

**Dec. 21, 2011**

The holiday get together for North Penn Legal Services Bethlehem Office had a little extra celebration on Wednesday, Dec. 21, 2011, as lawyers and staff of the Northampton County program joined the Pennsylvania Bar Association in honoring local attorney Michelle DeWald for her pro bono service as DeWald was honored with the 2011 Pennsylvania Bar Association Pro Bono Award. DeWald volunteers at North Penn's Bethlehem office every Tuesday to assist as needed with bankruptcy, consumer, and mortgage foreclosure cases. She is also available to staff there whenever they have questions in these areas of law.

"At a time when Pennsylvania is dealing with a civil legal aid crisis which sees more than half the people who make it to a legal aid office and qualify for legal aid being turned away from receiving such help because of a lack of resources, DeWald's commitment of pro bono service is a tremendous example for other lawyers and the public at large," noted Pennsylvania Bar Association Pro Bono Coordinator David Trevaskis as he presented DeWald with her award. "Despite special fees and a loan forgiveness program for civil legal aid attorneys starting its second year, the justice system just does not have the professional resources to meet the growing need for such services in these tough economic times," Trevaskis explained. "The commitment of pro bono lawyers like Michelle DeWald significantly extends the resources of legal aid available for the neediest among us."

There are nearly 70,000 attorneys licensed in Pennsylvania. According to recently released data from the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania's Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) Program, pro bono services by Pennsylvania lawyers provide the annual equivalent service of 61 full-time legal aid lawyers. Pennsylvania Bar President Matt Creme knows that pro bono service cannot replace the work of fully funded legal aid offices. "It is only within a well-supported legal aid program, that there is a structure for organized pro bono service to make a difference," Creme stated.

"As funding for legal aid programming faces cuts in these hard economic times and the number of persons needing such service grows, the work of attorneys such as Michelle DeWald and others around the Commonwealth provides access to justice for many who otherwise would be without legal representation."

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**Below, photo at right, PBA Pro Bono Coordinator David K. Trevaskis with, from left, Michelle DeWald, Vicki Coyle, executive director, North Penn Legal Services, and Lori Malloy, managing attorney, Bethlehem Office of North Penn; at left, North Penn Legal Services group photo**

