



# Polk County Bar Association

## Volunteer Lawyers Project

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

November 21, 2019

Dear Polk County Bar Association Members:

Each day, thousands of lowans are facing their own battleground in which the odds are not in favor of a just result due to financial constraints. A victim of domestic violence who simply wants to unhook the yoke of endless suffering in an unhealthy marriage. A veteran's widow who is denied benefits. A tenant without consistent heat during frigid winter months who cannot afford alternate housing.

Under these circumstances, our neighbors are confronting personal battles. Many feel powerless and lack security in the assurance of some of the basic necessities of life. As lawyers, we can level the playing field. With a commitment to another year of your generous gifts of time, talent, and financial resources, together we can, and we will, continue to ensure access to civil justice.

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.

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 74,000 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 closed 755 cases in the 2018-2019 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 \$7,500 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.

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. Attorneys donated approximately 3,000 hours of time. The value of volunteer attorney time each year is well over \$600,000 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:

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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 profound impact in our community. Thank you for your ongoing support.

Sincerely,

*Maria E. Brownell*

Maria Brownell, President  
Polk County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyer Project