

Committee on Civil Justice UPDATE



DECEMBER 2009

- Anne W. Lewis
Co-Chair
- Teri P. McClure
Co-Chair
- Jill O. Radwin
Executive
Director
- Tracy Powell
Project
Coordinator
- www.gaccj.org

INSIDE

THIS ISSUE:

ATJ 2
Headlines

Committee 3
News

Looking 4
Ahead

Legal Needs Round Tables a Success

Twelve-site series brings communities together

The Georgia Civil Legal Needs Summit, hosted by the Committee on June 24, 2009, brought the results of the 2007/2008 Georgia Legal Needs Study to audiences in Atlanta, Savannah, and Tifton. To bring this program, and extend the conversation, to the local level, the Committee hosted a series of Round Table Discussions in twelve locations around the state. The Round Tables aimed to facilitate discussion among local stakeholders on ways to improve access to justice in their area.

The series began in Albany on July 31, with Chief Superior Court Judge Willie Lockette (Superior Court, Dougherty Judicial Circuit) serving as host, and concluded in Savannah on October 16, hosted by Superior Court Judges Louisa Abbot and James Bass. While total attendance varied at each location, there was one trend that was common throughout – far more participants showed up than had preregistered. Most locations had double the number of attendees than originally anticipated. Yet, what was even more exciting was the enthusiasm and exchange of ideas that were generated at each of these sites. The round table with the greatest number of participants was Ellijay, with approximately 90 in attendance. The average number of attendees for all twelve of the round tables combined was 43.9.

See the table on page 2 for attendance counts for each location.

The agenda for these discussions was structured around a condensed presentation of the findings of the legal needs study; presentations of the resources available to help litigants in each area (through two to five minute speeches by representatives from various organizations, including Georgia Legal Services Program, Georgia Office of Child Support Services, domestic violence shelters, etc.); and, a discussion of participant's opinions on the current local situation and necessary steps for improvement, led by psychologist Dr. Kevin Baldwin of Applied Research Services, Inc.

There was much positive feedback heard from participants throughout the series. Judges, attorneys, legal and social service providers, mediators, and private citizens were among the groups represented and all shared their thoughts and opinions on the issues of prominent legal needs, the lack of resources facing the courts and providers, and the unquestionable need to provide alternative options to litigants who are not able to afford legal representation. Many attendees met their local counterparts for the first time at these round tables, and spoke about their excitement to continue meeting together.

The results and findings from the round tables were compiled by Applied Research Services and, following a meeting of the Delivery Coordination and Needs Assessment subcommittee on November 16, is being drafted into a report, which will be included as an addendum to the 2007/2008 Georgia Legal Needs Study. The addendum will include recommendations for programs and initiatives aimed at addressing the needs of low and moderate income citizens. The goal and intent is that the local groups will continue to meet on their own accord and work to implement some of these ideas.

2009 was truly a busy year in regards to legal needs study. In the span of these twelve months, the report (in its final form) was written, designed, and published, the half-day Georgia Civil Legal Needs Summit introduced the findings to the public, and Round Table discussions were held in twelve different locations from July through October. The dedication of the Committee has paid off to generate a product that will hopefully be used as a tool in further efforts to increase and improve access to the civil legal system. Upon its completion, the Addendum to the Legal Needs Study will be available on the Committee website at www.gaccj.org, along with the full report and other related materials.

Round Table Discussions — Attendance Figures

<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Host</u>	<u># of Pre-registrants</u>	<u># of Attendees*</u>
Albany	July 31	Chief Judge Willie Lockette	11	26
Gwinnett	August 7	Judge Michael C. Clark	25	44
Brunswick	August 21	Chief Judge Amanda Williams	22	50
Ellijay	August 28	Chief Judge Brenda Weaver	29	84
Carrollton	September 4	Judge John Simpson	25	39
Columbus	September 11	Chief Judge John D. Allen	20	42
Augusta	September 18	Judge Sheryl B. Jolly & Chief Judge J. Carlisle Overstreet	10	35
DeKalb	September 23	Judge Cynthia J. Becker	48	57
Rome	September 25	Chief Judge Walter Matthews	24	57
Macon	October 1	Chief Judge Martha Christian	20	38
Jefferson	October 9	Judge Currie Mingledorff	12	25
Savannah	October 16	Judge Louisa Abbot & Judge James F. Bass, Jr.	14	47

*signed in

Access to Justice in the News

*Access to Justice Headlines
found at www.atjsupport.org

The **Maryland Access to Justice Commission** is currently hosting a series of [ten statewide listening events](#). Advocacy and service organizations will speak with members of the Commission about their experiences with the state's civil justice system. The final event will be held at the state Court of Appeals on January 10, 2010.

The **2010 ABA/NLADA Equal Justice Conference** will be held May 13-15, 2010, in Phoenix, AZ. The Access to Justice State Chairs meeting will be held in conjunction with the conference, on May 15. Visit www.abanet.org/legalservices/ejc for more information.

The **Legal Services Corporation** released its updated *Documenting the Justice Gap in America* report on

September 30. The report shows that half of all low-income people seeking legal assistance from LSC-funded organizations are turned away due to lack of resources. Download the report at www.lsc.gov.

The **Maine Justice Action Group** held its first legal needs symposium, "Expanding Justice in Maine: Upstream Solutions to Downstream Problems," on October 3. Over 200 attorneys, judges, professors and legal services professionals attended the event, held just one week after the release of the state's latest legal needs report, *Justice For Some*.

The **American Bar Association** held its first National Pro Bono Week Celebration October 25-31. This coordinated national celebration aimed to highlight the impact made by pro bono attorneys and to also inspire more

attorneys to volunteer their services. Visit www.probono.net/celebrateprobono/ for more.

The **Supreme Court of Minnesota** has implemented a temporary increase of \$100 on lawyer registration fees, \$25 of which will go to the state's Legal Services Advisory Committee.

On October 12, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed **California Assembly Bill 590** into law, creating pilot projects in designated jurisdictions for appointment of counsel in civil cases affecting basic human needs.

The **Michigan Supreme Court** has named a new Director of Access & Fairness. This new position will work to promote improved access to the courts and greater confidence in the justice system.

Committee News

A quick look at what's been going on...

- The Emory Law School Public Interest Committee will hold its 2010 Inspiration Awards Ceremony and Reception on Tuesday, February 9, 2010. **Terry Walsh** will receive the Lifetime Commitment to Public Service Award, and **Rita A. Sheffey** will receive the Unsung Devotion to Those Most in Need Award.
- **Judge William S. Duffey** has recently published a new book, *A Life in the Law: Advice for Young Lawyers*. See below for more.
- The Atlanta Bar Association hosted a pro bono summit on Monday, December 7, entitled "Pro Bono in Atlanta: Economic Challenges & Creative Solutions." **Chief Justice Carol Hunstein** delivered the opening remarks, and **Charlie Lester, Sharon Hill, Phyllis Holmen, Steve Gottlieb, and Rita Sheffey** all participated as moderators and/or panelists.
- **Georgia Legal Services Program** was awarded a grant from The Goizueta Foundation to address the civil legal needs of low-income Latinos in Georgia. Read more below.

New book provides guidance, advice to new lawyers

Inspired by his mentor, the late Griffin B. Bell, Judge William Duffey sought to pass on the former U.S. Attorney General's sound advice to current and future young lawyers who may not yet comprehend the full scope of what it takes to truly serve in the profession. The result was *A Life in the Law: Advice for Young Lawyers*, a collection of essays by attorneys from around the country, edited by Judge Duffey and Attorney Richard A. Schneider.

The essays seek to provide new lawyers with a sense of duty and true appreciation for the profession.

As described by the American Bar Association's Web Store, "In this compelling collection of essays, the contributors write about the values of the profession, a lawyers responsibility to their communities, their duty of service to clients, and to the public and to each other. These renowned lawyers and educators also address troublesome issues about how hard lawyers are expected to work, and what sacrifices they should and should not make."

The essays include Griffin Bell's last written work, a reflection by

former Governor Roy Barnes on the day of his unsuccessful bid for reelection, an essay by Mercer University Law Professor Timothy Floyd, and two essays from Judge Duffey himself. Mr. Schneider, the book's co-editor, lends an essay to the book as well.

A Life in the Law: Advice for Young Lawyers is published by the American Bar Association and is available through its online store. All proceeds from the book's sale will be donated to the Atlanta Legal Aid Society and the Georgia Justice Project.

GLSP receives grant, will host Skadden Fellow in 2010

Georgia Legal Services Program (GLSP) has been awarded a grant by The Goizueta Foundation to be used to address the civil legal needs of Georgia's low-income Latino population. The grant, for the amount of \$998,111, will be used to hire four bilingual attorneys to be placed in the Albany, Savannah, and Dalton GLSP offices, as well as two bilingual paralegals to set up and staff a statewide phone intake line for Spanish-speaking persons. These staffing

additions will allow GLSP to increase the number of cases it accepts involving low-income Latinos. Included as one of the "hard to reach populations" in the 2007/2008 *Georgia Legal Needs Study*, this is a big step towards improving access to justice for the Latino community in Georgia.

Read more about the partnership between GLSP and The Goizueta Foundation at GeorgiaAdvocates.org.

In other GLSP news, the Macon office will bring on board Duke Law School student Veronica Allen to work next fall on expanding access to civil legal services to at-risk youth in Central Georgia. Working under the Skadden Fellowship program, Ms. Allen will begin this two-year project following graduation from Duke Law School. For more information, visit <http://www.law.duke.edu/news/story?id=4251&u=11>

Supreme Court of Georgia Committee on Civil Justice

244 Washington Street, SW
Suite 300
Atlanta, GA 30334-5900

Jill O. Radwin
Executive Director
Phone: 404-463-1849
Fax: 404-651-6449
E-mail: jill.radwin@gaaoc.us

Tracy Powell
Project Coordinator
Phone: 404-463-0040
Fax: 404-651-6449
E-mail: tracy.powell@gaaoc.us

Committee Membership

Anne W. Lewis **Co-Chair**
Teri P. McClure **Co-Chair**
Charles T. Lester
Rita A. Sheffey
W. Terence Walsh
Judge Wayne Purdom
Timothy W. Floyd

P. Todd Carroll
Richard Deane
Terence Dicks
Judge William S. Duffey, Jr.
Reverend Jane Fahey
Senator Seth Harp
Thomas D. Hills

Linda Klein
Representative Edward Lindsey
Judge Willie Lockette
John B. Long
Cubbedge Snow
Michael Tyler
Derek J. White

Advisory Members

Martin L. Ellin
Steven Gottlieb
Sharon N. Hill
Phyllis J. Holmen
Michael L. Monahan

Created in May 2005, the Committee on Civil Justice works to strengthen Georgia's civil justice system by developing, coordinating and supporting policy initiatives to expand access to the courts for poor and vulnerable Georgians.

Vision Statement

The cornerstone of our free society is a civil legal system that is available to all to address legal issues that arise in their daily lives and a judiciary that advances the fair, efficient, and impartial resolution of disputes

Mission Statement

To develop for implementation in Georgia a statewide, broad-based, publicly-known and supported, coordinated system for the poor which:

1. Provides education, advice and tools to identify and address legal issues;
2. Ensures competent legal representation when appropriate; and
3. Promotes the efficient, effective and fair resolution of legal issues and disputes

Looking Ahead, etc.

January 11, 2010 — Legislative Session Begins

February 9, 2010 — Emory Public Interest Committee Inspiration Awards

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

WWW.GACCJ.ORG