

PRESS RELEASE

TBA Pro Bono Campaign Wins State & National Awards

August 20, 2009

(Nashville, TN / August 20, 2009) The Tennessee Bar Association (TBA) recently received state and national recognition for its work expanding access to justice for Tennesseans who cannot afford legal representation.

The Tennessee Society of Association Executives (TSAE) named the TBA's 4ALL campaign the best statewide program by an association during the past year. In presenting the "Associations Advance Tennessee Award," TSAE President Andrea Hayes said, "TSAE's Awards Committee was impressed that the 4ALL campaign met its ambitious goals of involving more attorneys in pro bono work and educating the public about available legal resources. In doing so, it has successfully reduced the number of Tennesseans facing critical unmet legal needs."

The 4ALL program also won first place for service to the public from the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division. That group, meeting in Chicago, selected the program from entries submitted by bar associations across the country. The award, which was accepted by Nashville lawyer and TBA Young Lawyers Division President David Changas, recognized the hard work of Tennessee young lawyers who organized and staffed free legal clinics across the state last April. Many of these events focused on providing end-of-life planning to firefighters, police officers, first responders and their families.

The TBA's 4ALL campaign took on the critical problem of access to justice on four fronts. It educated legal professionals and the public on the severity of the need for such services. It involved collaboration with legal organizations, the Tennessee Supreme Court and the state legislature to increase access to justice for the poor. It also mobilized close to 1,000 legal volunteers to provide free legal services to more than 1,300 individuals on just one day last spring. Finally, it worked for changes in state law and court rules to encourage more pro bono work.

While the campaign was the focus of immediate past TBA president and Baker Donelson shareholder Buck Lewis, newly installed president and Nashville lawyer Gail Vaughn Ashworth has pledged to continue the work with a month-long effort this October. Events are being planned across the state throughout the month. "Despite welcome indications of improvements in the economy," Ashworth said, "the reality for many in our state is that they cannot afford basic legal services. The TBA is committed to providing all lawyers opportunities to provide free legal assistance to these needy Tennesseans. By partnering with the American Bar Association and participating in the Celebrate Pro Bono Campaign this October, the TBA will continue the good work of the 4ALL campaign."