

## 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 bound 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 12-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 and its Alabama Lawyer Assistance Program (ALAP), its Alabama Lawyers Assistance Program Committee (ALAPC), 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 Alabama Lawyer Assistance Program (ALAP) is a service division of the Alabama Bar. It's Director, Robert Thornhill, receives inquiries on a confidential basis. Unless a matter is brought to him from the disciplinary committees, an inquiry or a case referred to him remains confidential even within the Bar offices. He also entertains anonymous inquiries. He can provide advice and guidance for handling your situation, whether it is your own problems with substances or those of a friend, colleague or acquaintance.

Robert Thornhill at ALAP can provide information about the problem, about treatment options and other resources, and about funding available for financially strapped members. ALAP also provides confidential, structured programs for monitoring recovering attorneys to help assure the member, families, partners, and others of continuing sobriety. Robert Thornhill can be reached at (334) 269-1515 or (334) 834- 7576.

The Alabama Lawyer Assistance Program (ALAP) is a Bar committee whose members are committed to assisting their fellow lawyers with problems related 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 ALAPC and he or she will guide you to the help you seek. Their phone numbers are available through the Bar offices or through ALAP.

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. More is needed, however, and fund-raising will continue to be a focus of the foundation.

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.

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