

Platinum Sponsor Highlight**Husch Blackwell, LLP: Leaving a Pro Bono Legacy****By Amber Steinbeck**

Husch Blackwell has a long-standing commitment to bridging the justice gap and improving access to critical legal services for the underserved and underrepresented. As a Signatory Member of the Pro Bono Institute's Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge, a national organization that encourages pro bono work in law firms across the country, our attorneys are encouraged to provide pro bono legal services to individuals, public service groups and charitable organizations. The firm also provides much needed financial support to non-profit organizations that focus on providing care and services to the indigent.

We are proud that in 2010, our attorneys donated nearly 15,000 hours to pro bono services covering a broad range of areas, including civil rights, children's rights, discrimination, criminal defense, immigration and housing. For many of our attorneys, their pro bono efforts meet the needs of those in their own communities. In Kansas City, our attorneys are helping to gain commitments from developers to acquire and rehabilitate residential properties in areas of Kansas City with high foreclosure rates. Attorneys in our St. Louis and Kansas City offices assist local families with children who are diagnosed with learning disorders, such as autism. The volunteer attorneys work with families in disputes over educational services, medical reimbursements and other legal issues. Attorneys in our other offices regularly provide their legal services via area bar associations.

Recognition

Husch Blackwell is fortunate that its commitment to pro bono and community service has been recognized by public interest agencies, bar associations and other organizations throughout the United States. Recent recognitions include:

- 2011 Outstanding Community Partner Award, The Center for Women in Transition
- 2011 Difference Maker, Memphis Area Legal Services
- 2010 Outstanding Law Firm, Legal Services of Eastern Missouri
- 2010 Pro Bono Firm of the Year, Legal Aid of East Tennessee
- 2010 Community Awareness Award, The Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis
- 2010 Excellence in Pro Bono Award, The Public Interest Law Group

Each year, Husch Blackwell attorneys invest in their communities by dedicating their time and skills to those who are unable to afford legal services and representation. Below are just a few of the programs in which we regularly participate:

Juvenile Detention Dockets

In Kansas City and St. Louis, several Husch Blackwell attorneys provide pro bono representation to juveniles entering the justice system. Long time AWL member and Husch Blackwell attorney, David Schatz

was one of the founders of this program in Kansas City in 2007. He notes that: "for many juveniles, their first contact with the County or City Court when charged with a delinquency or a status offense is during the Detention Hearing, which must be held within 72 hours of their initial detention. Due to funding cutbacks, the Jackson County and St. Louis City Public Defender's offices no longer provide attorneys to represent juveniles in these initial proceedings, leaving juveniles to face the court without an advocate. It is imperative that the local bar step in to help our justice system and protect these juveniles." More than a dozen Kansas City attorneys have volunteered to represent juveniles during detention hearings on a rotating schedule. In St. Louis, several of our attorneys partner with Saint Louis University Law School to advise juveniles all the way through the legal process, including trial, motions and pleadings.

"These kids don't know what's going on when they find themselves in this situation," says Dasha Lyeshchenko, an AWL member and Kansas City Husch Blackwell attorney who represents juveniles. "We can help the kids and parents make decisions to help them navigate more smoothly through the legal system. The majority end up not being detained. Although many of the kids have had a rough start in life, I'm glad we can offer the families some support."

Domestic Violence Programs

Husch Blackwell assists individuals affected by domestic violence; the firm has relationships with Women's Safe House in St. Louis and Harmony House (formerly known as the Family Violence Center) in Springfield.

In 2010, St. Louis volunteer lawyers began visiting The Women's Safe House, a local domestic violence shelter, twice a month to meet with residents facing a variety of legal issues. In coordination with Saint Louis University Law School's Family Law Clinic, Catholic Legal Ministries and Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, Husch Blackwell lawyers handle a variety of legal matters, including traffic warrants, permanent housing, divorce and custody cases. In the last six months, 67 residents received legal assistance from 10 Husch Blackwell lawyers.

The firm's relationship with Springfield-based Harmony House started three years ago; currently, Springfield partner Paul Satterwhite serves as president of the organization's board. In addition to Paul, Springfield attorneys Charlie Cowherd and Kevin Meyers have worked on behalf of Harmony House residents in child custody and spousal support matters.

Immigration & Asylum Services

Attorneys in the firm's Kansas City, St. Louis and Denver offices also handle a number of cases for individuals seeking immigration status or asylum in the United States. Our attorneys serve clients of local refugee support organizations. Our key roles are working on establishing

(continued, p. 6)

Husch Blackwell, (continued)

permanent residency for the clients and helping them navigate the Immigration and Naturalization Service process.

In one recent asylum case, Husch Blackwell Kansas City attorney Stacey Meyer Bowman's client was, along with her husband, a member of a political party that opposed the ruling government in her home country in Africa. Both were abducted, beaten and tortured by government supporters and the police, who continued to further brutalize Stacey's client while forcing her husband to watch the attack. In another case, Husch Blackwell Denver attorney Sudee Mirsafian Wright's client was suffering the long-term and horrific effects of mutilations performed on her during infancy at the request of her mother. Both female clients feared persecution if they returned to their home countries, and Sudee and Stacey were faced with proving to an immigration judge that this fear was well-founded.

“Even though my parents brought me and my brothers to the United States in the mid-1980s in order to escape the oppressive Iranian government, I often take for granted the freedom we have in this country,” Sudee said of her experience. “The asylum case reminded me that there are millions of people around the world that would do almost anything to live here.”

Husch Blackwell, LLP was and is a pioneer in its support of pro bono initiatives, a philosophy shared and promoted time and again through AWL and its membership. So, when approached this year to be a sponsor of AWL, the request was met by Husch Blackwell with a resounding yes and a decision to support AWL monetarily at the highest level—platinum sponsorship. We encourage your support of AWL in the same capacity.

If you or your firm would like to support or sponsor AWL in a similar capacity, please visit the AWL website at awl-kc.org.

Amber (Van Hauen) Steinbeck is a partner with Husch Blackwell and is currently serving on the AWL board as the Vice Chair of Community Support.