael Cooper Douglas Durst Alan Greer Peter R. Haje David & Barbara Heiner Michael Hertz & Dorothy Thomas Steven L. Holley John Knight Douglas & Wendy Kreeger Jack Londen Suzette Brooks Masters & Seth Masters Michael Mills Kenneth A. O'Brien, Jr. William Pollak Michael & Sheila Walsh Stephen Warnke

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Among the more than 300 public interest legal organizations that have joined us in meeting the challenge of increasing access to justice by embracing collaboration and new technologies, the following partners merit special recognition.

National LawHelp Advisory Committee

Jonathan Asher, Colorado Legal Services Joan Fairbanks, Washington State Bar Association and Access to Justice Board Phyllis Holmen, Georgia Legal Services Program Patrick McClintock, Iowa Legal Aid Sam Milkes, Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network Raun Rasmussen, Legal Services NYC

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Immigration Advocates Network Working Group

ACLU Immigrants' Rights Project American Bar Association Commission on Immigration American Immigration Lawyers Association American Immigration Council ASISTA Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. Immigrant Legal Resource Center Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service National Immigration Law Center National Immigration Project, NLG The Advocates for Human Rights

Pro Bono Manager Law Firms

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LawHelp.org Partner Organizations

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probono.net Host Organizations

ABA Center for Pro Bono ABA Commission on Domestic Violence ABA Death Penalty Representation Project ABA Standing Committee on Legal Assistance for Military Personnel ACLU Racial Justice Program The Advocates for Human Rights Association of Pro Bono Counsel Bet Tzedek Blue Ridge Legal Services The Bronx Defenders City Bar Justice Center Corporate Counsel Pro Bono Coordinators (NYC) Finger Lakes Volunteer Lawyer Service Human Rights First Human Rights Institute at Columbia Law School Immigrant Defense Project inMotion, Inc. Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti International Bar Association Lawyers Alliance for New York Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of San Francisco Legal Aid Association of California Legal Aid of Northwest Texas The Legal Aid Society Legal Aid Society of Rochester Legal Services Corporation Legal Services Corporation of Virginia Legal Services NYC Lone Star Legal Aid Mississippi Center for Legal Services National Association of IOLTA Programs National Campaign to Restore Civil Rights National Center for State Courts National Employment Law Project National Language Access Advocates Network National Legal Aid & Defender Association New York Legal Assistance Group New York Unemployment Insurance Coalition Pennsylvania Bar Association Polk County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Program Pro Bono Law Ontario Sanctuary for Families Self Represented Litigation Network State Bar of Georgia Pro Bono Project Texas Access to Justice Commission Texas Bar Foundation Texas Equal Access to Justice Foundation Texas RioGrande Legal Aid Volunteer Lawyers Project of the Boston Bar Association Volunteer Legal Services Program of the Bar Association of San Francisco Volunteer Legal Services Project of Monroe County Volunteers of Legal Service

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10,200 ACTS OF HELP THROUGH LIVEHELP 15,500 LIVES TOUCHED DAILY



Learn more about how Pro Bono Net is powering access to justice at www.probono.net/stories.

