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NEW VOLUNTEER SEARCH AND INTERNSHIP APPLICATION SYSTEM UNVEILED

Revamped IllinoisProBono.org Launches in Celebration of Pro Bono Week

CHICAGO, IL - October 21, 2013 – Illinois Legal Aid Online (ILAO) kicks off Pro Bono Week today with the launch of a new system on IllinoisProBono.org for finding volunteer opportunities and applying for internships and fellowships. A joint venture with The Chicago Bar Foundation (CBF), the Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI) and pro bono stakeholders, this new system will make finding and doing pro bono easier than ever.

IllinoisProBono.org has been helping lawyers and legal professionals find volunteer opportunities and obtain the training and support they need to do pro bono work since 2001. The current initiative is consistent with one of the recommendations of the Legal Services Corporation in its October 2012 pro bono task force report to “use technology to support pro bono programs.” In collaboration with the CBF and PILI, ILAO engaged stakeholders in the pro bono, legal aid and law school communities to learn how an upgraded IllinoisProBono.org would improve their experience.

Out of this collaboration came the new Volunteer Search and Internship Application System, which launches on Monday, October 21st, the first day of Pro Bono Week 2013. According to Bob Glaves, Executive Director of the CBF, "the new system will make it easier for attorneys and students to connect with meaningful pro bono opportunities and will help more people in need of legal assistance throughout the state to resolve their legal problems."

The new Volunteer Search and Internship Application system will play a key role in navigating public interest opportunities statewide and includes two core components. First, registered lawyers, law students and other legal professionals (registration is simple and free at IllinoisProBono.org) can search for volunteer opportunities by practice area, geographic location, organization or type of opportunity. The CBF is partnering with ILAO to help ensure high-quality and up-to-date pro bono opportunities in coordination with the CBF Pro Bono Support Program. Once registered users find an opportunity that interests them, they can then connect immediately with one simple click, sign up for online trainings, and access resource manuals to support the volunteer opportunity.

"The new system will make it easier for our attorneys to find the pro bono opportunities that fit their needs, interests and busy schedules," says Greg McConnell, Pro Bono Counsel at Winston & Strawn LLP. The new system allows pro bono managers at law firms and corporations, like
McConnell, to direct their associates and partners to volunteer listings that match their skill sets and areas of interest. The new system creates a user-friendly experience for all those who choose to give back.

The second major component of the new system allows interested law students to search for internships and fellowships through a new online tool specifically designed for them and the legal aid and public interest organizations that host these opportunities. PILI is partnering with ILAO to help ensure internship and fellowship opportunities through PILI and other programs are up-to-date and provide good experiences for the students and the organizations. According to Alisa Rosales, Associate Director of Public Service Law at DePaul University, "The new volunteer system on IllinoisProBono.org will help law students find opportunities that complement their classroom skills while serving the community. The experience is invaluable for building practical skills while deepening the base of knowledge of the legal profession and practice." As with the pro bono search, students can search for internships and fellowships by organization, geographic location, or type of opportunity.

With the launch of this new system, ILAO is offering training sessions to law firms, corporations, public interest organizations, law schools, and potential volunteers who are interested in learning how to use the new system. If you would like to schedule a training session, please contact Kevin Zickterman, kzickterman@illinoislegalaid.org.

About Illinois Legal Aid Online
Illinois Legal Aid Online is a groundbreaking, nationally-recognized nonprofit that uses technology to put the law within reach for millions of lower-income, disabled and vulnerable Illinois residents who can’t afford a lawyer. Four websites and two mobile apps link people in need of legal services to the law, volunteers to pro bono support resources, and members of the legal aid community to each other. For more information, please visit www.IllinoisLegalAidOnline.org.

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