



# Polk County Bar Association

## Volunteer Lawyers Project

625 E. Court Ave., Suite 100  
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November 18, 2020

Dear Polk County Bar Association Members:

We have confronted a year of unprecedented challenge. From a worldwide health crisis to The Derecho, our daily burdens may feel heavier than usual. Yet, friends, in spite of it all, your collective outpouring of support for pro bono legal services this year leaves no doubt in the fact that Polk County lawyers are dedicated to working tirelessly together to close the civil justice gap.

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.

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 1028 cases in the 2019-2020 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.

Despite the fact that we were unable to be together in person over the summer months, our very first virtual night, brought to you by Trivia Mafia, in June, was a success—your donations brought in over \$5,000 and we enjoyed team collaboration in Zoom breakout rooms and friendly competition among colleagues in the new format. We also enjoyed playing golf together at the annual Bench Bar golf outing on an unseasonably warm October afternoon at Waveland Golf Course, where your generosity and support raised \$25,000.

Finally, the results of the President’s Challenge spoke volumes about your commitment. When we were advised recently that low interest rates on lawyer trust fund accounts would likely lead to a decrease in IOLTA funding in 2021, you all answered the call and came together along with the past and current PCBA and VLP Presidents to fund the gap, raising \$31,000.

Your selfless outpouring of support this year has been a reflection of the best we can be together when faced with challenges we cannot foresee or control. But our work is not done. There are countless individual clients still waiting for an opportunity to be placed on fair footing in our legal system, and we can continue to help. Every dollar donated and volunteer attorney hour expended 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 over 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 continue your commitment to access to civil justice by making your annual donation to the PCBA VLP today. Your gifts of time and treasure will make 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

*Michael C. Kuehner*

Michael C. Kuehner, President-Elect  
Polk County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyer Project