

PRO HONOR ROLL BONO



The State Bar of Nevada Board of Governors and the Access to Justice Commission extend a special thanks to the following attorneys who generously accepted cases in January 2012 through the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada, Washoe Legal Services, Nevada Legal Services and Volunteer Attorneys for Rural Nevadans.

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Stefana Laurantita Ghita
Susan Noyce
Tera Hodge

BOLD honors multiple cases accepted and/or sessions conducted within the month.

PRO SPOTLIGHT BONO

SANDRA-MAE PICKENS

BY CHRISTINA ALBERTS,
NEVADA LAWYER STAFF

One of the first projects Yerington attorney Sandra-Mae Pickens became involved in as a member of the State Bar of Nevada's Young Lawyers section in the early '90s was establishing a pro bono provider that would serve Nevada's rural counties. What was then known as the Rural Counties Pro Bono Project became Volunteer Attorneys for Rural Nevadans (VARN) – one of the only pro bono legal services providers to focus on the needs of individuals in rural counties.

"It makes you feel good; you are assisting someone who could not otherwise be able to afford an attorney," Pickens says of her efforts in establishing the Rural Counties Pro Bono Project. Pickens is still involved with the project and currently serves as the vice president of VARN's board of directors.

Pickens regularly peruses the VARN pro bono case list and takes as many cases based in Lyon County as she can. Pickens also takes on cases that come from the Court Appointed Reduced Fee Program. In the past few years, Pickens has donated a few hundred hours to pro bono causes. "Everybody should do it. You get satisfaction from helping someone," she explains. "Their issues are the same as everyone else's, they need access [to the justice system] like everyone else."

The cases Pickens finds most gratifying are those in which she is able to help children, either through resolving a custody issue, enforcing child support or otherwise acting as an advocate.

"If someone is asking about pro bono, but isn't sure, take that first case!" Pickens urges. "VARN is willing to help ... attorneys that work for VARN are more than willing to help you."

Pickens graduated from the University of Wyoming Law School in 1989 and became a member of the Nevada bar the same year. Pickens is currently employed with Schlegelmilch Law Offices in Yerington. ■