

VOL. 1 ISSUE 4 · OCTOBER 2023

PRO BONO INSIGHTS

A Monthly Georgia Legal Services Program Newsletter

Message from the Director

October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

In Georgia, domestic violence affects individuals and families across all backgrounds. It's essential that we come together as a community to address this pressing issue. Here at Georgia Legal Services Program, our advocates have provided access to justice for thousands of survivors of family and intimate partner violence. As a volunteer lawyer or law student, you can also make a difference. This newsletter provides you with a full view of our pro bono programming as well as information on how to volunteer. We'll make pro bono service easy for you. Sign up today.

This month marked the National Pro Bono Celebration, too. The ABA Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service has joined programs like GLSP this October for a National Celebration of Pro Bono. The Celebration is an opportunity for you to commit or recommit to service and join pro bono providers and attorneys across the nation to showcase the incredible difference that you and other pro bono lawyers make to our nation, to our system of justice, to our communities, and most of all, to the clients you serve.

#CelebrateProBono
#LegalAidHelps
#DueJusticeDo50



Mike Monahan
Director of the Pro Bono Unit

**CELEBRATE
PRO BONO**
www.celebrateprobono.org

National Pro Bono Celebration
October 22-28, 2023

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GLSP HONORS FIVE FOR PRO BONO SERVICE AT STATEWIDE AWARDS ON OCTOBER 11

CHAMPION

ADVOCATE

CATALYST

WISE COUNSEL

POWERHOUSE



SANDRA
SASEEN-SMITH
SAVANNAH, GA



RON
DANIELS
EASTMAN, GA



JATARYIA
THOMAS
VALDOSTA, GA



SAM
NICHOLSON
AUGUSTA, GA



EL
HAYNES
ATLANTA, GA



At our October 11th Pro Bono Awards Reception in Athens, GLSP honored five individuals who have helped advance our mission through pro bono efforts across the state.

Each of this year's honorees has made significant contributions, unique to their roles and interests, that exemplify the impact volunteers can have:

Sandra Saseen-Smith of Savannah was named Pro Bono Champion for her steadfast commitment to pro bono. Saseen-Smith, a retired lawyer and former public defender, volunteers her services on a near daily basis at GLSP's Savannah Regional Office. At any given time, she maintains a caseload of between 15 and 20 pro bono cases, many of which are criminal record restrictions that will allow the clients a fresh start in life.

Ron Daniels, the immediate-past president of the Younger Lawyers Division of the State Bar of Georgia, was recognized as Advocate of the Year. From his office in rural Dodge County, Daniels has been a steady pro bono volunteer handling a wide range of cases on behalf of Georgians with low incomes. In his role as State Bar of Georgia YLD president and immediate-past president, Daniels has also focused the attention of the State Bar on GLSP's works and the critical legal needs of the organization's clients.

Sam G. Nicholson of Nicholson Revell LLP was honored with the Wise Counsel Award. Nicholson serves as a member of GLSP's Board of Directors, but his contributions to access to justice extend far beyond his board service. Nicholson has handled pro bono cases as a volunteer lawyer with GLSP's Augusta Regional Office for many years, and has expanded his volunteer service extending to include mentoring GLSP staff attorneys and providing expert assistance on consumer cases.

El Haynes, a 3rd-year law student at the Georgia State University College of Law, received the Powerhouse Law Student Award. The Powerhouse Law Student Award recognizes a law student's significant contributions in supporting and extending GLSP's mission. As a 1L, Haynes volunteered on GLSP's Alternative Spring Break supporting our Victims Legal Assistance Network, assisting a GLSP attorney with a groundbreaking effort on a unique divorce law issue. Last year, El served as leader of an Alternative Spring Break trip, leading discussion and services around "legal deserts" in southwest Georgia and learning about innovative access to justice efforts.

A leader in both her nonprofit and her community, JaTaryia Thomas, received GLSP's Catalyst Award, which recognizes a nonprofit or law-related entity that helps GLSP extend its reach into low-income and marginalized communities throughout the state. Thomas is the founder and CEO of the financial education and asset building coalition CASH Prosperity Campaign, which has evolved into the Mental Wealth Center, Inc., a 501(c)(3) serving the Valdosta area. Thomas received the Catalyst Award for her support in bringing GLSP's Pro Bono Signature Projects to Valdosta.

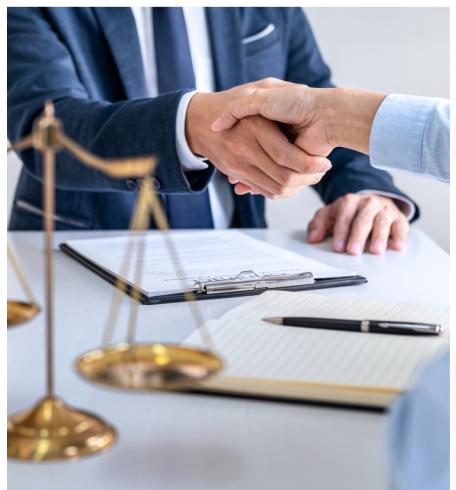
National Pro Bono Week

October 22 - 28, 2023

Each year, the last week of October is reserved as a National Celebration of Pro Bono. Since 2009, the American Bar Association's Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service has led this initiative by sponsoring, coordinating, and supporting more than 13,000 events in 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. According to the ABA "...this initiative provides an opportunity for legal organizations across the country to collaboratively commemorate the vitally important contributions of America's lawyers and to recruit and train the many additional volunteers required to meet the growing demand."

Of course, the benefits of pro bono work are not limited to a single week! GLSP's Pro Bono Unit encourages our volunteers and partners to sign up to serve clients, recognize your colleagues who undertake pro bono work, and join us in celebrating - year round - all those who help provide meaningful access to justice for individuals and families across Georgia.

**Learn More about the Initiative at
https://bit.ly/National_Pro_Bono_Week**





CLE and Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers are encouraged to access and explore our substantive training materials through our Pro Bono Learning Management System (Learning.GLSP.org). Additionally, GLSP and our partners host a variety of free or at-cost CLE sessions throughout the year.

To learn more about our training program, volunteer to host/present a training, or recommend new topics, please contact Mike Monahan (mmonahan@glsp.org) or Alexandra "Alex" Eichenbaum (aeichenbaum@glsp.org).

DIRECT REPRESENTATION

GLSP's Pro Bono Unit offers a wide array of in-person and remote direct service opportunities throughout the state of Georgia. These opportunities are a great way for attorneys licensed in Georgia to assist clients one-on-one with legal matters ranging from appearing in court, drafting documents, or obtaining access to new resources. Opportunities exist statewide in the following substantive areas:

- Wills and Powers of Attorney
- Restriction of Criminal Records
- Bankruptcy
- Protective Orders for Victims of Violence
- Name Changes
- Probate of Estates
- and more

Paladin, our new volunteer platform, lists some of our existing volunteer opportunities. You can access it by going to https://bit.ly/GLSP_Paladin.

To learn more about region-specific opportunities, contact one of our Pro Bono Coordinators or Staff Attorneys (see page 11 of this newsletter) or contact Mike Monahan (mmonahan@glsp.org) or Alexandra "Alex" Eichenbaum (aeichenbaum@glsp.org).

DISASTER LEGAL SERVICES UPDATE!

Georgia Team Ready is currently providing FREE legal assistance for individuals in Berrien, Brooks, Cook, Glynn, and Lowndes counties who were affected by Hurricane Idalia.

Join us and volunteer by contacting Alexandra "Alex" Eichenbaum (aeichenbaum@glsp.org)

UPCOMING PRO BONO CLINICS

Clinics may be advice-only or brief services. Some clinics will cover a variety of civil legal issues and provide clients time to meet with a private attorney for advice on their issue. Other clinics will focus on a specific legal issue, such as wills or record restriction, and will require the attorney to draft documents prior to meeting the client at the clinic. You can participate on-site or virtually.

Check out our upcoming legal clinics around the state and find one that meets your volunteer interests. Remember, for many clinics you can join us in-person or participate remotely.



Floyd County Wills Clinic

Looking for volunteer to assist up to 2 clients with completing wills, power of attorneys, and advanced directives for healthcare. Contact Ashley Clark (aclark@glsp.org) to sign up or for more information.



Warner Robins Veterans Clinic

Looking for volunteers to provide civil legal assistance to veterans. Clients have needs ranging from drafting wills, applying for benefits, bankruptcy consultations, and more. Contact Rachael Schell (rschell@glsp.org) to sign up or for more information.



Gainesville Probate Clinic

Looking for 1 volunteer to provide up to 4 clients with counsel and advice on probate/estate matters. Contact Maria Fuentes (mfuentes@glsp.org) to sign up or for more information.



Dougherty County Wills Clinic

Looking for volunteer to assist up to 2 clients with completing wills, power of attorneys, and advanced directives for healthcare. Contact Lorilynn Daniel (lmdaniel@glsp.org) to sign up or for more information.

COMING SOON...

December 20
Gainesville
Probate Clinic

TBD 2024
Waycross
Wills and Estates Clinic

TBD 2024
Whitfield County
Record Restriction Clinic

Not able to volunteer right now, or want to increase your impact? A gift to GLSP helps support our staff and provide access to justice and opportunities out of poverty throughout the state!

bit.ly/Justice_2023

OCTOBER'S PRO BONO STARS

Join with us to applaud October's Pro Bono Stars - A
Volunteer Lawyer and a Pro Bono Partner



STAR VOLUNTEER LAWYER FRANCESCA REHAL



**"EVERY CASE I'VE
HANDLED FOR GLSP
FEELS LIKE A GIANT
ACCOMPLISHMENT."**

Francesca Rehal is a truly exceptional GLSP volunteer. Since 2008, she has represented more than 200 GLSP clients, mostly survivors of domestic violence seeking protective orders. She is a three-time recipient of the GLSP Savannah Regional Champion award and one-time recipient of the Regional Advocate award. She helps recruit other volunteers to the GLSP cause, and helps train those seeking to build their expertise. Furthermore, she does all of this as a solo practitioner.

"I work on pro bono cases because I grew up poor and I know what it's like to struggle financially. I know a lot of people out there need help and can't afford a good lawyer," says Francesca, who advocates for working with GLSP in particular because of its ability to serve individuals with low incomes. "It's important for attorneys to provide services to people with lower incomes because they most need the help of skilled lawyers. There are plenty of skilled lawyers out there, and they need to give some time. They just need to."

Francesca also uses volunteer opportunities to familiarize herself with court practices in nearby counties. Even for seasoned attorneys like herself, she notes

that the county systems are all different. "You get to learn how court works [in each county], how filing paperwork works, and just generally how to do things in each of the different counties you work in."

"Francesca is often the first to respond to a call for client assistance, and she is loved by her clients," says Sarah J. Anderson, Pro Bono Supervising Attorney with the GLSP Savannah Regional Office. "They report back how much they appreciate her work and the respect she shows them. They feel heard. For many of them, meeting Francesca is the first time they've had a positive interaction with an attorney."

GLSP gets many more applicants for legal assistance than we can handle. Our mission is to provide civil legal services to persons with low incomes, creating equal access to justice and opportunities out of poverty. Francesca helps us with that mission with each pro bono case she takes. Without her dedication to this work, GLSP would have to turn away some of those most in need of legal assistance.

OCTOBER'S PRO BONO STARS

Join with us to applaud October's Pro Bono Stars - A Volunteer Lawyer and a Pro Bono Partner



STAR VOLUNTEER PARTNER



JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF THE GEORGIA SUPREME COURT'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMITTEE

The Judicial Council of the Georgia Supreme Court's Access to Justice Committee (also known as the A2J Committee) is a key partner of GLSP, and greatly enhances our ability to ensure our clients can access the courts.

The A2J committee, chaired by Justice Verda Colvin (appointed by Chief Justice Michael Boggs), seeks to improve the public's trust in the judicial branch by promoting meaningful and effective access to courts and fairness for all. They work closely with the State Bar of Georgia's Access to Justice Committee (ATJ) and others to identify opportunities to improve Georgia's court system. This comes in many forms. A2J Committee Projects include standardizing family law forms across all 159 Georgia counties, unifying stakeholders behind collaborative record restriction events, and researching new technologies to ensure individuals in rural communities are no less able than their urban peers to access legal resources.

According to the A2J Contract Attorney and part-time Judge, Tabitha Ponder, "We all owe it to our citizens to find better and more creative ways for them to access justice and get what they need from the legal/court system. We know that most people are trying to navigate their civil cases without lawyers, and we are grateful for all that organizations like GLSP do to help meet that need. We also know that they cannot do this alone. All lawyers have a role to play in improving access to justice."

Learn more about the A2J Committee here:
<https://georgiacourts.gov/judicial-council-standing-committee-on-access-to-justice/>

"ALL LAWYERS HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN IMPROVING ACCESS TO JUSTICE."



Pictured: Deonte Mayfield, Access to Justice Policy Analyst, and Judge Tabitha Ponder, Contract Attorney for the A2J Committee.



Domestic Violence Awareness Month: An Issue that Impacts All of Us

by Nichole DeLoach, Staff Attorney

Every year in the month of October, Domestic Violence Awareness Month is observed to both shed light on this far-reaching issue and its impact on all of us, as well as to mourn the lives lost to domestic violence. Domestic Violence Awareness Month was first observed in 1981 as a “Day of Unity” that sought to unite advocates across the nation in their efforts to end domestic violence (1).

According to the National Network to End Domestic Violence, one in three women, one in four men, and nearly half of LGBTQ+ people will experience domestic violence in their lifetime. Domestic violence disproportionately impacts survivors who already experience marginalization and discrimination, such as survivors of color, survivors with disabilities, and immigrant survivors (2).

Domestic violence is an issue that touches so many peoples’ lives and can be difficult to navigate for both survivors and their loved ones. Abuse is rarely as simple as recognizing an unhealthy relationship, then leaving. There are many reasons why someone stays in an abusive relationship, and studies show that it takes many survivors approximately seven attempts before they leave their abusive partner permanently (3). The time after a survivor leaves their abuser is when they are at the highest risk for domestic homicide (4). Even more startling is that in 42% of cases of domestic homicide studied by Georgia’s Domestic Violence Fatality Review Project, there were children present during the homicide (5). Remarkably, however, in the cases studied by this Project, only 13% of the victims that were involved in fatal domestic incidents had obtained a Temporary Protective Order (“TPO”) against the abuser (6). This reinforces the importance of TPOs as highly useful tools for victims seeking safety from abuse.

There are a number of reasons that may factor into a survivor’s decision to stay with an abuser. A large part of abuse is the abuser’s desire to assert power and control over the survivor. Because of this, some abusers take a survivor’s important legal documents, such as their Social Security card, passport, birth certificate, etc. so that the survivor cannot leave, or if they do leave cannot seek government assistance to transition to independence. If a survivor is an immigrant, an abuser may make threats regarding their immigration status to deter them from leaving. Many abusers don’t allow survivors to work or receive an income, making them financially dependent on the abuser and inhibiting their ability to leave. If a survivor has a job, an abuser may withhold the use of a vehicle or show up to a survivor’s workplace and cause a commotion, resulting in the survivor being fired. There may be children or pets involved that the survivor is worried will be harmed if they attempt to leave. Additionally, abusers tend to isolate survivors from family and friends, sometimes moving them miles away from their support system to further prevent them from leaving or seeking help.

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Domestic Violence Awareness Month (continued)

In addition, there are societal and cultural norms that can be harmful to survivors. Society can normalize certain unhealthy relationship behaviors, such as being a person's 'ride or die,' which may make it difficult for a survivor to recognize when they are being abused. Additionally, many survivors have shame of admitting to failing to meet the social pressure to be in a 'perfect relationship' or to be 'couple goals.' Survivors may also fear the shame associated with being a 'survivor' (or being perceived as a 'victim') or the backlash they may receive from loved ones, since society tends to ask, "why didn't you just leave before?" which can imply a sense of blame on the victims. When survivors do reach out to institutional representatives (such as police officers or clergy) for help, they are sometimes met with responses that encourage them to save the marriage or relationship, or may be dismissive of the survivors' concern because of a lack of empathy.

Regardless of the reasons a survivor of violence may choose to stay with an abuser, it's important to remember that the victim is never at fault when they are experiencing an abusive relationship. Often, they need emotional support as much - or more - than anything else while they find the strength to leave for a better life.

For more ways to provide support for a loved one experiencing abuse, you can visit <https://www.thehotline.org/support-others/ways-to-support-a-domestic-violence-survivor/>. You can also volunteer with your local GLSP office to help provide legal representation to survivors seeking TPOs to better protect and support them when they decide to leave the abuse.

Citations

1. <https://www.thehotline.org/stakeholders/domestic-violence-awareness-month/>
2. https://nnedv.org/latest_update/nnedv-launches-every1knowssome1-domestic-violence-awareness-month-campaign/#:~:text=Held%20annually%20in%20October%2C%20Domestic,they%20realize%20it%20or%20not.
3. <https://safespeaks.org/2021/05/18/why-is-it-difficult-to-just-leave-an-abusive-relationship/>
4. <https://ncadv.org/why-do-victims-stay;> <https://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/2017/01/28/most-dangerous-time-for-battered-women-is-when-they-leave-jerry-mitchell/96955552/>
5. <https://safeshelter.org/learn/statistics/#:~:text=35.1%25%20of%20Georgia%20women%20and,sexual%20violence%20and%20stalking.>
6. Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Project, 2018 Annual Report Final Edition

Law Students and the Access to Justice Effort: A Menu of Opportunities

Pro bono isn't just for private attorneys and large firms. Georgia Legal Services Program is equally passionate about engaging law students and recent graduates in our activities. We work closely with law schools to offer a variety of opportunities where law students can gain hands-on experience in both substantive law and professional practice skills while under the supervision of a Georgia-licensed attorney.

Those looking for substantive experience will benefit from direct work with our staff and volunteers on client cases. Law students may help draft advice letters for survivors of violence, interview clients and assist in preparation of legal forms and documents, or assist in the planning and supporting of substantive clinics across the state. Each of these offers a chance not only to see attorneys in-action, but also allows law students to see just how much our lawyers meaningfully impact the lives of our clients in real-time. Better yet: GLSP can often offer these opportunities in remote, hybrid, and/or in-person settings.

Law students interested in the larger access to justice problems in Georgia can also participate GLSP's alternative spring break and semester/term-long internship programs. Our regional offices and community partners work closely with participants to address systemic issues. Past spring break activities have included traveling to rural parts of south Georgia to conduct intake interviews, speaking with partner agencies about the holistic legal issues impacting our joint client base, improving access to legal services in the wake of disasters, and more.

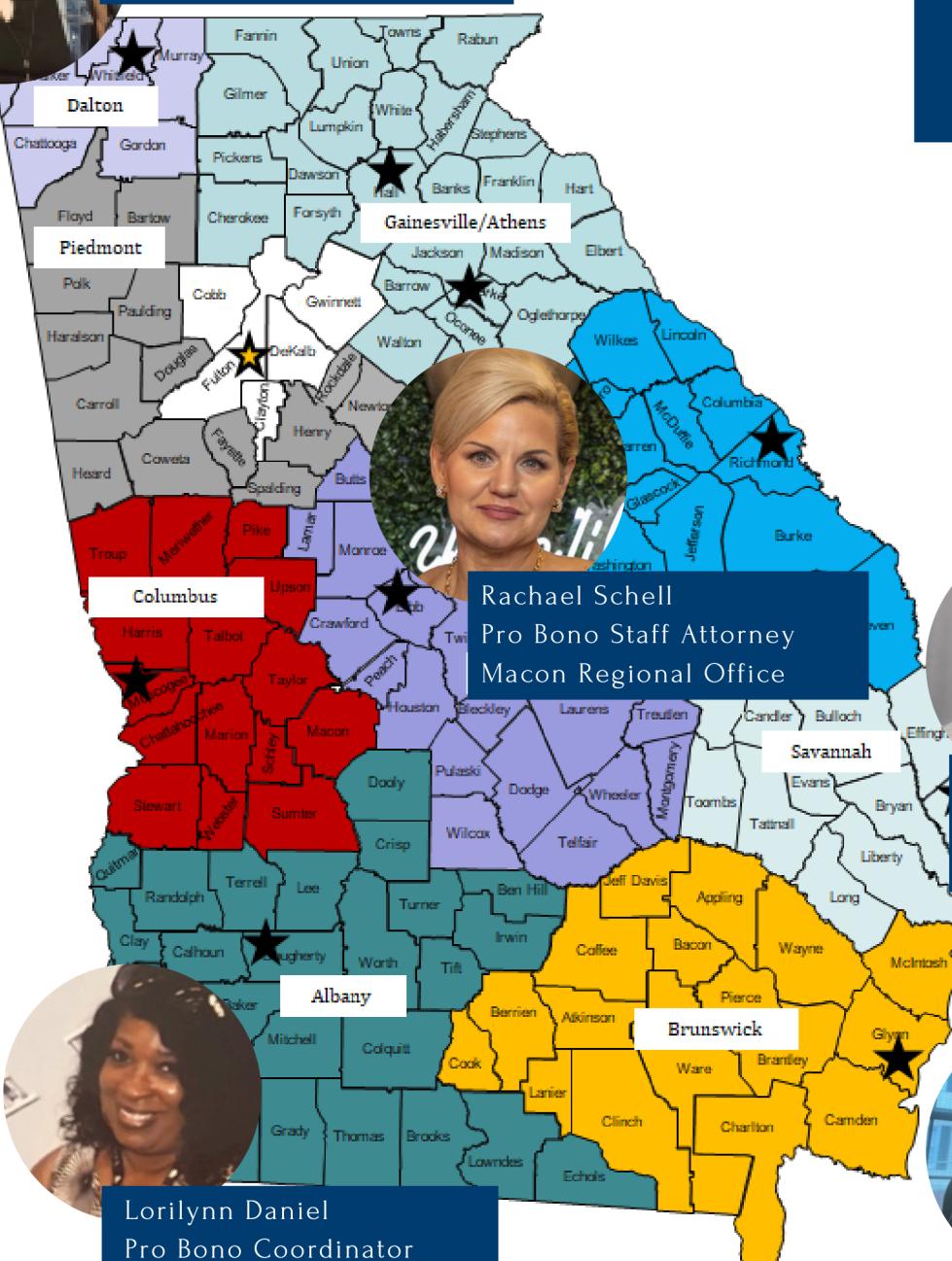
For more information about our law student pro bono opportunities, contact Alexandra "Alex" Eichenbaum, Pro Bono Deputy Director, at aeichenbaum@glsp.org.



MEET THE TEAM- REGIONAL OFFICES



Angelina Vaquera-Linke
Pro Bono Coordinator
Dalton Regional Office



Lorilynn Daniel
Pro Bono Coordinator
Albany Regional Office



Rachael Schell
Pro Bono Staff Attorney
Macon Regional Office



Sarah J. Anderson
Pro Bono Supervising Attorney
Savannah Regional Office



Marika LaRoy
Pro Bono Coordinator
Brunswick Regional Office

WE'RE HIRING!

GLSP's Pro Bono Unit is seeking new lawyers and legal professionals to join our team in our Augusta, Columbus, and Piedmont Offices.

To learn more, contact Alexandra Eichenbaum (aeichenbaum@glsp.org) or view our job postings at bit.ly/GLSP_Jobs

MEET THE TEAM- CENTRAL SUPPORT



Mike Monahan
Director of the Pro Bono Unit



Alexandra V. Eichenbaum
Deputy Director of the Pro Bono Unit



Ashley Clark
Pro Bono Supervising Attorney



Nobie Mitchell
Pro Bono Coordinator



Deborah Chapman
Pro Bono Support Manager



Tommy Richards
Pro Bono Coordinator

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