

# The Florida Housing Coalition Recognizes Kathleen McLeroy for Extraordinary Pro bono Assistance

The Pro bono committee of the Real Property, Probate and Trust Law Section of the Florida Bar is headed by Drew O'Malley. Drew has been working with the Florida Housing Coalition to provide free legal assistance to nonprofits in need through a partnership with the Florida Housing Coalition.

The Volunteer Lawyer Project would not be a success without the commitment of lawyers throughout Florida. At this time, we would like to honor one extraordinary lawyer in particular – **KATHLEEN S. McLERROY.**

McLeroy is the chair of Carlton Field's active pro bono committee and has been the point person for finding just the right lawyers in her firm's various offices to respond to the legal needs of Florida's nonprofits. McLeroy was instrumental in finding counsel for two nonprofits starting up community land trusts: Hibiscus CLT in Punta Gorda, and the Northwood Renaissance in Palm Beach County. She also found legal counsel for the Arcadia Housing Authority when complicated title issues could not be negotiated with local resources.

"There are people who need work from the legal profession and can't pay for it themselves," says McLeroy. She typically puts in 100 hours of pro bono work each year. She has represented many people in landlord/tenant, mortgage foreclosure, consumer, and collection disputes. In one of her most noted cases, she successfully defended a mortgage foreclosure action against a sixty-year-old woman who was the head of a household consisting of her daughter, her

retarded adult son, and two grandchildren. "She had paid on the mortgage faithfully," said McLeroy. The woman also ran her business, a beauty salon, out of her home. "If she had lost the house, she would have also lost her place of business."



The lender, however, an individual who had purchased the mortgage and note from a government entity, had begun charging excessive fees not provided for in the loan instruments. By applying the mortgage payments to these fees rather than to principal and interest, the lender declared the loan in default and commenced a foreclosure proceeding. After thirteen months of litigation, McLeroy was successful in having the loan, which was at all times current but for the excessive fees, reinstated. "They didn't

agree to do it easily," she said, "but we were able to have her mortgage deemed to be current."

Ms. McLeroy has received the Florida Bar Foundation's President's Award for Excellence. She was recognized by the Hillsborough Attorney Volunteer Efforts Program with its Outstanding Pro Bono Service as Client Intake Volunteer Award. In 2004, she received the Hillsborough County Bar Association's Jimmy Kynes Award for Outstanding Pro Bono Service, and in 2005, the Florida Bar and President's Pro Bono Service Award. The Florida Housing Coalition joins these many others in recognizing Kathleen McLeroy for her commitment to providing pro bono legal work, and in particular for furthering the work of affordable housing through her assistance to the Volunteer Lawyers Project partnership with the Florida Housing Coalition.

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