



OUTSTANDING PRO BONO PARTNERSHIP CELEBRATED AT PRO BONO INSTITUTE ANNUAL GALA

The Washington, D.C.-based Pro Bono Institute® (PBI) presented the sixth annual **CPBO Pro Bono Partner Award** at the Pro Bono Institute Annual Gala on November 13, 2008 at the Plaza in New York City. The CPBO Pro Bono Partner Award, presented by Corporate Pro Bono, itself a national partnership project of the Association of Corporate Counsel and the Pro Bono Institute, recognizes the unique role partnerships between and among in-house corporate legal departments, law firms, and public interest groups play in the provision of pro bono legal services.

James Bender, Senior Vice President and General Counsel, The Williams Companies, Inc. accepted the Partner Award on behalf of the partnership among The Williams Companies, Inc. (Williams); Hall, Estill, Hardwick, Gable, Golden & Nelson, P.C. (Hall Estill); and Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma, Inc. (Legal Aid). The legal department of Williams was selected to receive this national pro bono partnership award for its innovative partnership program representing low-income and elderly Oklahomans with civil legal problems, such as end-of-life planning and guardian ad litem services, in coordination with Hall Estill and Legal Aid.

The partnership among Williams, Legal Aid and Hall Estill developed after a local program closed that had provided estate planning and related services to the elderly poor, and the local guardianship court experienced a dearth of volunteers willing to serve as guardians ad litem. Calling a town meeting of its legal department, Williams began to organize an effort to expand the capacity of services provided by Legal Aid. With the support of its General Counsel, James Bender, Williams reached out to Hall Estill and created a project to provide coverage for those underserved matters.

Once established, the partnership supported its efforts by designing comprehensive training sessions, preparing online video of those trainings, and creating and posting legal research and forms online. It also developed social networking processes, such as establishing work teams among lawyers and non-lawyers, frequent updates, and quarterly experience sharing sessions. These innovations have proven effective – sustaining volunteers, facilitating repeat volunteering, and encouraging peer to peer recruitment.

The support of the partnership by Williams General Counsel James Bender, who took the first Legal Aid case, and Hall Estill Managing Partner Michael Cooke has also been an integral part of the partnership's success.

“It is a win-win situation for Tulsa . . .” said Karen Langdon, Pro Bono Coordinator, Legal Aid. “[T]hose in poverty who have a legal problem are treated with dignity and receive wonderful services. Legal Aid Services is supported in its role of providing legal assistance, and the corporate counsel at The Williams Companies and their outside counsel have found work that

brings rewards and fulfillment very different from that received in their corporate work.”

The relationship among Williams, Hall Estill, and Legal Aid has encouraged Williams to challenge other Oklahoma companies to support legal pro bono efforts and has spurred the partnership to expand the range of services it provides to address the needs of the Tulsa community.

About The Williams Companies

An integrated natural gas company, Williams produces, gathers, processes and transports clean-burning natural gas to heat homes and power electric generation across the country.

About Hall Estill

Hall Estill is a full-service business law firm, providing legal representation in local, regional, national, and international venues. The more than 100 attorneys in the firm maintain close contact through four offices nationwide - Tulsa, Oklahoma City, Washington, D.C., and Northwest Arkansas.

About Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma

Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma is a non-profit law firm serving low-income and elderly Oklahomans that seeks to ensure basic needs for its clients, especially those involving: freedom from harm and violence; access to housing; freedom from hunger; access to health care; income maintenance for survival.

About Corporate Pro Bono

Established in 2000, Corporate Pro Bono (CPBO) is a national partnership project of the Association of Corporate Counsel (www.acc.com) and the Pro Bono Institute® (www.probonoinst.org). Through on-line services (www.cpbo.org), technical assistance to the in-house community, and educational outreach, CPBO seeks to encourage and support the participation of in-house counsel in pro bono legal services.

About the Pro Bono Institute

Established in 1996, PBI is a non-profit organization with a mandate to explore and identify new approaches to the poor and disadvantaged unable to secure legal assistance to address critical problems. In doing so, PBI identifies and develops innovative programs and undertakes rigorous evaluations to ensure that these new approaches are workable and effective. PBI administers a number of projects designed to enhance access to justice, including: the Law Firm Pro Bono Project®, Corporate Pro BonoSM, Second Acts®, Global Pro Bono, and Public Interest Pro Bono.

About the Association of Corporate Counsel

The Association of Corporate Counsel is the in-house bar association, serving the professional needs of attorneys who practice in the legal departments of corporations and other private sector organizations worldwide. The association promotes the common interests of its members, contributes to their continuing education, seeks to improve understanding of the role of in-house attorneys, and encourages advancements in standards of corporate legal practice. Since its founding in 1982, the association has grown to more than 17,500 members in 53 countries who represent more than 7,800 organizations. For more information, go to www.acc.com.