

President's Message

When It Rains, It Pours!

By President E. Jane Sherman

Communities across Louisiana have experienced unprecedented flooding this year. In August, Louisiana was plunged for the second time in 2016 with more than 24 inches of rain from a single event. Almost 27 inches of rain fell in the south Monroe and Shreveport areas on March 8-11, 2016, and floods also ravaged historic downtown Covington and other parts of western St. Tammany Parish, resulting in President Obama declaring 26 of our state's 64 parishes as disaster areas. Five months later, in August, one third of Louisiana's parishes were underwater with the Red Cross labeling this August's 500-year flood "the worst natural disaster to strike the United States since Superstorm Sandy." The Washington Post noted that the "no-name storm" dumped three times as much rain on Louisiana as Hurricane Katrina, and enough to fill Lake Pontchartrain about four times. People living on high ground were forced to flee to makeshift shelters. But like other communities in Louisiana that have been hit with similar tragedy, the support and assistance from others are also unprecedented.

Although the rains came, volunteer assistance also is pouring in, but more support is needed.

We know that, after a disaster, civil legal needs are dramatically increased. Displaced families and individuals experience a variety of legal needs. Thousands need help with title clearing to access insurance and federal recovery dollars. Vulnerable children need protection due to family instability and separation. The elderly's economic security needs increase. And, history shows that domestic violence centers are severely impacted with increased residents.¹ For example, New Orleans had a 45 percent increase in domestic violence following Hurricane Katrina.² The stories of all these needs are powerful and heart-breaking.

October is National Domestic Violence Month. Nationally, an average of 20 people are physically abused by intimate partners every minute, which equates to more than 10 million abuse victims annually.³ A recent census



E. Jane Sherman

conducted by the National Network to End Domestic Violence showed the need for domestic violence services in Louisiana is growing.⁴ In a single day, 714 Louisiana citizens received services from a domestic violence program. These services ranged from refuge in emergency shelters to counseling, legal advocacy and children's support groups. In addition, Louisiana domestic violence programs answered more than 11 hotline calls every hour. These hotlines are a lifeline for victims in danger, providing support, information, safety planning and resources. While these services are lifelines, on that day, sadly, there were 126 UNMET requests for services due to a critical shortage of staffing resulting from funding cuts and reduced individual donors.

The domestic violence agencies that the Louisiana Bar Foundation (LBF) funds enable people to leave abusive relationships and seek safety. As lawyers, we have an opportunity to help victims gain access to the legal system regardless of financial situation, to help protect their families so they can feel safe. A pouring out of support is needed after the storm.

The LBF is committed to increasing resources for civil legal aid for the poor, especially during times of natural disaster. Now those needs are even greater with domestic violence garnering a high amount of need. But with your help, we can make a difference.

The LBF is working with stakeholders, including the legal services corporations,

pro bono projects, the Louisiana State Bar Association, law schools, community foundations and other key organizations in our civil legal aid network, to most efficiently and effectively address the many needs.

The LBF has established the Louisiana Bar Foundation Flood Recovery Fund to address the recent increased need for legal services, including domestic violence issues, homeowners' insurance, title clearing and federal aid eligibility, by utilizing community-based clinics modeled in conjunction with FEMA's disaster recovery centers.

For more information about the LBF and the Louisiana Bar Foundation Flood Recovery Fund, contact LBF Development Director Laura Sewell at (504)561-7306 or email laura@raisingthebar.org. Or go to: www.raisingthebar.org.

Thank you for your generosity and for pouring out your support after the rain and disastrous floods experienced by our state.

October is National Domestic Violence Month. The LBF proudly supports the following domestic violence programs: Beaugard Community Concerns, Inc., Catholic Charities/Project S.A.V.E., Chez Hope, D.A.R.T. of Lincoln, Faith House, Inc., Jeff Davis Communities Against Domestic Abuse, Metropolitan Center for Women and Children, Oasis, Project Celebration, Safe Harbor, Inc., Safety Net for Abused Persons, Southeast Spouse Abuse Program, St. Bernard Battered Women's Program, The Haven, Inc., The Wellspring Alliance for Families, Inc. and United Way of Central Louisiana.

FOOTNOTES

1. www.nj.gov/dcf/home/Domestic%20Violence%20and%20Disasters%20with%20Sources.pdf
2. www.ncdsv.org/images/AsDomesticViolenceRisesinNewOrleansWakeKatrina.pdf
3. <http://ncadv.org/learn-more/statistics>
4. www.ncadv.org/files/Louisiana.pdf