PRESS RELEASE

Lackawanna Pro Bono to Honor Susan S. Belin, the Children's Advocacy Center of Northeastern Pennsylvania and Attorneys Melinda C. Ghilardi and Sidney J. Prejean with the Attorney Robert W. Munley Distinguished Service Award

The ballroom of the Scranton Cultural Center will be the setting for Lackawanna Pro Bono’s eighth annual Fundraising Gala, to be held on Thursday, October 27, 2016 from 6:30PM to 8:30PM. Cocktails and hors d’oeuvres will be served and a brief program will be held.

Proceeds from the Gala will support Lackawanna Pro Bono’s mission, which is to provide free legal representation to the poor by recruiting local attorneys to volunteer their professional services to financially eligible individuals, primarily Lackawanna County residents, who are faced with serious civil legal problems. Funds will be raised through ticket and program book ad sales.

At the event, Susan S. Belin, the Children’s Advocacy Center of Northeastern Pennsylvania, Attorney Melinda C. Ghilardi, and Attorney Sidney J. Prejean will be honored for their service to the community with the Attorney Robert W. Munley Distinguished Service Award.

Ms. Belin is a longtime member and former chair of the Keystone College Board of Trustees. She is a founder and co-chair of the Scranton Area Foundation's Women in Philanthropy and was a founder of the Northeast Regional Cancer Institute, where she was executive vice president and president. She has served on many other boards, including the Northeastern Pennsylvania Philharmonic, the Scranton Cultural Center, and the local chapters of the American Red Cross and the Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. She is a graduate of Wheaton College in Massachusetts and received a master’s degree in business administration from the State University of New York at Binghamton.

The Children’s Advocacy Center of Northeastern Pennsylvania is a private, non-profit, charitable organization whose mission is to provide excellence in the assessment and treatment of child abuse and neglect. CAC/NEPA provides medical assessments and child forensic interviews for victims of abuse and neglect and coordinates a multidisciplinary team response to child abuse and neglect in Lackawanna and surrounding counties of Northeastern Pennsylvania. The Center provides child abuse prevention education to professionals and communities served.

Attorney Melinda C. Ghilardi has served as a Federal Public Defender for the Middle District of Pennsylvania since 1986. Prior to joining the Federal Public Defender’s staff, she was an Assistant District Attorney in Lackawanna County. A past president of the Lackawanna Bar Association, she has been on the boards of numerous organizations, including the University of Scranton, Girl Scouts in the Heart of Pennsylvania, the American Heart Association, Family Service of Lackawanna County, Friendship House, United Way of Lackawanna County, and Community Medical Center. She is a graduate of the University of Scranton and the University of Pittsburgh School of Law.

Attorney Sidney J. Prejean is on the faculty of Lackawanna College and is the coach/advisor to the University of Scranton mock trial team. Formerly the Lackawanna County Chief Public Defender, he served as a Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Air Force, sits on the boards of ARC of Northeastern PA, Friends of the Weinberg Memorial Library, and the Kiwanis Club of Scranton and the advisory board of the Salvation Army, Scranton Citadel, and is a past president of the Pocono Mountains Chapter of the Retired Officers Association. He is a graduate of the University of Scranton, has a master’s
degree in International Relations from Troy University in Alabama, and earned his law degree from Rutgers University School of Law – Camden. He is married to Attorney Melinda C. Ghilardi.

Tickets for the Fundraising Gala are $150 each. Program book ad opportunities range from $100 to $5,000.

Lackawanna Pro Bono was established in 1997 for the purpose of addressing the unmet need for pro bono legal services in Lackawanna County. Approximately 200 Lackawanna County attorneys volunteer their professional services through the organization. Since 1997, Lackawanna Pro Bono has matched pro bono attorneys to its clients in more than 3,000 legal matters, serving over 7,000 people, and close to 400 local attorneys have assisted one or more pro bono clients in cases that Lackawanna Pro Bono, Inc. referred to them. Lackawanna Pro Bono is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation.

To qualify for Lackawanna Pro Bono’s services, a person’s household income must be less than 125 per cent of the federal poverty guidelines. Types of cases handled include landlord/tenant, unemployment compensation, mortgage foreclosures, debtor/creditor matters, child custody and visitation, protection from abuse, and others.

Further information can be obtained by calling Lackawanna Pro Bono at (570) 961-2714.