

Alabama Lawyers Assistance Foundation Update

The Message of Hope

By David Wooldridge ALAF Board of directors

The Alabama Lawyers Assistance Foundation was created for the purpose of helping our fellow members of the Bar push away from that other "bar." Whether serving alcohol, drugs or just feeding deep depression, the world of addiction is a living hell for all who live in it and for those who live with them. Alcoholism and addiction destroy careers, marriages, families, partnerships, friendships, and ultimately lives.

We all know brothers and sisters in the Bar who have problems at the other "bar." Some have become alcoholics or addicted to other drugs. Some suffer deep, clinical depression. Some are just on the road to that fate. *No one is hound to that road!*

There *is* **hope**. Although those in the throes of addiction usually can't see it, hope exists for each and every one of them. Through many forms of assistance, guidance and counseling, through rehabilitation, treatment and 2-Step programs (such as AA, NA, AlAnon), and through the caring of their fellow human beings, constructive help and healing is available to any who seek it. And it *works!* Tens of thousands recover every year and escape from this hell.

The Alabama State Bar, its Lawyer Assistance Program (LAP), its Lawyers Helping Lawyers Committee(LHL), and the Alabama Lawyers Assistance Foundation (ALAF) combine to ensure that members of the Alabama Bar and their families know of the problem, know of the solution, and know that help is available. The Bar's focus is naturally on lawyers, judges, and law students, but its help extends to others whose lives the members touch.

The programs available can address each variation of the problem. Truly, no situation is unique, although it often seems so to those involved. The trails have already been blazed, and one need only take the first step and reach out for help.

The Lawyer Assistance Program (LAP) is a service division of the Alabama Bar. It's Director, Jeanne Marie Leslie, receives inquiries on a confidential basis. Unless a matter is brought to her from the disciplinary committees, an inquiry or a case referred to her remains confidential even within the Bar offices. She also entertains anonymous Inquiries. She can provide advice and guidance for handling your situation, whether it be your own problems with substances or those of a friend, colleague or acquaintance.

Jeanne Marie Leslie at LAP can provide information about the problem, about treatment options and other resources, and about funding available for financially strapped members. LAP also provides confidential, structured programs for monitoring recovering attorneys to help assure the member, families, partners, and others of continuing sobriety. Jeanne Marie Leslie can be reached at (334) 269-1555 or (334) 834- 7576.

Lawyers Helping Lawyers is a Bar committee whose members are committed to assisting their fellow lawyers with problems relating to alcohol, addiction and depression. Their work is confidential and informal. It is not part of any reporting structure with the Bar. Its members merely desire to be helpful to any lawyers who are struggling with alcohol or drugs, providing understanding, information and support. You are welcome to contact any member of LHL, and he or she will guide you to help you seek. Their phone numbers are available through the Bar offices or through LAP.

Finally, the Alabama Lawyers Assistance Foundation was formed to provide a previously missing piece to the puzzle, *financial assistance*. ALAF is a *501(c)(3)* charitable foundation. It needs support from you and others, by way of tax-deductible contributions. Its fund-raising started in 2002 and has achieved significant success. Over \$75,000 has been pledged or received. More is needed, however, and fund-raising will intensify in 2003.

ALAF makes loans (*not grants*) to Bar members who demonstrate their inability to get the help they need without financial assistance. The assistance is small but significant. Often it is the difference between the lawyer getting the treatment he needs or sliding further down the slope toward disaster. You can help make sure that assistance is there.

Contributions can be made by sending a check (or a letter pledging funds) to:

Alabama Lawyer Assistance Foundation
c/o Jeanne Marie Leslie
Alabama State Bar
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P.O. Box 671
Montgomery, AL 36101