

Blair County Pro Bono CLE, Sept. 23, 2008

Lawyers came together on Sept. 23 in Blair County to do something about the debt and foreclosure crisis gripping our nation.

Debt and foreclosure expert Patrick Cicero of MidPenn Legal Services' Harrisburg office joined PBA Pro Bono Coordinator David Trevaskis, Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network (PLAN) Executive Director Sam Milkes and MidPenn's Blair County office head Diana Ingersoll to present a three-hour CLE in Altoona for Blair County attorneys on how to help needy persons access justice in debt and foreclosure matters. Materials from the program are available to attorneys who register on <http://www.paprobono.net/>, the online site for pro bono attorneys in Pennsylvania that is sponsored by PLAN and the PBA.

The Blair County Bar Association (BCBA), in partnership with the PBA Pro Bono Office, MidPenn Legal Services and PLAN, has created a new pro bono program for county residents facing the struggles of rising debt and foreclosure actions, and the Sept. 23 training was the kickoff of the program. Under a grant provided by the Pennsylvania IOLTA Board, which operates under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, BCBA and its partners have established an innovative program in which participating lawyers will take one pro bono (no compensation to the lawyer) case and then be given three "low bono" (reduced compensation paid out of the grant) cases in debt and foreclosure matters. The clients for this program must meet the poverty income and residency guidelines of the local MidPenn Legal Services office, which does all of the screening for the initiative. Funding for the grant is derived from contributions from Pennsylvania licensed attorneys through an annual fundraising effort tied to the attorney registration process. The grants are targeted to initiate or expand organized pro bono efforts of private attorneys for the representation of low income Pennsylvania residents.



Left to right, Traci Naugle, Diana Ingersoll, Patrick Cicero, David Trevaskis, Ilissa Zimmerman and Sam Milkes at the Blair County event. Naugle, Ingersoll and Trevaskis are members of the Blair County Bar Association Pro Bono Program Committee, which coordinates the new debt and foreclosure program. The committee also includes: BCBA President Jeff Fleming; Judge Jolene Grubb Kopriva and community representative Rhonda White.