

President's Message

Last Call

By President Valerie Briggs Bargas

When I was installed as Louisiana Bar Foundation (LBF) president last April, I followed in the footsteps of my predecessors, all of whom I am honored and privileged to have served after. This has been an amazing year and I'm honored to report in my last message some of the highlights.

▶ A new logo and a new look. If you haven't viewed our new website, go to: www.raisingthebar.org.

▶ Unveiling the findings of the Economic Impact and Social Return on Investment Analysis to reveal that civil legal aid is a good investment. We found that, for every \$1 invested in legal aid services, these programs deliver \$8.73 in immediate and long-term consequential financial benefits.

▶ Awarding more than \$6.7 million in grants for social justice initiatives to non-profit organizations and public interest attorneys throughout the state to address the civil legal needs of indigent citizens, provide a basic understanding of the law, and assist with improvements to the justice system.

▶ Successfully implementing a new online grants management system which made it easier to apply, populate and summarize data, and provide for the submission of electronic reports.

▶ Our Board Training for Grantees focused on an upgrade to the new statewide case management system offering many improvements and efficiencies, and a session on the importance of the ongoing collection of economic impact outcomes. I have been fortunate to audit several of our grantees and, through this process, have learned some organizations provide more effective services at a better cost. Providing our grantees direction and support is important. It validates the

LBF's mission and gives our supporters confidence in the work that is being done.

▶ Adding a seat on the board for a representative of the Louisiana philanthropic community helping to deepen our relationship with the community foundations and enhance our ability to work together on key civil legal aid initiatives.

▶ Holding the first meeting of the newly formed Past Presidents Advisory Council formed to engage LBF past presidents and utilize their institutional knowledge and leadership abilities.

▶ Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards proclaiming Nov. 13-17, 2017, as Louisiana Kids' Chance Awareness Week. The LBF awarded 20 students \$59,000 in scholarships for the 2017-18 school year.

▶ The LBF leadership continues working with the Access to Justice Commission to obtain a constant and



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Bargas

sustainable yearly stream of income. This is a priority for the LBF.

As the curtain falls and the lights dim, I am very proud to announce that, in October, the LBF engaged Brent Henley of The Pyramid Group to conduct strategic planning with the board and staff. The leadership outlined a detailed plan to evaluate and maximize resources and outcomes for future years, find more sustainable forms of income to support civil legal aid initiatives and current grantees, and to better fund Legal Services Corporations in Louisiana.

I hope to see you this year at the 32nd Annual Fellows Gala on Friday, April 20, at the Hyatt Regency New Orleans. I would like to give special thanks to the amazing LBF staff and the LBF board who remain passionate and committed to making equal access to justice a reality in Louisiana. It has been a humbling experience to interact with and engage the civil legal aid community in Louisiana. I could not be more proud of the phenomenal work being done. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Annual LBF Fellows Membership Meeting April 20 in New Orleans

The Louisiana Bar Foundation's (LBF) Annual Fellows Membership Meeting will be held at noon on Friday, April 20, at the Hyatt Regency New Orleans, 601 Loyola Ave. This luncheon meeting is an opportunity for Fellows to be updated on LBF activities and to elect new board members. The President's Award will be presented and recognition will be given to the 2017 Distinguished Honorees and the Calogero Justice Award recipient.

All LBF Fellows in good standing will receive an official meeting notice with the Board slate and a committee selection form in early March. For more information, contact Laura Sewell at (504)561-1046 or email laura@raisingthebar.org.