

# JOURNAL

Newsletter of the Fairfax Bar Association

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## Fairfax Law Foundation *Pro Bono* Awards—2012



The FBA is pleased to announce the 2012 *Pro Bono* Awards given by the Northern Virginia *Pro Bono* Law Center. Local legal professionals were honored for their service at the Annual State of the Judiciary Membership Luncheon held on November 28, 2012. Arlene Beckerman, Director of *Pro Bono* Activities, stated, "It is through our generous volunteers that we are able to serve the neediest in our community and help to provide access to justice."

### Pro Bono Lawyer of the Year—Deborah Matthews

Deborah Matthews is a resident of Mt. Vernon and has established her office in Old Town Alexandria. Her practice is limited to estate planning, probate, and trust and estate administration - areas where she is frequently able to make a difference in the lives of her clients and their loved ones.

For several years, she served as Co-Chair of the FBA's Wills, Trusts, and Estates section. Deborah has lectured extensively before attorneys, judges, court staff and CPAs. She is licensed to practice law in Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. Upon moving to Fairfax County, Ms. Matthews opened her home to foster children. She served as a board member to United Christian Ministries (UCM) as well as President, Vice President, and as a founding member of the Friends of UCM. She is a Co-Chair of the Alexandria TRIAD, established by the Alexandria Sheriff to protect elderly citizens in the community, and is the Secretary of the Board of Directors of the Ivy Hill Cemetery Historical Preservation Society.

Most recently, when approached, Deborah jumped in to support the Northern Virginia *Pro Bono* Law Center's Wills on Wheels program, which provides life-planning documents to low-income and poverty seniors. The *pro bono* attorneys travel to partner sites throughout the county to meet with these clients. Deborah, without any hesitation, not only offered to completely rewrite the

outdated training manual and update all of its forms, but she also recruited another trainer and presented an excellent CLE to prepare the volunteer lawyers to participate in the program, which is still in use today. She continued to serve as a mentor to participating lawyers, as well as becoming the go-to person for ongoing technical issues with the program. She has participated in providing hands-on services to low-income seniors, as well, and even drafted a retired judge to participate with her.

By going beyond the individual representation of clients, to teaching and writing valuable resource materials, Deborah has had a wide-ranging impact. By leveraging her knowledge to teach others to do this *pro bono* work, there is a ripple effect resulting in the program being able to serve many more clients than would otherwise be possible. Deborah has been enthusiastic and energetic in helping to make this program as good as it can be in serving those most in need.

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