

President's Message

ASHLEY L. BELLEAU

SOLACE—There is Nothing Too Big and Nothing Too Small!

WHEN I GAVE my President's acceptance speech in New Orleans, I told you that the "A" in FBA represents "Action!" In addition to taking action to fill judicial vacancies and insure adequate funding of our judiciary, the FBA is taking action by assisting



chapters in establishing SOLACE programs in their communities.

What is SOLACE? SOLACE is the acronym for Support of Lawyers/Legal Personnel—All Concerned Encouraged. The sole purpose of this program is for the community to reach out in a small, but meaningful and compassionate way to those judges, lawyers, court personnel, paralegals, legal secretaries and their families in their times of need due to a death or some catastrophic illness, sickness or injury.

Judge Jay C. Zainey of the Eastern District of Louisiana is the primary architect of this program, which was initially established in Louisiana in 2003. He is working with the FBA to bring the SOLACE program to national prominence by starting programs with a number of FBA chapters throughout the country. Over 20 chapters have expressed interest in starting SOLACE programs, including Alaska, Chicago, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Cleveland, Utah, and Lafayette-Acadiana.

The way the program works is quite simple, but the effects can be significant. It is basically a networking of emails of the chapter members. Each member serves as the eyes and ears of the program. Any member who learns of someone in the local legal community who is going through a difficult time can apprise the chapter's designated SOLACE representative through email as to the need. Then, the request for assistance is circulated to our fellow legal professionals by email with the appropriate discretion being used, identifying the need and potential assistance and/or appropriate expression of our support and concern that can be provided. The requestor's name remains anonymous.

The assistance or response can range from simply sending the family a card signed by a recognized local federal judge or leader to providing a family with some meals, assistance with grocery shopping or child care, clothes for a family who may have lost their home or possessions due to flood or fire, transfer of airline points to a person who needs to travel to a medical center for treatment or whatever the situation might warrant.

The SOLACE program has already worked wonders in the legal communities where it has been implement-

ed by simply using email to inform those who can help know about those who need help. In seminars and presentations, Judge Zainey has recounted how those recipients of SOLACE assistance are most appreciative. In addition, he has noted that those volunteers who have worked on the SOLACE project have experienced the fulfillment of doing something meaningful for colleagues in need.

There are many examples in which members of our legal community have assisted each other in times of need, including our own Executive Director Jack Lockridge. Here is the SOLACE email sent to members, the request that was made, and Jack's response:

EMAIL TO SOLACE NETWORK: Dear SOLACE members, The 39 year old step father of a legal secretary has an aggressive, inoperable brain tumor. He has undergone several forms of chemotherapy and six weeks of radiation, to no avail. He is scheduled to go to the National Institute for Health (NIH) in Bethesda, Maryland for two nights commencing March 17, 2011 for further treatment. NIH will assist with transportation costs. His insurance only pays for a percentage of his treatment. The hotel, Residence Inn Marriott, which provides a free shuttle to and from NIH, will cost approximately \$388.00 for a two night stay.

SOLACE REQUEST: If anyone has Marriott Points to donate for the hotel, or if anyone has contacts with the NIH who might be able to assist with a possible discounting of expenses, please contact

RESPONSE: Within 21 minutes, Jack Lockridge had offered to the family the Marriott points they needed.

If you want to start a SOLACE program in your community, please contact our Executive Director Jack Lockridge at 571-481-9100 or Judge Jay Zainey at 504-589-7590 or by email at Jay_Zainey@laed.uscourts.gov. There is nothing too big or too small that our fellow attorneys and legal professionals aren't willing to do for each other! **TFL**

Ashley L. Belleau