

THE DAILY RECORD

WESTERN NEW YORK'S SOURCE FOR LAW, REAL ESTATE, FINANCE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SINCE 1908

Pro Bono SPOTLIGHT

The best volunteers aren't always attorneys

They say you can't believe everything you read, but that's not true when it comes to the *Pro Bono* Spotlight Column. Just ask Robert "Bob" Hauser, Volunteer Legal Services Project's volunteer extraordinaire.

Hauser, who retired from Xerox in 2007, approached VLSP last year to offer his considerable skills after reading a column describing the many ways in which non-attorneys can volunteer.

Hauser's professional background is an unusual blend of technology, teaching experience and exceptional people skills. A native of Pennsylvania, Hauser joined the Navy after high school, providing 32 years combined active duty and reserve time as an electronics technician.

Hauser's teaching career also began during his military service. A top student, Hauser was tapped to teach others early in his career. He subsequently served as an assistant training officer in his Naval Reserve Unit. In his civilian life, Hauser taught computer classes at several colleges and universities, including SUNY Binghamton and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf.

"I've always had a legitimate day job in technology and taught at night," Hauser said recently, showing the good-natured humor that VLSP's staff and clients have grown accustomed to over the past year.

Drawing on his professional experience, Hauser wears a wide range of hats at VLSP, from providing IT support to assisting with CLEs, to lending a helping hand to both clients and staff.

"At VLSP, volunteers can help in a number of ways that don't require a legal background. I worked in tech support at Xerox for the last 12 years of my career, supporting customers, field technicians and field analysts. I'm able to provide similar services to VLSP," Hauser said.

Initially, Hauser came to VLSP as a much-needed IT volunteer. The Rochester/Finger Lakes *Pro Bono* Net site had been on a protracted hiatus prior to Hauser stepping forward. *Pro Bono* Net can be an effective tool for volunteer attorneys if it is updated regularly to show current cases awaiting placement, upcoming clinic dates, CLE programs and the like.

For the past year, Hauser has been providing the ongoing maintenance that *Pro Bono* Net requires.

Acting as VLSP's liaison with the tech staff at *Pro Bono* Net,

Hauser succeeded in implementing upgrades to the Rochester/Finger Lakes *Pro Bono* Net site, including the posting of photos of VLSP's numerous events, fundraisers and CLEs. Similar upgrades subsequently were made to *Pro Bono* Net's New York City site.

Over time, Hauser's role at VLSP broadened. Hauser has become the go-to volunteer for support with CLEs, having provided assistance with VLSP's Matrimonial Doubleheader CLE in May 2010 and the Ethics Redux CLE in October 2010.

He worked side-by-side with VLSP staff planning and conducting these CLEs, which were broadcast live from Rochester's Hall of Justice to courthouses in the seven rural counties of the Seventh Judicial District.

"I had been involved in providing trainings for a number of my employers, including serving as the Support Center Training Team Lead at Xerox. Once again, I was able to draw on my past experiences in my new role as a VLSP volunteer," Hauser said recently.

Currently, Hauser is assisting with the Unemployment Insurance Hearings CLE planned for April 15. Limited space is still available. Interested attorneys are welcome to contact me to register. Lunch is being provided courtesy of Avalon Document Services.

Hauser's teaching experience also made him the ideal volunteer to assist VLSP's Staff Family Law Attorney, Mary Beth Conway, in revising a series of three PowerPoint presentations used by volunteer attorneys at VLSP's *Pro Se* Divorce Clinic.

In addition to his work behind the scenes, Hauser also works with clients at *Pro Se* Divorce Clinic, helping them complete the forms necessary to obtain an uncontested divorce. Hauser draws upon his wealth of experience as a volunteer arbitrator and family law mediator for the past ten years at the Center for Dispute Settlement.

"At VLSP, it's a different clientele, a different process, but it's largely the same thing. I get a lot of satisfaction out of helping 30 or more people get through the *pro se* divorce clinic," Hauser said.

During his professional career, Hauser conducted soft skills trainings focusing on topics including customer support, team building, problem solving and interviewing skills. As was the case with Hauser's IT skills, teaching experience and expertise as a

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Daily Record
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mediator and arbitrator, his soft skills carry forward in his volunteer work at VLSP.

Hauser regularly conducts interviews with clients seeking assistance with the denial of unemployment insurance benefits. He strives to put clients at ease by telling them he is merely helping them fill out forms.

"You can see the tension melt away because clients are not fearful that they must choose every word carefully. It's satisfying to help people fight injustices in the system and help give them a chance to prevail at their hearing," Hauser explained.

Hauser is a member of VLSP's Art of Lawyering Committee, currently seeking donations of artwork created by artistic members of the legal community, as well as artistic family members and friends. Donated art will be sold in VLSP's silent auction fundraiser opening with a gala reception at VLSP's offices on Oct. 6. Artists are welcome to contact me for more information.

In addition to his extensive volunteer service at VLSP and CDS, Hauser is also an active hospice volunteer for Visiting Nurse Service.

With such a busy schedule, and so many opportunities to choose from, what keeps Hauser coming back to VLSP? "As Winston Churchill said, 'I'm always ready to learn, although I do not always like being taught.' I'm learning a lot at VLSP and meeting a lot of nice people. I look forward to coming into the office," said Hauser, who lives in Rochester with his wife, Sam Scherer.

"And volunteering at VLSP gives me a chance to take my tie to lunch," Hauser joked.

Considering his outstanding organizational skills, it is not surprising that Hauser has a checklist of sorts when contemplating a new volunteer opportunity.

"I look for flexible opportunities doing different types of work that utilize my skills so I don't fall into the rut of doing the same



Robert "Bob" Hauser has used his vast experience outside of the legal profession to help with the Volunteer Legal Services Project. He is a great example of non-attorneys being able to contribute needed assistance.

thing over and over. It's also important to feel appreciated. At some offices, there's a big class distinction between volunteers and staff, which is unappealing. I prefer to think of myself as unpaid staff," Hauser said recently.

VLSP is pleased to think of Bob Hauser as one of our own.

VLSP welcomes volunteers from diverse backgrounds. Those outside of the legal profession are encouraged to contact me to discuss opportunities that will fit your particular skill set. In particular, VLSP is always looking for volunteers with language skills — especially Spanish and American Sign Language.

VLSP thanks Hauser and the members of the legal community who stepped up last month to help low-income people cope with a wide range of issues including divorce, grandparent/non-parent child custody, adoption, foreclosure settlement conferences, bankruptcy, wills, name change, mortgage settlement conferences and unemployment insurance benefits denials.

March 2011 honor roll

Solo practitioners: Mary Aramini; Katie

Breitenbach; Alexander Budd; Karen Smith Callanan; Michelle Cimino; Jason Essley; Charles Genese; Patricia Gibbons; Jason Espinosa; Deborah Indivino; Shaina Kovalsky; Victoria Lagoe; Thomas Martin; Robert Mullin; Marla Pilaroscia; Gilbert Perez; Gregory Piede; George Reiber; Raja Sekharan; Paul Watkins; John Wieser.

Attorneys at firms: James Metzler, Robert Nassau (Boylan Brown); Steven Carling (Burns & Schultz); Andrew Cohen (Cohen & Associates); Raul Martinez (Faraci Lange); Timothy Ingersoll (Fero & Ingersoll); Diana Holl, Kristen Lowe, Patrick Quigley (Harter, Secrest, & Emery); Kevin Bambury (Jeffrey Freedman Attorneys at Law); Wayne DeHond (Hiscock & Barclay); Lucien Morin, II (McConville Considine, Cooman & Morin); Ashley Baker, Adam Brunner, Dana Campbell, Barry Carrigan, Patrice Morrison, Meghan Schubmehl (Nixon Peabody); Jennifer Lunsford (Osborn Reed & Burke); Robert O'Connell (Petralia Webb & O'Connell); Gavin Reynolds (Phillips Lytle); Steven Feder (Pirrello Missal Personte & Feder); Helen Zamboni (Underberg & Kessler); Elizabeth Randisi (Weinstein & Murphy); Harry Messina (Woods Oviatt Gilman).

Government attorneys and paralegal: Timothy Fox, Tara Lynch, James Mulley, April Orlowski, Craig Peterson, Maureen Polen, Emina Poricanin, Kimberly Taylor, paralegal Carrie Ludwig (Appellate Division, Fourth Department).

Corporate paralegal: Patricia Carey (Thomson Reuters).

Mediators: Robert Hauser, Cheryl Vanderwall (Center for Dispute Settlement).

College Student: Claire Bould (SUNY Geneseo).

Linda Kostin is the pro bono coordinator for the Seventh Judicial District's Pro Bono Action Now Program. Her office is located at Volunteer Legal Services Project of Monroe County Inc.; lkostin@wnylc.com; (585) 295-5703.