

## Baker Donelson to Help Launch Memphis Homeless Clinic

The homeless community in Memphis and many other cities has grown by leaps and bounds since the housing market all but collapsed, and people left without homes and perhaps jobs struggle to meet even their most basic needs.

So it's no surprise finding legal help, even for important matters such as resolving an outstanding warrant, often falls by the wayside.

The Homeless Experience Legal Protection (HELP) program, launched in early 2004 by a New Orleans federal judge, gives legal providers and law firms a platform to work with so they can offer pro bono clinics specifically targeted to the homeless community. Fifteen cities already offer the HELP clinics, and besides Memphis, two more programs are scheduled to kick off soon in Austin, Texas, and Hartford, Conn.

Putting the pieces together The Memphis office of Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz PC is holding the clinics with the help of Memphis Area Legal Services Inc. and the Community Legal Center. Clinics will be held starting in April, at first monthly at the Hospitality Hub at 146 Jefferson Ave.

Lori Patterson, a pro bono coordinator for Baker Donelson, said the idea came from U.S. District Court Judge Jay Zainey.

While serving meals to the homeless with other judges at a New Orleans shelter, Zainey thought an attorney – or a judge – could do much more to help.

"So he started HELP in New Orleans, and the way he works it is he relies on law firms that have a relationship with – ours is one of those law firms – and he looks at cities (with) significant homeless populations and he brings the clinic to that city," Patterson said. "So Memphis has been on his list for a while, and it's our turn."

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