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**Lady Justice Rocking on the River to Celebrate 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of  
The Pro Bono Project's Justice For All Ball on September 20, 2013**

*Walter E. Blessey, Jr. is Honorary Chair; Blessey Marine Services, Inc. is Presenting Sponsor*

**(New Orleans, LA)** – There's a good reason that Lady Justice is 'Rocking on the River' to celebrate The Pro Bono Project's (The Project) 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Justice For All Ball (JFAB): this year's Honorary Chair, Walter E. Blessey Jr. is well connected to the Mississippi River through his company Blessey Marine Services, Inc. this year's JFAB Presenting Sponsor. Blessey will oversee the 2013 JFAB from the captain's quarters at The Audubon Tea Room on Friday, September 20, 2013 from 8:00 pm to 12 midnight; a private patron party will precede the Ball.

As Founder, Chairman and CEO of Blessey Marine, Blessey and his leadership team operate one of the youngest and largest multi-faceted fleets of inland tank barges and towing vessels in the world. The firm services the inland waterway system of rivers that flow ultimately into the Mississippi River and then out into the Gulf of Mexico. His success comes from a simple, yet profound business philosophy, which has served him well over the years, "Create a company culture that is focused and centered around respect for the individual." (See Full Bio on Page 3)

"Like Mr. Blessey, the work of The Pro Bono Project centers around the philosophy of 'respect for the individual' and many times this is exactly what the pro bono services, which our volunteer attorneys provide, do for our clients: restore their respect - for themselves and their ability to move forward once their legal issues are resolved. We are thrilled that Mr. Blessey and Blessey Marine Services accepted the challenge and the opportunity to serve as Honorary Chair and Presenting Sponsor, respectively, for this

year's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Ball, " explained The Project's Executive Director, Rachel Piercey.

The JFAB serves as one avenue through which The Project raises funds to enable people to rebuild their lives and this community. So often, many of The Project's clients don't have the resources, or even understand that the problem they have requires a legal solution. That's where The Project makes a difference by matching private bar attorneys *pro bono* with clients in need. Without The Project, so many of the legal issues that continue to impede the return of citizens and the rebuilding of the metro area will continue to be unresolved.

As well, the economy has had an impact in two critical areas for The Project and other legal service providers: first, new legal issues and new types of clients have emerged increasing the need for services; and second, federal and state funding continues to be cut each year, placing a greater need to raise funds from within the private sector. Companies, foundations and other private sector groups still require a great deal of education in order to better understand the full impact that a lack of legal services for the underserved has on the overall community. A study recently presented at the 2013 ABA's Equal Justice Conference noted that more than 80 percent of civil legal needs among those meeting low income guidelines continue to go unmet each year and this number is still growing.

This year's JFAB will feature entertaining patrons with George Porter, Jr. and Runnin' Parners (<http://www.georgeporterjr.com/index.php>) rocking on the river; Dave Hansen's Garden District Trio (<http://www.nogdo.com>) will welcome guests with smooth Jazz sounds upon their arrival to the Ball. More than 20 area restaurants, as well as the Audubon Tea Room will provide food and beverages. Raffle items from the area's retail and service businesses, along with a special art and travel silent and live auction will provide patrons with other ways to financially support The Project. Art photographer and JazzFest Marketplace Best of Show winner, J. Stirling Barrett (<http://www.stirlingbarrett.com>) is creating this year's invitation art. His original photographic artwork will be the centerpiece of the live auction.

Tickets are \$150 in advance, \$175 at the door, young attorneys, \$100 advance/\$125 at the door and students \$75 advance/\$100; raffle tickets are \$5 each. Ticket packages and corporate sponsorships are also available. All proceeds from sponsorships, ticket sales, the raffle, the live and silent auction will benefit The Pro Bono Project. To purchase advance tickets online: at <http://www.probono-no.org/jfaball/index.html> or call the JFAB Hotline at: 504.581.3480. For sponsorship opportunities or more information on the Justice For

All Ball or The Project, contact Executive Director Rachel Piercey at [rpiercey@robono-no.org](mailto:rpiercey@robono-no.org) or 504.581.4043.

*The Pro Bono Project's continuing mission to provide free, quality civil legal services to the underserved is more important than ever. By engaging volunteer lawyers and other professionals to render pro bono services, The Pro Bono Project serves clients in Orleans, Jefferson, St Bernard, St Tammany, Plaquemines and Washington parishes. With funding from the Justice For All Ball and other sources, locally and nationally, The Pro Bono Project works in collaboration with other social service providers to improve the quality of life for our clients and our community.*

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**Bio: Walter E. Blessey, Jr.**

Walter E. Blessey, Jr. is CEO of Blessey Marine Services, Inc., located in Harahan, Louisiana. Blessey earned a B.S. in Civil Engineering, a JD in Law, and attended classes for a Masters in Business Administration from Tulane University in New Orleans. He also attended the University of Edinburgh in Edinburgh, Scotland and the University of Washington in pursuit of said degrees. He began his career at what is currently Entergy, with responsibility for fuel purchasing and transportation.

Blessey founded what is now Blessey Marine Service, Inc. in 1978. He owns and operates one of the youngest and largest multi-faceted inland tank barge and towing vessel fleets in the United States, employing over 700 people. There are currently 71 boats in operation and nearly 150 barges carrying cargoes which include residual fuels, asphalt, lubricating oils, petroleum feedstocks, refined petroleum products, petrochemicals, alcohols, and LNG. An affiliated company, WEB Fleeting, LLC, operates a fleeting operation, located on the San Jacinto River Basin in Channelview, Texas. This state-of-the art operation is within minutes of virtually every dock facility in the Houston Harbor.

Blessey has served on the Board of Directors of American Waterways Operators, and has been a member of their Executive Committee. He also served as past Chairman of AWO's Inland Liquid Sector. In 1999, Walter was inducted into the Louisiana Business Hall of Fame. In 2012, Walter received the Martin de Tours Award from St. Martin's Episcopal School.

He has also participated in numerous non-profit activities in the New Orleans community and currently serves on the Board of Directors of Junior Achievement. In the past seven years or so Blessey has raised over \$1 million for Junior Achievement. He has also participated in fundraising activities for Children's Hospital and the Audubon Zoo raising six figures of revenue for each. Over the last thirty years, Blessey has served on various boards including St. Martin's Episcopal School. He is currently on the Board of Overseers for the Hoover Institution.

During the 1990s, Blessey owned and operated thirteen automobile franchises and was the largest car dealer in Louisiana and Mississippi, employing over 1,000 people. He liquidated the dealerships in or before 2003.

Blessey is married and has two grown daughters, four grandsons and three granddaughters. He has three step-daughters. He and his wife, Jane Ann, enjoy traveling between their homes in Mandeville, Louisiana, Big Sky, Montana, Destin, Florida, Carmel, California and Charleston, South Carolina. He has many hobbies, including golf, scuba diving, jogging, racquet ball, snow skiing, and chess. Blessey is a member of New Orleans Country Club, Santa Rosa Beach Golf & Beach Club, where he was President for four years, River

Oaks Country Club, The Club at Spanish Peaks, Santa Lucia Preserve, Old Capital Club, and Monterey Peninsula Country Club.

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