



## A LARGE FIRM TAKES ON PRO BONO: Maynard Cooper & Gale's Pro Bono Divorce Clinic

BY MAIBETH J. PORTER

**O**n September 27 and 28, Maynard Cooper & Gale conducted its first Pro Bono Divorce Clinic.

Nineteen attorneys participated and met with 22 clients, who previously had been screened by Legal Services Alabama. The purpose of the clinic was to help relieve Legal Services' backlog of clients who desired uncontested divorces without children. The other purpose was to allow the attorneys at Maynard, Cooper, who serve mainly corporate clients, to learn the skills to fulfill their obligation to provide pro bono services. Domestic relations attorneys from Legal Services were on site to answer questions, as were Linda Lund, director of the Volunteer Lawyer Program for the ASB, and Deborah Jenkins, Linda's counterpart in Birmingham.

Several months prior to the clinic, LSA conducted a two-hour seminar regarding divorce law.

At the clinic, clients' circumstances varied. Some qualified to request waivers of filing fees and submitted affidavits of hardship. Others, who had waited months to file for divorce, brought money orders

for the filing fees to the clinic. Many of the clients had been separated from their spouses for years, but had only felt the need for a divorce relatively recently.

The lawyers who participated noted a profound sense of accomplishment in helping an individual client, who, without the lawyer, would have remained in need.

Maynard, Cooper plans other pro bono divorce clinics as well as a seminar on landlord/tenant law to be followed by a clinic. ■



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Maibeth J. Porter is a founding member and shareholder of Maynard Cooper & Gale PC. She currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Birmingham Bar Foundation and has served on the Board of Directors of the Birmingham Bar Association.

Porter was president of the BBA in 2003 and is a member of the ASB Board of Bar Commissioners. She has served on the ASB Character and Fitness Committee, which she also chaired. Porter is a member of the Supreme Court of Alabama's Standing Committee on the Alabama Rules of Civil Procedure.