First Friday Blitz

Who: A collaboration between the SC Access to Justice Commission, SC Bar Pro Bono Committee and the USC School of Law Pro Bono Program

Why: Initially the First Friday Blitz was designed to address a backlog of questions on www.SCLawAnswers.org, the SC Bar Pro Bono Program’s project that allows low-income members of the public to post civil legal questions online.

From the law school perspective it was an opportunity to give students experience working directly with attorneys solving and analyzing issues while researching and drafting responses to real problems. It is also a chance to gain first hand knowledge of the resources available to clients and the Bar all within a positive pro bono atmosphere.

How: Volunteers are recruited from the Bar and the USC School of Law and asked to bring a wi-fi enabled laptop to a designated location. Prior to the First Friday event the lawyer must have signed on and been approved for the SCLawAnswers.org program. All SC licensed lawyers are welcome to help. Malpractice insurance is provided for the limited scope relationship that exists when an attorney accepts and responds to a question. In most situations the questions are posted anonymously but it is possible that an attorney may deduce that they have a conflict either from the contents of the question or the email address. Confidentiality is maintained throughout the process.

First year law students were not allowed to participate until April when it was determined that they had enough knowledge to be comfortable and useful.

Now: The First Friday Blitz has become an effort to show that pro bono work can be fun, efficient and effective. Once the backlog problem was solved the First Friday Blitz volunteers continue to meet in order to keep the queue of questions down to a manageable number. This allows the SC Bar opportunities to promote the website and increase the public service outreach of pro bono attorneys. This is especially important after television and clinic events. The SC Access to Justice Commission is also able to promote the use of SCLawAnswers as a resource during its rural and self-help outreach projects.

Future: The goal is to maintain the success of the existing program and to explore using this model in other areas of the state with the primary goals of the First Friday Blitz project being supplemented by a secondary goal of increasing the number of attorneys for more traditional pro bono efforts.

Next Step: Volunteer attorneys are asked to contact the SC Bar Pro Bono Program 803-576-3797 or Cindy Coker cindy.coker@scbar.org