

# PRESS RELEASE

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## Baker Donelson Recognizes 2023 Pro Bono Attorneys of the Year

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**Baker Donelson has announced its annual Pro Bono Attorneys of the Year Awards, recognizing 11 attorneys throughout the Firm for their pro bono work.**

Zachary B. Busey and Pete A. Brunson were named the firm-wide 2023 Baker Donelson Pro Bono Attorneys of the Year. Mr. Busey and Mr. Brunson, attorneys in the Firm's Memphis office, were recognized for their work representing animal welfare organization Guardians of Rescue. After a local sheriff's office raided and shut down a notorious Tennessee puppy mill that was regarded as one of the worst in the country, Guardians of Rescue was asked to assist with rescuing and processing more than 300 dogs and puppies. Later, in an effort to intimidate the organization, the family involved in the puppy mill operation filed a multimillion-dollar lawsuit against Guardians of Rescue. Mr. Busey and Mr. Brunson were able to secure a dismissal of the case, then also successfully represented Guardians of Rescue in pursuing fees and sanctions.

Baker Donelson also recognized attorneys in many of its individual offices for their pro bono efforts.

- **Caitlin S. Colley**, Atlanta Pro Bono Attorney of the Year: Ms. Colley, a veteran of the U.S. Army JAG Corps, concentrates her pro bono efforts in defense of veterans, active-duty soldiers, and other servicemembers. Her work has included representing an active-duty U.S. Army soldier who faced retaliation and retribution for reporting a sexual assault incident. Through Ms. Colley's advocacy, the retaliating commander was removed from command of a brigade-sized element, and the soldier's security clearance was restored. Ms. Colley facilitates Baker Donelson's relationship with The Warrior Alliance, a nonprofit veterans organization, to bring additional veteran pro bono matters to interested attorneys, paralegals, and legal services coordinators within the Firm.
- **Jade E. Sipes, Maia Fleischman, and Kayla M. Wunderlich**, Birmingham Pro Bono Attorneys of the Year: Ms. Sipes, Ms. Fleischman, and Ms. Wunderlich were recognized for their work with the National Advocates for Pregnant Women (NAPW) in preparing a petition for writ of habeas corpus to obtain the release of a pregnant woman from Etowah County Jail, where she had been wrongfully held for three months. Less than 24 hours after the filing of the habeas petition, the woman was released under a bond supervision program and reunited with her three-year-old son.
- **Erin J. Greten**, Washington, D.C. Pro Bono Attorney of the Year: Ms. Greten provided pro bono services to the volunteer stewards of New Jersey's historic Romer Shoal Lighthouse in appealing a decision by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to claw back \$4.4 million in disaster relief assistance ten years after the lighthouse sustained catastrophic damage during Hurricane Sandy. When the restoration project faced construction delays due to COVID-19, the stewards submitted a time extension request to FEMA. FEMA issued a decision that the documentation was insufficient to determine eligibility for the grant and reversed all funding, which was critical for the repair and restoration of the lighthouse. After the stewards reached out to Baker Donelson for help, Ms. Greten leveraged her deep knowledge and experience with FEMA's Public Assistance program to develop the strategy and write two substantive appeal letters providing the documentation and information needed to prove the stewards' eligibility under the law.

- **Karen Blake**, Fort Lauderdale Pro Bono Attorney of the Year: Ms. Blake was recognized for her work assisting a church in Aurora, Indiana, in their sponsorship of a Ukrainian family seeking to obtain U.S. visas through the Uniting for Ukraine project, which provides a pathway for Ukrainian citizens and their immediate family members to come into the U.S. on a temporary basis. Ms. Blake assisted the church and family with the necessary forms and submission to ensure the family was able to come to the U.S.
- **Gary L. Edwards**, Johnson City Pro Bono Attorney of the Year: Mr. Edwards has been instrumental in the pro bono work for the National Native American Law Enforcement Association, as well as the Native American Consulting Group, for nearly two decades, volunteering a significant amount of time. That work has included assistance with tribal border security projects, consultation on the inclusion of tribal communities in government legislation, drafting and providing feedback on contracts between tribal, federal, state, local and third-party stakeholders, planning and agendas for annual law enforcement conferences, and research into many issues affecting tribal communities.
- **Jonathan C. Hancock**, Memphis Pro Bono Attorney of the Year: For several years, Mr. Hancock has worked with various nonprofit organizations, including the Baddour Center in Senatobia, Mississippi, and Hope House in Memphis. A majority of his work in recent years has been with Friends for All (formerly Friends for Life). Mr. Hancock was recognized for his many efforts to provide comprehensive legal support for the organization. His work has included addressing zoning issues related to Friends for All's new corporate headquarters, as well as handling a dispute with a vendor regarding a mobile unit to provide health services throughout the community.
- **Chris Barrett**, Nashville Pro Bono Attorney of the Year: In addition to serving as the Nashville office pro bono chair, Mr. Barrett has successfully managed several pro bono matters for multiple organizations, including Disability Rights Tennessee, which provides legal advocacy services to people with disabilities; Hope Smiles, an organization that provides free dental services; and Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and The Cumberland. He has also played a role in helping to manage the Nashville office's success in representing Afghan asylum seekers, work that has provided pathways to protection for asylum seekers at no cost.

Through its commitment to [pro bono representation](#), Baker Donelson provides legal services to groups and individuals whose resources are limited. The Firm's efforts include work on a wide range of matters, such as advocating for the homeless and organizations that serve the homeless, providing corporate legal services to non-profit organizations, and collaborating with our clients to address particular community needs. Baker Donelson has been instrumental in endeavors such as expanding the Homeless Experience Legal Protection (HELP) program across the Southeast; creating courts dedicated to handling minor legal matters common among the homeless; assisting persons of limited means with obtaining driver's licenses, an essential need when reintegrating into society; and spearheading and organizing volunteer lawyer programs across Baker Donelson's footprint.

Baker Donelson has helped reshape the legal industry by being one of the first law firms in the Southeast to create a Pro Bono Committee and designate a pro bono shareholder. Additionally, Baker Donelson designates Pro Bono Committee office chairs in most of its 22 offices. These chairs are best suited to address local needs while coordinating with the Firm's pro bono shareholder for global pro bono initiatives. This structure ensures Baker Donelson is well-suited to further its goal of addressing broad spectrum needs across the Firm's markets and beyond.