Remarks by

Thomas G. Wilkinson Jr.

PBA President

During the

Bucks County Bar Association Pro Bono Reception

To Celebrate Pro Bono Week

Wednesday, October 24, 2012
I am delighted to join lawyers and judges from Bucks County and beyond to celebrate and recognize the pro bono effort in Bucks County, a partnership of local bar, the courts, private practice attorneys and legal aid professionals that helps the neediest among us have access to justice.

We are in the middle of Pennsylvania Pro Bono Week, proclaimed by Governor Corbett with resolutions affirming the importance of pro bono service from both houses of the General Assembly. There are nearly 70,000 attorneys licensed in Pennsylvania. Many give significant pro bono like those among us today. However, 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. 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 pro bono attorneys, here in Bucks County and around the Commonwealth, provides access to justice for many who otherwise would be without legal representation.

Pennsylvania Chief Justice Castille wrote to all lawyers in the state and urged that we all take up at least one pro bono client representation each year, and we expect every member of the PBA House of Delegates and Board of Governors to meet that challenge. You clearly get it and understand the importance of service in this county and I am pleased to be honoring tonight one of your own for such service. The PBA is taking this opportunity to honor local attorney

Martin N. Ghen
Martin Ghen has been practicing in Bucks County for over 40 years. During that time he has assisted many individuals pro bono in domestic matters.

Since the inception of the Pro Bono Defendant Representation in Protection From Abuse matters more than 10 years ago, Mr. Ghen has been a reliable resource to assist defendants in Protection from Abuse matters at least monthly, if not more often, as available. (This Program was formed at the Bench’s request so that all parties in protection from abuse litigation, defendants as well as plaintiffs, are aware of their legal right and represented. The Program is managed by the Bucks County Bar Association.) In these matters defendants appear at court and are guided by the court tip staff to defense counsel. Defense counsel meets with the defendant at the court on the day of the hearing. This is the only time they have to meet with and prepare their case. Because of Mr. Ghen’s extensive experience in domestic matters, these individuals are provided the best defense possible in what is a tumultuous time in the parties’ lives.

Because of the legal representation of both parties, an agreement can often be reached protecting the rights of all parties involved, which is then entered as an Order of Court.

Mr. Ghen currently has his own practice specializing in domestic matters, Wills, Estates and Orphan’s Court litigation, as well as other civil litigation. He is an active member of the Pennsylvania Bar Association and Bucks County Bar Association, having served on many committees.
Mr. Ghen's pro bono assistance to defendants in Protection from Abuse matters helps to provide the balance the Court desired in this type of litigation, by making sure that the rights of all litigants were protected.