



# NEW MEXICO ATTORNEYS JOIN NATIONAL CELEBRATION OF PRO BONO WEEK

■ *Hundreds of Attorneys Step Up to the Plate to Help N.M. Citizens*

*By Amy LaFaver, Statewide Access to Justice Pro Bono Coordinator*

Building on the extraordinary success of the first annual National Pro Bono Celebration in 2009, New Mexico's Pro Bono attorneys turned out in full force to assist individuals of limited means who face urgent legal problems such as foreclosures, loss of parental rights, consumer debt, evictions, and lives paralyzed by domestic violence. This statewide event, held October 24–30, was part of a coordinated national effort to showcase the great difference that pro bono lawyers make to the nation, to our great state, its system of justice, its communities and, most of all, to the clients they serve.

Through the oversight of New Mexico's Access to Justice Commission, co-chaired by Justice Petra Jimenez Maes and Judge Sarah Singleton, each of New Mexico's judicial districts has formed pro bono committees that tailor their programs to best address both the type of legal needs and the type of assistance their local attorneys are able to give. During Pro Bono Week, these committees focused their efforts on developing unique opportunities for lawyers and low income population in need of legal assistance. Ten local pro bono committees representing nine judicial districts planned and implemented public events across the state this year.

### Highlights of the Week

■ **Free public legal information seminars and one-on-one consultations** were provided in Albuquerque, Silver City, Taos, Clovis, Gallup, Ruidoso, Farmington and Los Lunas.

The 2nd, 6th, 8th, 9th, 11th (McKinley County), 11th (San Juan County) and 12th judicial districts hosted multi-topic legal fairs that provided general information to a number of attendees and private consultations to individuals. According to Judge Clay Campbell, co-chair of the 2nd Judicial District Pro Bono Committee, around 800 customers were served in **Albuquerque** during the Law-La-Palooza legal fair staffed by 150 attorneys, 20 legal services providers, 80 or more UNM

*continued on next page*



Bert Parnall



Bryan Fox



Lori Gibson



Captain Kyra Gruenstein,  
USAF Assistant Staff Judge Advocate



Judge Frank Sedillo welcomes the volunteers to the Albuquerque Law-La-Palooza.



Bill Brogan



Brian Thomas



Daymon Ely



Rebekah Courvoisier

law students, and others. Judge Henry Quintero, chair of the 6th Judicial District Pro Bono Committee, also reported overwhelming success during the Free Legal Advice Day held at Western New Mexico University in **Silver City**, with nine seminars and 65 private consultations given by 14 volunteer attorneys. **Deming** also hosted a free call-in clinic. **Taos** held 12 classes on various topics and 80 people income qualified for the event. In total, about 100 people participated in the event. In **Clovis**, 125 people received free consultations from 20 volunteer attorneys. “People were lined up for two and one-half hours to see an attorney,” said Judge Robert Orlik, pleased with the success of their first legal fair. **Ruidoso** held their first ever legal fair and 28 people received private consultations with 13 volunteer attorneys. According to Judge James Counts, chair of the 12th Judicial District Pro Bono Committee, a family drove 90 miles to receive help. **Farmington** focused their efforts on the three senior centers in Farmington, Bloomfield and Aztec where six attorneys assisted 48 clients with their legal needs. They also had a pro se clinic that helped 14 participants. **Gallup** set up an informational booth and handed out information to 58 individuals. In **Los Lunas**, 32 people attended their legal fair and four attorneys volunteered their time.

Across the state, 250 attorneys, plus other partners such as paralegals, law students, members of legal service organizations and judges, helped provide free legal help to approximately 1,500 New Mexico citizens.

■ **Continuing Legal Education.** *Addressing the Needs of Pro Se Litigants* was developed specifically for the week by Judge Raymond Z. Ortiz, chair of the 1st Judicial District Pro Bono Committee, and Tom Clark, an attorney in Santa Fe. Sixty-one attorneys and judges earned one professionalism CLE credit for \$1 each.

■ **Pro Bono Attorney Recognition.** The New Mexico Supreme Court justices traveled the state offering words of support, encouragement and gratitude to pro bono attorney volunteers. Justice Petra Jimenez Maes attended ceremonies in Farmington; Justice Richard C. Bosson joined the festivities in Las Vegas; Justice Patricio M. Serna offered remarks to attorneys in Santa Fe and Las Vegas; and Justice Edward L. Chávez attended the recognition event in Albuquerque. This gift of time from the esteemed members of New Mexico’s highest court firmly defines their level of support in developing and maintaining strong pro bono programs.

Jesus Lopez, David Silva, Victoria Doom, Suzanne Gaulin of Las Vegas, Judy Fry from Albuquerque, and the Spring into Action project in Farmington were recognized as leaders in pro bono work for New Mexico.

A most sincere thank you goes to every person who contributed to this amazing celebration. Our continued goal is to capitalize on the energy and momentum generated in each of our communities to keep the Celebration of Pro Bono going all year.



Evan Hobbs



Judy Fry (*second from left*) of the Modrall Sperlberg was named the 2nd Judicial District 2010 Pro Bono Attorney of the Year. Justice Edward L. Chávez, Judge Nan Nash and Judge Clay Campbell present Fry with the award and a certificate of appreciation during the Oct. 28 Law-La-Palooza free legal fair.



Justice Petra Jimenez Maes awards a certificate of appreciation to attorneys at the Spring Into Action recognition event in Farmington.