

Mississippi DOVIA (Directors of Volunteers in Agencies) Central Mississippi Chapter

Meeting Minutes: Thursday, October 18, 2012

Subject: Volunteer Lawyers Project

Presentation by Shirley Williams, Executive Director of the Volunteer Lawyers Project

Meeting Leader: Dr. Fran Baker

Hosted by Elizabeth Coleman

Location: Old Capitol Museum

8:15 – 9:30 a.m.

The October 2012 DOVIA meeting was held at the Old Capitol Museum. Those attending were Shirley Williams and her assistant, Dorene (Volunteer Lawyers Project), Amy Burrow (St. Dominic's Hospital), Barbara Beavers (CPC Metro), Mary Kitchens (Mississippi's Toughest Kids), David Mallery and Krista Estes (Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service), Abigail Phillips (Food Corps), Troy Nickelson (Goodwill), Cynthia Armstrong (Sta-Home Hospice), Michael Gentry Rainbow Garden), Doris Bridgeman and Gloria Watson (Tougaloo College), Fran Baker (Born Free), Dawn Jones (Catholic Charities), and Elizabeth Coleman (Mississippi Department of Archives and History).

The meeting was led by Dr. Fran Baker of Born Free. She opened the meeting by having everyone introduce themselves and telling about current vents at their sites. Dr. Baker explained the need to acquire professional services for the maintenance of the DOVIA website. A motion was made by Mary Kitchens, and seconded by Elizabeth Coleman to facilitate this request. The motion carried.

Next, Ms. Shirley Williams delivered a presentation about the work of the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project (MVLP), assisted by Dorene from the same organization.

The MVLP is a thirty year old organization. Ms. Williams has been there since 2004 as their director. The main objective of the group is to provide low income people with equal access to the law. This agency differs from others because it is pro bono legal services, the group receives federal funding and are considered a non-profit organization. They have two main legal service programs — the Mississippi Center for Legal Services and the North Mississippi Rural Legal Services.

The MVLP handles mostly family law-type services. Their greatest needs are with corrected birth certificates, guardianship, adoptions, wills, uncontested divorces, etc. They can't handle anything that is fee-generated. They also do not handle criminal or class action suits. The MVLP is mobile. They go to clients because quite often clients can't afford a car, telephone, etc. They have a 20 member board and a 13 member advisory board.

On October 24, from 5 – 6:30 p.m., they will have a recognition event at the Mississippi Bar Association honoring 8 lawyers and 2 law firms for their pro bono work. DOVIA member Mary Kitchens has sons who will be honored at this event.

Currently, there are 1200 volunteer lawyers, with 358 actively working on cases. They do have a need for non-attorney volunteers such as people answering the phone, clerical support, fundraising, information gatherers, etc. They recently ceased their hotline because they did not have enough lawyers staffing the phones.

For more information, the public can contact the MVLP at 1-800-498-1804. Ms. Williams' number is 601-906-9577. Their website can be accessed by following this link: www.mvlp.net.

At the conclusion of the program, Doris Bridgeman reminded everyone of the Tougaloo College Service Fair to be held at their campus (Kroger Building) next week on October 24, 2012. Participants need to set up at 9:15 a.m. The convocation and fair will be held at 10 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned.

Minutes by Elizabeth Coleman, DOVIA Vice President (Programs) 2012.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elizabeth N. Coleman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "E".