

VLSP Honors Outstanding Volunteers and Organizations at Annual Party

March 23, 2011 – San Francisco - The Volunteer Legal Services Program (VLSP) of The Bar Association of San Francisco celebrated its most exceptional volunteers at its annual Outstanding Volunteer Appreciation Party on March 22.

More than 200 people were in attendance at the event, which was held at the Green Room of the War Memorial and Performing Arts Center in San Francisco. Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye, California Supreme Court; Judge Katherine Feinstein, San Francisco Superior Court; Supervising Judge Patrick Mahoney, San Francisco Superior Court; and BASF President Priya Sanger were on hand to pass out the awards.

The top 10% of VLSP's volunteers were honored as recipients with Outstanding Volunteer in Public Service certificates. Additionally, VLSP recognized three individual volunteers, a law firm and a corporation with special awards.

Manatt Phelps & Phillips was the recipient of the 2010 Outstanding Law Firm in Public Service Award. Accepting on behalf of the firm was partner Craig Miller. During the 2010 calendar year, Manatt nearly tripled its pro bono contribution to VLSP, with its attorneys volunteering on a range of projects, including VLSP's Community Organization Representation Project (CORP). Manatt attorneys have also been among the most dedicated volunteers for VLSP's clinics at Project Homeless Connect, a San Francisco-wide event that serves homeless individuals. Manatt has also volunteered with our Federal Pro Bono Project, providing limited-scope assistance to a pro se litigant. Additionally, the firm was a strong supporter of VLSP's Bike-a-Thon, forming a team to raise money for our programs.

The James P. Prevolos Award for Outstanding Pro Bono Services in Family Law was presented to Diane Gentry, a solo attorney who has been volunteering with VLSP's Family Law Project for the last few years, and in 2010, took over ten cases, representing clients in matters involving custody, divorce, and domestic violence. Diane devoted hundreds of hours to VLSP clients in 2010.

The 2010 Housing Justice Award honors an attorney who has provided outstanding pro bono services through VLSP in landlord/tenant law. The award went to Mary Catherine Wiederhold, a solo attorney, who has been volunteering with VLSP's Landlord-Tenant Projects since 2004 and in 2010, she took six full-scope cases involving hundreds of pro bono hours to represent these clients. Mary Catherine also offers her services as a mentor to newer attorneys who take on pro bono cases.

VLSP honored Union Bank with the Outstanding Corporation Award. The purpose of this award is to recognize a corporation for its dedication to providing pro bono assistance for low-income and underserved clients. Senior Executive Vice President and General Counsel Morris Hirsch accepted the award on behalf of the organization. Union Bank attorneys

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regularly volunteer at VLSP's Housing Negotiation Project. This limited-scope pro bono project offers representation to every low-income tenant facing eviction in San Francisco at the crucial mandatory settlement conference immediately before trial.

The Community Service Award honors a non-attorney volunteer who has contributed in a significant way to VLSP, its clients and the community as a whole. As a holistic services provider, VLSP would not be able to provide its services without the support of volunteer paralegals, social workers, therapists and interpreters. This year, the award was presented to Patrick Kelly. Patrick, a paralegal, has volunteered with VLSP's Consumer Debt Defense and Education Clinics, writing cease and desist letters to creditors, drafting answers, and providing overall assistance to the volunteer attorneys, and LARC, VLSP's free monthly walk-in clinic providing brief legal advice to low-income clients, and volunteers with this project almost every month.

A special thank you to Morrison & Foerster for its sponsorship of the event.

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The Bar Association of San Francisco (BASF) is a nonprofit voluntary membership organization of over 8,000 attorneys, law students and legal professionals in the Bay Area. Founded in 1872, BASF is one of the largest and most dynamic metropolitan bar associations in the U.S., with a long and distinguished record of community action, public service and service to the legal profession.