



Polk County Bar Association

Volunteer Lawyers Project

625 E. Court Ave., Suite 100
Des Moines, IA 50309-2007
Phone: 515-243-3904

November 14, 2018

Dear Polk County Bar Association Members:

In this season of crisp air and crackling leaves, we are given an opportunity to be grateful. Some of us are grateful for our families, our education, and our homes.

It is less common for us to remember to be grateful for healthy and safe relationships, access to nutrition, support necessary to achieve an education, and a home that has consistent heat in the winter. Yet, those simple necessities are crucial gifts.

The Polk County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project ("PCBA VLP") is a charitable organization established by the Polk County Bar Association with the mission of providing legal services to low income residents of Polk County. The PCBA VLP provides both independent client intake and intake in partnership with Iowa Legal Aid for cases that cannot be placed due to conflict or capacity. With your help, the PCBA VLP is one of the most successful volunteer lawyer programs in the country, with Polk County lawyers donating thousands of hours of their time each year to those in need.

The clients of the PCBA VLP take nothing for granted. True equality in civil justice, such as in housing, domestic relations, or consumer protection, starts with access to civil justice. The need for the services of this project continues to increase as there are now close to 65,000 individuals living at 125% of the poverty guidelines in Polk County. In most cases, volunteer lawyers are the only option for low income citizens in our community.

Our program is primarily funded by donations from lawyers like you and a grant from the interest on lawyer trust accounts ("IOLTA"). The PCBA VLP accepted close to 1000 new cases in the 2017-2018 fiscal year. Without monetary donations by Polk County lawyers, the PCBA VLP could not continue to provide services to thousands of individuals within Polk County who need access to justice. Your donations are essential for the continued operation of this important program helping to ensure that all residents of our community have equal access to justice regardless of income.

Our PCBA VLP board and staff are dedicated to partnering with you in this mission of service to the low-income and vulnerable in our community. We have had another successful year of trivia night fundraising, where your donations brought in over \$5,000 and we enjoyed an evening of spirited, competition and fellowship. We enjoyed playing golf together at the annual Bench Bar golf outing in June at Waveland Golf Course, where your generosity and support raised \$25,000. We applied for and received the Polk County Community Betterment grant and a generous gift from the Fredrickson & Byron law firm, as well as many individual donations.

Every dollar donated is invested in the future of the PCBA VLP and expands the depth and breadth of the scope of services we can provide. The administration and staffing of each case costs the program \$200 from beginning to end. The value of volunteer attorney time each year is well over \$800,000 at an average billable rate of \$200 per hour, per attorney.

The PCBA VLP is a tax-exempt charitable organization which means your donation is tax deductible. You can designate the PCBA VLP as a recipient of your United Way donation or you can make a direct donation to:

Polk County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project
625 East Court Avenue, Suite 100
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The PCBA VLP also now offers you the ability to make donations on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis. This option is available on your Polk County Bar Association membership renewal form.

I respectfully ask that you make a donation to the PCBA VLP today. Given the limited IOLTA funding available for the PCBA VLP, any amount you can give will make a difference. If you have questions about your donation or if you have questions about volunteering, please do not hesitate to contact Carol Phillips at (515) 243-3904 or contact me at (515) 246-0322.

Finally, I would like to personally thank all of you who have volunteered to take a case this past year and/or have made a monetary donation. You have made a remarkable difference. Thank you for your ongoing support.

Sincerely,

Maria E. Brownell

Maria Brownell, President
Polk County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyer Project