

Honoring Our Own

Each year, Ballard Spahr honors every lawyer and paralegal who has performed more than 50 hours of pro bono service. The firm also recognizes four individuals or groups who have made significant pro bono contributions during the past year, and donates \$1,000 to a charitable organization chosen by the honorees. These awards are in addition to the \$25,000 Alan J. Davis award recognizing outstanding public service.

In 2009, the honorees were:

Timothy F. McCormack and **Michelle M. McGeogh** (Baltimore). Tim and Michelle represented a 93-year-old widow in poor health after her neighbor foreclosed on her century-old family home, and sold it to an innocent third party, after misrepresenting to the court that the widow had died with no living relatives. Tim and Michelle moved to vacate the foreclosure proceedings and obtained a significant monetary settlement for the widow. Tim and Michelle donated their award to the Domestic Violence Center of Howard County.

Adrienne Wilhoit (Phoenix). In the past few years, Adrienne has represented numerous families in guardianship proceedings in order to provide stable homes for young relatives whose parents are unable to care for them, whether due to substance abuse, jail terms or youth. Adrienne donated her award to Arizona Women's Education and Employment, Inc.

Anthony C. Kaye and **Steven D. Burt** (SLC). Tony and Steve contested a predatory lending scheme that threatened to put a single mother and her family on the street, while she was pregnant and undergoing chemotherapy. They negotiated a deal that allowed the client to recoup the equity in her home, repay her loans, and move into an affordable home. Tony and Steve donated their award to the Utah Legal Services.

Luzerne County Juvenile Justice Initiative (Philadelphia). This team represented children whose Constitutional rights were violated in the Luzerne County Court system, which became national news after two judges were charged with accepting bribes from a privately run juvenile detention center. **Kenya Mann**, **Amy Shellhammer**, and **Gina Smith** represented a high school honor student who was not given a lawyer before she was sentenced to a juvenile facility for a minor offense. The team filed a habeas petition to secure the girl's release, and represented her in the retrial, where they secured a more conventional disposition involving counseling rather than detention. They also helped restore the student's driver's license and represented her family when the county tried to charge them for the cost of their daughter's unconstitutional detention. **Sapna Anderson**, **Shannon Farmer**, and **Mayra Troendle** represented another Luzerne County juvenile for whom the denial of effective counsel almost caused deportation. The 16-year-old's first lawyer did not speak Spanish, the client's native language, and failed to perform an adequate investigation, or to try to transfer the case to juvenile court, although there was no jurisdictional basis for the boy to be charged as an adult. Instead, the lawyer advised the boy to plead guilty to an adult felony charge, which immediately subjected him to deportation proceedings. After filing a habeas petition, the team was able to substitute juvenile charges for the adult charges, thereby derailing the deportation proceedings. The boy, who used his seven months in immigration detention to learn English, now has a job and a renewed commitment to his family and future in the United States. The Luzerne County Juvenile Justice Team donated their award to the Juvenile Law Center.

