

McGuireWoods Receives Virginia State Bar's Frankie Muse Freeman Pro Bono Award

September 12, 2017

McGuireWoods has been honored by the Virginia State Bar's Access to Legal Services Committee as the recipient of the inaugural Frankie Muse Freeman Organizational Pro Bono Award for the firm's contributions to legal services for the poor. The award will be presented Oct. 18 during the VSB Pro Bono Conference in Charlottesville.

The award is named for a Virginia-born civil rights lawyer who was the first woman appointed to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. In nominating McGuireWoods for the award, Legal Aid Justice Center executive director Mary Bauer noted that lawyers from McGuireWoods' Virginia offices donated 18,834 pro bono hours over 19 months in 2016 and 2017. She wrote that the firm's pro bono efforts "cover the state and its attorneys appear in all forums from General District Court to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals."

Bauer lauded the firm for providing pro bono services to refugee children seeking legal immigration status, to youth who were tried as adults or sentenced as serious juvenile offenders, and to [low-income Virginians whose driver's licenses were suspended for unpaid court costs or fines](#). She noted that the firm has committed significant resources to LAJC's lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of those license suspensions.

"This is pro bono leadership," Bauer wrote. "Not just a few hours here, or a few hours there, fulfilling the commitment to access to justice in its most hollow form . . . [b]ut recognizing a systemic injustice that devastates the lives of hundreds of thousands of low-income people and their families using the resources, influence and legal prowess of the firm to make it right."

The firm also was honored for coordinating an innovative "distance lawyering" project with the Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society to assist rural clients in uncontested divorce cases, and for working with the Greater Richmond Bar Foundation and Central Virginia Legal Aid on a project that will expand access to services for clients with "non-core" legal aid cases.

In Northern Virginia, lawyers from McGuireWoods' Tysons office have partnered with AOL and now Verizon for the past 10 years on a pro bono legal referral clinic, handling more than 2,000 matters in areas such as consumer law, family law, immigration and public benefits. In Norfolk, McGuireWoods is one of eight firms that work together to coordinate pro bono representation in cases referred to the Legal Aid Society of Eastern Virginia.

"Pro bono service is an essential investment in our communities and our lawyers embrace the opportunity to provide legal assistance to our neighbors in need," said [Scott Oostdyk](#), the firm's pro bono partner. "It is gratifying to have the [Virginia State Bar](#) recognize that commitment with this prestigious award."

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