



Neighborhood Legal Services Association

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NEIGHBORHOOD LEGAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION CELEBRATES

“HONORABLE ALUMNI” ON MAY 16

Over NLSA’s first 45 years, more than fifty past and present members of the NLSA “family” have achieved “honorable” status in public service.

PITTSBURGH, PA -- On May 16, 2011, Neighborhood Legal Services Association (NLSA) will commemorate its 45th year by honoring more than 50 former NLSA legal interns, staff attorneys, executive directors, board members and incorporators who have served or now serve as jurists, legislators, government leaders and in other official capacities at all levels of public service.

The past presidents of NLSA will hold an invitation-only reception for the honorees on Monday, May 16 from 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm at the August Wilson Center in downtown Pittsburgh. In addition to the “honorable” and NLSA staff, directors, Board President Efreem Grail and supporters, invited guests will include local elected officials and leaders of the private bar. As co-hosts of the Past Presidents Club, Maureen P. Kelly (Babst, Calland, Clements and Zomnir) and Kenneth M. Argentieri (Duane Morris LLP) led the planning for the reception.

“It gives us great pride to host this event,” said Argentieri. “Over the past 45 years NLSA has provided essential civil legal assistance to more than a million poor and vulnerable residents of our region. Every one of our “honorable alumni” has contributed to that achievement. We are especially proud that these distinguished leaders carry with them perspectives from the front lines of equal access as they serve in courtrooms and houses of government throughout the country and around the world.”

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The event program will feature remarks by The Honorable Dick Thornburgh, whose titles include NLSA incorporator and former Board member, as well as Governor of Pennsylvania, U.S. Attorney General and Under-Secretary-General at the United Nations; The Honorable R. Stanton Wettick, Jr., Senior Judge in the Allegheny Court of Common Pleas and Executive Director of NLSA from 1969 to 1976; and The Honorable Cynthia A. Baldwin, Vice President and General Counsel for Penn State University and both a former NLSA Staff Attorney and a former Justice on the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

"NLSA changed my whole life," said Justice Baldwin, who joined NLSA in 1980 as a Reginald Heber Smith fellow. "I had planned to go into real estate law. I fell in love with fighting for people."

At the event, NLSA will present a leather bound commemorative tribute book to each of its honorees containing recollections and a photo gallery of Honorable Alumni along with articles featuring eight of the "honorable," including former Governor Thornburgh.

"No principle is more fundamental to our democratic society than access to justice under law for all people regardless of economic circumstances," said Thornburgh. "That's why helping Neighborhood Legal Services Association was so important to me. At a time when no formal entity existed to ensure equal access for poor residents of Pennsylvania, thousands of vulnerable people for the first time found a place to turn in a civil legal crisis."

More than 35 honorees are expected to be present at the event. Family members of some of the seven "honorable alumni" that are since deceased also will attend. Among NLSA's Late "Honorable Alumni" is former Pennsylvania Supreme Court Chief Justice Ralph J. Cappy, to whom NLSA has dedicated its commemorative publication.

"I wish every one of these distinguished colleagues could be in the room on Monday so I could personally say 'thank you' on behalf of our clients and on behalf of our region as a whole," said NLSA Executive Director Bob Racunas. "The guidance and participation of these remarkable public servants over more than four decades has helped NLSA assist individuals and families in desperate circumstances. That, in turn, is helping to stabilize neighborhoods and strengthen communities in four counties."

Established in 1966, Neighborhood Legal Services Association is a non-profit, public interest law firm that provides free civil legal assistance to poor and vulnerable residents of Allegheny, Beaver, Butler and Lawrence Counties. For more information about NLSA or the Honorable Alumni Tribute, please contact Christine Kirby at 412.586.6137 or kirbyc@nlsa.us

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