



# COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES OF MID-FLORIDA, INC.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Florida Bar Pro Bono Award Winner From Volusia & Flagler**

Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida is proud to announce that Raven Sword, a lawyer with the Rice & Rose law firm in Daytona Beach and Palm Coast, has been awarded the Florida Bar Pro Bono Award for the Seventh Judicial Circuit which includes Volusia, Flagler, Putnam and St. Johns counties.

The Award will be presented at a special ceremony before the Florida Supreme Court on Thursday, January 28<sup>th</sup> in Tallahassee. Local recognition will come at the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Pro Bono Awards Dinner in Daytona Beach on September 28<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Sword, a lawyer with the Rice & Rose law firm in Daytona Beach and Palm Coast, has made it her mission to give back by doing pro bono work for Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida's clients who cannot afford legal services. Raven works pro bono to assist them, saving them from a bad situation. "I feel most fulfilled when the people feel less intimidated by the legal system," Sword said.

When Sword became a lawyer, she made it her mission to give back. Since becoming an associate with Rice & Rose, she has been involved in pro bono work, logging upwards of 100 hours a year. She also helps conduct weekly legal advice clinics through the Volunteer Lawyer project, Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida's pro bono program.

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With the growing strain on the system, area attorneys have been taking on more pro bono cases and have been working outside their traditional practices to help with an overwhelming amount of requests for legal aid. The number of calls asking for help in the Volusia and Flagler area rose dramatically in 2009. Foreclosure cases screened by Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida and passed on to pro bono attorneys also increased last year up 150 percent from 2008 to 2009.

“The types of legal aid people seek through the project are a broad range and many times, help with writing letters to the other side can put an issue to bed. People just need help determining what rights they have, Sword added.

“Attendance at Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida’s Legal Advice Clinics has risen dramatically this year.” Lisa Durham, Daytona Area Pro Bono Coordinator said. A clinic for foreclosure and bankruptcy is held weekly as well as a general clinic in which lawyers are available to answer general law questions. The availability of clinics, Durham said, makes it very easy for lawyers to plug in and volunteer. More lawyers also are doing work outside their traditional practice to help out with situations related to the economy.” Durham said, and Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida has been holding regular training sessions for attorneys to get them up to speed on the current state of foreclosure and bankruptcy cases.

It helps that in Daytona Beach area, there are a lot of lawyers willing to help, Durham said, “I think that all attorneys recognize that these are tough times and they are going to get tougher,” she said. “And the need for legal services is going to accelerate as the economy deteriorates. I don’t think there is any attorney in Daytona Beach who wouldn’t step up and either do pro bono work or help us fund the services of Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida thru their donations to the *Justice For All* campaign or both in many cases”

Upon taking the oath at the beginning of a career in law each attorney makes a promise to “never reject the cause of the defenceless or oppressed or delay anyone’s cause for lucre or malice.” In October the Supreme Court’s Standing Committee on Pro Bono, led by Judge William Van Nortwick, launched the *One* campaign committed to giving attorneys who have not yet done pro bono work the opportunity to keep that promise with its goal of [“One Client, One Attorney, One Promise”](#)



## [Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Inc.](#)

Attorneys interested in donating their time can contact COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES OF MID-FLORIDA at (386) 255-6573 X 2425 or email [probono@Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida.org](mailto:probono@CommunityLegalServicesofMid-Florida.org)

Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida is a nonprofit organization providing free legal assistance to eligible low-income persons in civil (non-criminal) matters ranging from consumer issues and family law to special education and elder law. The mission of Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida is to provide access to justice through high quality legal assistance to low-income people in central Florida. Clients who need legal help should call the HelpLine at (386) 258-5600 in the Daytona Area or (800) 363-2357 outside of the area.

### Some of the past Florida Bar Pro Bono Award winners from Volusia & Flagler Counties:

1982 - William M. Chanfrau, Sr.  
1986 - Kimberly Sands  
1989 - Pamela D. Cichon  
1990 - Pamela A. Brown  
1991 - Diego Handel  
1994 - Frank D. Upchurch, III  
1996 - Ivan K. Clements, Jr.  
1998 - Michael B. Wingo  
1999 - Stephen R. Ponder  
2000 - Deborah J. Andrews  
2001 - Michael S. Becker  
2002 - Maurice Wagner  
2003 - Susan A. Fagan  
2004 - Irwin Connelly  
2005 - Diego Handel  
2006 - Julia A. Soerpeboel  
2007 - Philip Henry Elliott, Jr.  
2008 - Debra Trevlyn Alexander  
2009 - Judith Duggan Davidson

01/05/10