

## **NONPROFIT PRO BONO INITIATIVE**

### **GENESIS**

The Dauphin County Bar Association provides pro bono legal services in conjunction with Mid Penn Legal Services. The Association's bylaws include a commitment "to encourage the fulfillment of the obligations of the profession among its members to the courts and to society, [and] to promote programs to provide effective, affordable legal services to all segments of society . . . ."

A great deal of pro bono services, however, are provided to individuals in the context of domestic disputes, such as divorce or custody matters, or perhaps even landlord tenant disputes, workers' and unemployment compensation. But there are a great many lawyers and law firms in the Capital Area that simply do not practice in these special areas of the law. This has prompted the Association to setup clinics to train lawyers in these areas so the lawyers may participate in the pro bono program.

As a result of my involvement on two nonprofit boards in the Capital Area, I am of the thought that rather than train business-type lawyers to offer pro bono services in an area of law in which the lawyers do not practice, our community might be better served by taking advantage of their existing skills.

The two organizations that I sit on have limited (or nonexistent) budgets for legal services. I have no doubt, however, that they could be even more successful in their respective missions if they had unlimited access to the legal services of one of the Capital Area's leading commercial law firms.

### **CONCEPT**

With the support of the Association, area commercial firms would commit to providing pro bono legal services as outside "General Counsel" to area nonprofit organizations that satisfy certain criteria. Commitment to this project would satisfy the firms' and their lawyers' pro bono commitment as monitored by the Association.

A Steering Committee would be formed to establish the eligibility criteria for nonprofit organizations, seeking to avail themselves of this service. The Steering Committee would also develop an application process for those organizations, screen applications, and assign organizations accepted into the program to a participating firm, matching as best as possible the needs of the organization to the firm's resources.

The Steering Committee would also develop uniform engagement terms to which each firm and nonprofit organization would be subject.