



Volunteer attorneys were on hand for the Dallas Bar Association's November 2010 clinic and the Dallas Stand Down for Homeless Veterans.

Texas Young Lawyers Association President **Jennifer Evans Morris** and other TYLA officers and directors in the Dallas Veterans Day parade, where they handed out veterans resource cards with helpful resources and phone numbers for veterans and their families. This year, TYLA members, including President **Natalie Cobb Koehler**, are taking part in the Waco Veterans Day parade.

Clinics were held in all major metropolitan areas, as well as in Lubbock, Midland-Odessa-Big Spring, Beaumont and Galveston, Bastrop, Temple-Belton-Killeen, Denton, and Hidalgo County, among other locations. More than 600 veterans received some form of legal assistance, from basic advice to pro bono referral, from nearly 300 volunteer attorneys. Legal aid organizations also provided support and volunteers to many of the clinics. Highlights from the November clinics include the following:

- The Bastrop County Bar Association assisted 26 veterans with 13 volunteer attorneys on hand, with several attorneys taking pro bono cases.
- The Bell County Bar Association, Bell County Young Lawyers, and Lone Star Legal Aid had 27 volunteer attorneys on hand and helped 40 veterans.
- The Hidalgo County Bar Association helped 50 veterans with wills or estate planning documents during its "Wills for Heroes" clinic.
- The Jefferson County Bar Association had 30 volunteer attorneys on hand to help 101 area veterans — 13 veterans were assigned pro bono attorneys for further representation.
- Clinics in Midland, Odessa, Big Spring, and Fort Stockton combined to assist 52 veterans with 26 volunteer attorneys.

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Montgomery County Bar Association President Laura Marburger counsels veterans at a September 2011 clinic in Conroe as part of a 14-county Veterans Legal Initiative coalition.



A veteran receives assistance at the El Paso Bar Association's clinic in November 2010.

A similar effort on the part of local bar associations and legal aid organizations is being made this November, as well.

ATTORNEY TRAINING

The State Bar provides resource and educational materials to local bar associations to assist them in organizing and maintaining their clinics. Thanks to a grant from the Texas Bar Foundation, the State Bar was able to produce a “clinic in a box” and clinic toolkit, which contain how-to and practical materials for getting a clinic up and running. In addition, the Texas Young Lawyers Association produced two resource booklets that have received widespread distribution:

- *Resources for Veterans Seeking Help* — More than 6,000 copies have been distributed to veterans service offices, veterans service providers, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Texas Governor's Office, plus numerous VA Stand Downs, legal advice clinics, and other veterans benefits fairs.
- *Resources for Lawyers Assisting Veterans* — More than 3,000 copies have been distributed to local bar associations and legal aid organizations to assist in training volunteer attorneys.

For attorneys interested in assisting veterans with disability claims through the VA, the State Bar developed a continuing legal education webcast that qualifies toward an attorney's accreditation requirement with the VA. Attorneys who want to assist with claims for VA benefits before the Board of Veterans' Appeals or VA Regional Offices must be accredited by the VA and complete three hours of CLE during the first year following the date of their accreditation (*See p. 928*). The “Basics of

Veterans Benefits Law” webcast fits this requirement and is available at texasbar.com/veterans or at TexasBarCLE.com. The webcast was viewed by 195 attorneys during its broadcast in August 2010 and is available in DVD format to local bar associations or legal aid organizations wanting to conduct group trainings for their volunteer attorneys.

In May, the State Bar co-sponsored with the El Paso Bar Association/El Paso Lawyers for Patriots and Army OneSource a two-day seminar on legal issues affecting veterans and active military. The seminar provided high-caliber CLE and training to attorneys regarding the special legal issues often encountered by those who have served or continue to serve in the military. Prominent speakers included Lt. Col. George McHugh of the Department of Defense; retired Col. John S. Odom, an expert on the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act; Kyndra Rotunda, executive director of the Military Law & Policy Institute/AMVETS Legal Clinic, as well as staff judge advocates from Fort Bliss and Fort Hood. Tottenham and **Travis Sales**, who helped initiate the Houston Bar's veterans clinic program during his tenure as HBA president in 2008, were also on hand to talk about *Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans*.

Other local bar associations and legal aid organizations have conducted continuing legal education for attorneys who are interested in volunteering for their clinics:

- The Tarrant County Bar Association held a seminar in May 2011, featuring Texas Supreme Court Justice **Phil Johnson** and James Richman of the Texas Veterans Commission.
- Lone Star Legal Aid (LSLA), as part of a dedicated veterans initiative, held a veterans law CLE for 70 attorneys in



August 2011 in Longview. The CLE was free for attorneys who agreed to accept one pro bono case from LSLA.

- The Dallas Bar Association, in conjunction with co-sponsors American Airlines and Haynes and Boone, held a CLE in August 2011 for more than 60 attorney volunteers and placed all available veterans cases.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE GRANTS

In April, the Texas Access to Justice Commission celebrated its 10th anniversary at the Champions for Justice Gala in Austin, which raised nearly \$400,000 for the provision of civil legal aid for low-income Texas veterans. This was the second consecutive year the Commission has dedicated its gala funds to support legal services for veterans.

This year, the Texas Access to Justice Foundation awarded grants to 10 organizations including the Houston Bar Foundation, Jefferson County Bar Foundation, and Fort Bend Lawyers Care. These three organizations joined forces to form the Veterans Legal Initiative coalition, which will serve a veteran population of approximately 350,000 in 14 southeast Texas counties. The coalition is working to recruit and train volunteer attorneys and to set up veterans legal clinics in the area by working with local bar associations.

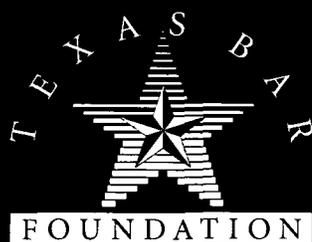
EXPANDING BEYOND TEXAS

Other state bar associations and legal aid organizations have begun to establish veterans legal advice clinics based on the *Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans* model. For example, the Oklahoma Bar Association established Oklahoma Lawyers for America's Heroes in November 2010 and the Legal Aid Society of Louisville, Ky., will be conducting 12 clinics starting this month. Other states in the process of implementing the program or interested in establishing a similar program include Alabama, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, New Mexico, New York, and Wyoming.

Closer to home, countless volunteers — attorneys, paralegals, and other support staff — continue to provide dedicated service at their local veterans clinic, helping to ensure that, on that day, a few more veterans receive the legal advice they need and deserve. Definitely worth the grateful hug. ☘

JUDY L. MARCHMAN

is publications manager at the State Bar of Texas.



Seeking Nominations

DEADLINE: January 13, 2012

For more information on the nominations process, visit www.txbf.org or call Holly Priestner at (512) 480-8014.

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Samuel Pessarra
Outstanding
Jurist Award