

## Baker Donelson Launches Pro Bono Legal Clinic for Homeless

(Memphis, TN / February 22, 2010) Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC, along with Memphis Area Legal Services and the Community Legal Center, will launch the Homeless Experience Legal Protection (HELP) program in Memphis. The project provides a monthly legal clinic offering pro bono advice and representation for homeless individuals.

To launch the Memphis branch of the program, Baker Donelson will provide volunteer attorneys to staff the clinic in its first month of operation, and will help to recruit additional volunteers to continue staffing the clinic in future months. The first volunteer recruitment meeting will be held on February 23 at noon in Baker Donelson's downtown Memphis office at 165 Madison Avenue on the 20th floor.

"The Memphis program will offer a much-needed resource for those who don't otherwise have access to legal services," said Lori Patterson, a Pro Bono Coordinator for the Firm's Memphis office. "Although we have other legal clinics in Memphis, we have found that the homeless do not often utilize these services, likely because the clinics are not held in places frequented by our homeless population." Adds George T. "Buck" Lewis, Immediate Past President of the Tennessee Bar Association and a shareholder in the Memphis office of Baker Donelson, "All lawyers can help, no matter what area of practice or level of experience. We welcome lawyers from corporate law departments, law firms, solo practitioners and governmental entities to give back to their community and volunteer their skills."

The Memphis HELP program clinics, which are expected to begin in April, will be held Tuesday afternoons at the Hospitality Hubs, located at 146 Jefferson Avenue.

HELP first began in New Orleans in May 2004 as the brainchild of U.S. District Court Judge Jay Zainey, who will attend the volunteer recruitment meeting, along with Janice M. Holder, Chief Justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court. Baker Donelson was one of the original firms to participate, and Judge Zainey approached the Firm about expanding the program in other cities. Since then Baker Donelson has participated in the launch of the HELP program in Nashville, Atlanta and Birmingham.

"Our experience in other cities is that most problems the clients bring to us are pretty simple for an attorney to resolve, but have presented huge obstacles for the individuals in terms of improving their lives. This program has the advantage of bringing that advice to the clients instead of requiring them to know how to seek it out," said Baker Donelson's Pro Bono Shareholder Lisa Borden, who directs the Firm's provision of free legal services to the disadvantaged. "But HELP goes way beyond providing legal services. The individuals served through this program are given a sense of belonging in a society that mostly ignores and fears them, and we are privileged to be able to help provide that opportunity."

More information on the HELP program is available at [www.homelesslegalprotection.com](http://www.homelesslegalprotection.com) .