

Assisting One Can Help Hundreds

BY STEVE GRIFFITH

I'm going to tell you about a program that helps lawyers and why our firm has been contributing to it for many years. We're not a large firm. We have six lawyers and we practice in a small town. Like most firms, we budget for monthly expenses we all need to keep our office running. We include in our budget a monthly check to the **Lawyer Assistance Foundation** to do our part in assisting lawyers in need.

I have been practicing law for 39 years. During that time, it has been my privilege to serve on the ASB Board of Bar Commissioners, the Executive Committee and various sub-committees. I support the Alabama Lawyer Assistance Foundation wholeheartedly and encourage you to do the same. Oftentimes, it appears that an individual lawyer in trouble does not deserve our help. However, the preservation of our system of justice demands that we assist lawyers in trouble. As lawyers, we have an almost sacred obligation to make our system work. It is the people's confidence in our system that makes the system work. The clients who are victimized deserve no less than our best efforts.

The purpose of the foundation is to provide financial assistance to Alabama lawyers suffering with addictions and other mental health illnesses. ALAF makes loans to ASB members who demonstrate their financial inability to get appropriate help. This is not a "give-away," but an opportunity to help these lawyers help themselves. A revolving loan fund gives these lawyers an opportunity to get treatment. Loans from the fund are paid directly to the treatment care providers. Repayment is expected once the lawyer is back on his or her feet, so money will always be available to aid the next lawyer in need.

We all know or have practiced beside an impaired lawyer. What most of us don't see is the wreckage that accompanies these illnesses.



Seated, left to right, are Steve Griffith and Jimmy Knight. Standing, left to right, are Todd McLeroy, Emily Niezer, S. Lynn McKenzie and Jason Knight.

Contributing a regular check every month, no matter how small, to the Lawyer Assistance Foundation goes a long way in helping our colleagues and our profession. I encourage all lawyers to get involved. ALAF is a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation so your contributions are tax-deductible. All money goes directly to helping lawyers in need. For more information, go to www.alabar.com and click on the "Lawyer Assistance Program," or call Jeanne Marie Leslie, ALAF's director, at (334) 834-7576. ■

Steve Griffith

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