

PRESS RELEASE

Baker Donelson Launches Pro Bono Legal Clinics for Homeless in Atlanta

August 6, 2008

(Atlanta, GA/August 6, 2008) Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC, is pleased to announce that it will lead the launch of the Homeless Experience Legal Protection (HELP) program in Atlanta. The project, which began in New Orleans and is expanding to a number of other cities, provides a weekly legal clinic for homeless individuals, and initially will be staffed by Baker Donelson attorneys offering pro bono legal services. The two-hour weekly clinic will reside at Task Force for the Homeless at 477 Peachtree Street in Atlanta from 3-5 pm each Thursday. The first clinic will be held August 7.

Atlanta judges, including Fulton County Superior Court Judges Melvin Westmoreland, T. Jackson Bedford and Ural Glanville, and Johnny Mason, currently a State Administrative Law Judge and candidate for DeKalb County Superior Court Judge, have stepped forward to promote the free clinics, and will be encouraging attorney participation throughout Atlanta beginning this fall. Until then, Baker Donelson will operate the clinics.

"The Atlanta HELP program offers a much-needed local platform for those who do not have access to legal services," said Henry Levi, a shareholder and Pro Bono Co-Coordinator for Baker Donelson's Atlanta lawyers. "Any lawyer who can help, no matter what specialty area of practice or background. We welcome lawyers from corporate law departments and law firms, as well as solo practitioners, to help provide this pro bono support."

"We anticipate answering general questions about social security issues, veterans benefits, or eviction and housing problems, as well as providing other common legal counsel. This program is one of the very few paths that the homeless in Atlanta have for legal advice," said Clint Crosby, also a shareholder and Pro Bono Co-Coordinator for Baker Donelson in Atlanta.

"This program brings real hope to families who face problems such as eviction without access to due process when faced with a dispossession notice. Evictions and related displacement are the leading causes of homelessness, and with the help of volunteer lawyers, families will have the kind of help they need," said Anita Beaty, director of Task Force for the Homeless.

"HELP goes way beyond providing legal services," added Levi. "The individuals served through this program, and by the Task Force, are given a sense of belonging in a society that mostly ignores and fears them, and we are privileged to be able to help provide that opportunity."

HELP first began in New Orleans in May 2004 as the brainchild of U.S. District Court Judge Jay Zainey, and that city now has more than 450 attorneys and notaries who volunteer. Baker Donelson, one of the original firms to participate, currently has about a dozen volunteer attorneys in New Orleans, and Judge Zainey approached the firm about expanding the program in Atlanta.

"I am very proud of the members of our honorable profession who are sharing their God given talents with the least fortunate in our communities," said Judge Zainey. HELP programs are now in several cities, including Baton Rouge, Lafayette and Shreveport, La.; New York City; Chicago; Savannah, Ga.; Columbia, South Carolina and more, with plans to establish programs in other cities this year.

Baker Donelson is currently working with Judge Zainey on further expansions of the HELP program in Birmingham, Memphis, and Nashville. Lisa Borden, Baker Donelson's Pro Bono Shareholder, directs the Firm's provision of free legal services to the disadvantaged. "Baker Donelson is both excited and honored to have the opportunity to help Judge Zainey in his efforts to provide needed legal services to homeless individuals," said Borden. "When you consider that a problem that is very simple for a lawyer to resolve may be what is standing between the homeless person and a job, or housing, you begin to realize just how important a project like HELP is, not just for the homeless clients, but for the communities in which they live," she added.