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**Monroe County Bar Association**

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**For Immediate Release**

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**MCBA SUPPORTS NPLS**

On May 21, 2014, the members of the Monroe County Bar Association (MCBA) voted to provide North Penn Legal Services (NPLS) with a donation of close to \$80,000. Legal aid agencies across the state have continued to see diminishing income over the past years, largely due to a reduction in IOLTA grants. IOLTA grants are a major funding source for the non-profit legal aid agencies in the state and they are funded by interest earned on lawyers IOLTA accounts. Unfortunately, present low interest rates on these accounts have resulted in smaller grants to fund the legal aid agencies. NPLS, the local agency that supports our community, is in a deficit position of over \$80,000 for their upcoming fiscal year.

The Board of Directors, in their desire to give back to our community, endorsed the initiative to fund NPLS and the members of the association showed their support by voting in favor of financially supporting the agency. This donation will fund a full time staff attorney and a part-time support staff person for one year. They will assist qualified consumers with legal matters having a venue in Monroe County, Pennsylvania, who meet the qualifications of NPLS for legal representation.

Dave Trevaskis, Pennsylvania Bar Association Pro-Bono Coordinator said at this historic meeting, "This is the largest gift from a Bar this size to North Penn and highlights the partnership between the local Bar and the local legal aid provider, a partnership that is at the heart of the PBA model pro bono initiative."

The Monroe County Bar Association and North Penn Legal Services have a long-standing collegial working relationship. The NPLS office has been in Monroe County for over 25 years. MCBA has been actively working with them in a formal capacity for over ten years when MCBA instituted the first pro-bono lawyer referral program. The

relationship continues and as Attorney Vicki Coyle, Executive Director for NPLS, indicates: “The Monroe County Bar Association has put its money firmly behind its values. North Penn Legal Services has been proud to work with the Monroe County Bar Association over the years in the development of a pro bono referral program. The MCBA shows a strong commitment to our clients, who are those denied access to justice due to poverty, or vulnerabilities such as lack of education, language access or disabilities. As our funding continues to decrease and we face deficit budgets year after year, meaningful donations such as these reaffirm to my staff that their work is valued. I am most grateful.”

The generosity of the Association stems from its members. The celebration of this historic donation to NPLS continued as Attorney Kevin Hardy was recognized for his dedication and generosity in support of North Penn Legal Services. Attorney Hardy sets the example for his peers by assisting clients through the formal referral program between NPLS and MCBA. He participates on the Pro-Bon Committee, takes on multiple cases per year, and encourages others to join him in support of the referral program. Attorney Trevaskis and MCBA President Lori Cerato had the pleasure of presenting Attorney Hardy with his award.

In addition to the financial contribution to NPLS, the members of the Monroe County Bar Association are stepping up their individual efforts to provide pro-bono services through the NPLS formal Pro-Bono Referral Program. Since its inception, the Association encourages members to take on cases in their respective legal practice areas. By funding both an attorney and a support staff person, the staff will now have time to work closely with the local MCBA members to grow the referral program thereby helping more of the community members.

Together, NPLS and MCBA continue to provide legal aid to thousands of people each year.

The mission of North Penn Legal Services (NPLS) is to provide civil legal representation to low-income people and ensure equal access to justice for all. As a regional non-profit provider of civil legal aid for more than 40 years, NPLS offers assistance with these civil legal problems: Consumer, Education, Family, Elderly, Housing, Employment, Utilities, Public Benefits, and Domestic Violence.

The mission of the Monroe County Bar Association is to maintain the honor and dignity of the profession of the law, to cultivate social interaction among its members and to increase its usefulness in promoting the due administration of justice.

The MCBA works hard to provide a broad range of services through its members and staff to both attorneys and to the general public. The MCBA is committed to providing leadership and guidance to both our members and to the community at large on important legal matters.

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