



ALASKA LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION
ANCHORAGE AND STATEWIDE OFFICE



1016 WEST SIXTH AVENUE, SUITE 200
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99501-1963
TELEPHONE (907) 272-9431
FAX (907) 279-7417

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CONTACT: Erick Cordero
VAS Director
907-222-4521**

PRO BONO PROGRAM CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF SERVICE

Anchorage, AK, April 17, 2008 - The Volunteer Attorney Support (VAS) pro bono program at Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC) is celebrating 25 years of service this year. Since 1983, thousands of low-income Alaskans have received free civil legal services through the generosity of private and government attorneys volunteering their time “pro bono publico” (the legal term meaning “for the public good”).

The program’s mission has been and remains to offer high quality legal services to those that otherwise would not have access to the legal system. VAS is currently housed in the Anchorage ALSC office and offers services to low-income Alaskans throughout the state. On average, over 2000 hours are donated by attorneys annually through consultations, representation in court and community legal education.

VAS assists over 100 low-income Alaskan families annually with direct services and over 1000 more through its clinics and workshops. The program is funded by the Alaska Bar Foundation and the Legal Services Corporation. Over the years, both VAS and ALSC have been forced to undergo several decreases in funding.

The program has had only four directors during its 25 years: David Gaffney, Seth Eames, Maria Elena Walsh and, for the past six years, its current Director, Erick Cordero. Maria Elena Walsh recalls with fondness “When I approached Dorsey & Whitney about needing their help, it only took them 24 hours to get back to me with the question: ‘When do you want us to start?’ WOW!”

“I have fond memories of all of my volunteers. They were truly like an extended family for me,” said Seth Eames recently.

The program has received several awards, including the Rural Private Attorney Involvement Program of the Year at the national level, and recognition from the Alaska Legislature. “We are deeply grateful for the generosity of all of our volunteers. They have carried forward the dream of equal access to justice in our state,” said Andy Harrington, ALSC’s Executive Director.

ALSC is a non-profit organization established in 1966 and the largest statewide provider of free civil legal services in Alaska. For additional information, please visit www.alsc-law.org, or contact Erick Cordero at the above number.

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