

# PRESS RELEASE

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## Baker Donelson Named a 2015 NLADA Beacon of Justice Award Winner

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(May 5, 2015) For the second consecutive year, Baker Donelson has been named a Beacon of Justice Award winner by the National Legal Aid & Defender Association (NLADA).

The 2015 Beacon of Justice Awards recognize law firms whose pro bono accomplishments have expanded opportunities for the underserved in areas such as education, health care, housing and legal services.

Baker Donelson is being recognized for its extensive pro bono work with the homeless. The Firm has been instrumental in expanding the Homeless Experience Legal Protection (HELP) program, which operates recurring legal clinics at homeless shelters in about 20 cities nationwide. HELP was first launched in New Orleans in May 2004, by U.S. District Court Judge Jay Zainey. Baker Donelson, one of the original firms to participate, has since worked with Judge Zainey to found HELP programs in Birmingham, Alabama; and Knoxville, Memphis and Nashville, Tennessee. The Firm continues to act as coordinators for those locations, and Baker Donelson attorneys serve as active volunteers for the HELP programs in Birmingham, Alabama; Jackson, Mississippi; Knoxville, Memphis and Nashville, Tennessee; and New Orleans, Louisiana.

Nancy Scott Degan, a shareholder in the Firm's New Orleans office and the current Chair of the ABA Section of Litigation, made launching HELP clinics in ten additional cities across the United States a major goal of her ABA term. Through Ms. Degan's leadership and the continued efforts of Baker Donelson attorneys, there will be established HELP clinics in 30 cities across the country by the end of 2015, creating a nationwide network offering vital assistance for homeless people.

Baker Donelson has also built on the success of the HELP program by taking the lead in creating courts dedicated to handling minor legal matters common among the homeless, providing a streamlined system for addressing and resolving legal barriers that prevent homeless individuals from re-establishing themselves as productive citizens. These innovative programs bring together judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys and homeless service providers to help resolve the cases that often keep individuals mired in homelessness.

Sherry Dolan, Pro Bono Manager in the Firm's New Orleans office, helped launch the New Orleans homeless court program in 2010, and Lisa Borden, the Firm's Pro Bono Shareholder, helped launch Birmingham's homeless court in 2013. Since helping to launch these homeless court programs, Baker Donelson attorneys continue to coordinate and manage their operations.

The Beacon of Justice Award winners will be formally honored at the NLADA Exemplar Award Dinner on Tuesday, June 23, at The Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C.

Through its commitment to pro bono representation, Baker Donelson provides legal services to groups and individuals likely to be marginalized in the legal system due to economic barriers. Over the years, the Firm's attorneys have provided a variety of counsel to many populations, including immigrants, refugees, the elderly and the impoverished. Baker Donelson's efforts include work on a wide range of matters, such as advocating for the homeless and organizations that serve the homeless, death penalty litigation, providing corporate legal services to non-profit organizations, and much more.

## About NLADA

The *National Legal Aid & Defender Association*, founded in 1911, is America's oldest and largest nonprofit association devoted to excellence in the delivery of legal services to those who cannot afford counsel. NLADA has pioneered access to justice at the national, state and local levels through the creation of our public defender systems and other important institutions from The Sentencing Project to the Legal Services Corporation. A leader in the development of national standards for legal aid and indigent defense, NLADA also provides advocacy, training and technical assistance for equal justice advocates across the country.