

OLAF Help Us Help Lawyers

by Barbara Fishleder
OAAP Executive Director



Now that the whirlwind of the holidays have passed, hopefully you each have a chance to enjoy a moment or two of calm and a fresh start to the new year. It is a great opportunity to consider how fortunate we are to be in a profession that has a keen spirit of professionalism and recognizes that it applies both to clients and to lawyers helping each other.

As this new year unfolds, I encourage you to draw upon this spirit of professionalism and help the Oregon Lawyer Assistance Foundation (OLAF) help a fellow lawyer in need. It may surprise you to learn that many lawyers are unable to obtain needed mental health or addiction treatment due to lack of insurance and lack of funding for community services. OLAF helps to fill the treatment gap that has been created by these difficult economic times and the resulting dramatic social service cuts.

OLAF provides treatment grants and loans to lawyers who access the Oregon Attorney Assistance Program (OAAP). The OAAP provides support, helps get lawyers to resources, and provides short-term counseling, but treatment is outside the scope of services offered by the OAAP. With an OLAF grant or loan, a lawyer who is suffering can get his or her life back on track by accessing treatment. Your help changes a desperate situation into a positive contribution to the legal profession.

OLAF is funded exclusively with private donations. OLAF loans and grants assist lawyers who suffer from depression, anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress syndrome, addiction, alcoholism, bipolar disorder, and other mental health and addiction-related diseases. Lawyers receiving OLAF funds are asked to contribute back to

the foundation when they return to health and a productive career. To date, OLAF has authorized 19 loans and 20 grants. Several of these loans have already been fully repaid.

Most Oregon lawyers know at least one professional colleague who has suffered with the challenges of mental health issues or addictions. The lawyer you help may be a former classmate, a lawyer you know and care about personally, a colleague in the community, or



someone you will someday meet. Since most mental health issues and addictions are treatable, contributing to OLAF helps to save lives, families, and careers.

For more information about OLAF, go to www.oaap.org and click on OLAF at the top right corner of the navigation bar. Or, contact me at 503.684.7425 or barbaraf@oaap.org. OLAF is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

We hope that you and your firm will be part of this inspired effort to help fellow lawyers. When you help another lawyer, you help the profession and the public we serve.

On behalf of Oregon lawyers in need, we thank you.

Barbara S. Fishleder serves on the board of the Oregon Lawyer Assistance Foundation. She is the Professional Liability Fund director of personal and practice management assistance and OAAP executive director.

IN SIGHT for Oregon Lawyers and Judges

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

OLAF HELPS DURING TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES

You probably already know that Oregon's vital social services have been significantly cut. What may surprise you is that many practicing lawyers in Oregon have been directly affected by these cuts. There are attorneys in our community who need mental health or addiction treatment but can't obtain the care they need due to lack of insurance and lack of funding for community services. The Oregon Lawyer Assistance Foundation (OLAF) helps to fill the treatment gap that has been created by these difficult economic times and the resulting significant social service cuts.

OLAF provides treatment grants and loans to lawyers who access the Oregon Attorney Assistance Program (OAAP) and who are unable to pay for the mental health or addiction treatment they need. The OAAP provides support, helps get lawyers to resources, and provides short-term counseling, but funding for treatment is outside the scope of services offered by the OAAP. That's the need that OLAF fills. With an OLAF grant or loan, a lawyer who is suffering can access treatment that has been recommended by the OAAP but that the lawyer otherwise cannot afford. OLAF loans and grants assist lawyers who suffer from bipolar disorder, depression, post-traumatic stress syndrome, anxiety disorder, addiction, alcoholism, and other mental health and addiction-related diseases.

Your financial contribution will help an Oregon lawyer who is trying to get his or her life back on track and who would otherwise be unable to obtain the treatment necessary to do that. Your support and financial contribution will help a cou-

rageous lawyer to access treatment – and thus help to change a desperate situation into a positive contribution to the legal profession and the community.

Most Oregon lawyers know at least one professional colleague who has suffered from some form of mental health or addiction disorder. Many lawyers who access the OAAP are unable to pay for the treatment they need. Lawyers receiving OLAF funds are asked to contribute back to OLAF once they return to health and a productive career. Some lawyers who have received OLAF loans have already begun to do this.

OLAF money comes entirely from private donations – most often from other Oregon lawyers who want to contribute to the profession by helping other lawyers. Since most mental health and addiction disorders are highly treatable with access to proper resources, contributing to OLAF helps to save lives, families, and careers.

We hope that you and your firm will join this inspired effort to help fellow lawyers. When we help another lawyer, we help the profession and the community we serve.

For more information about OLAF, go to www.oaap.org and click on OLAF at the top-right corner of the navigation bar, or contact me at 503-499-4486 or at robert.moore@bullivant.com. OLAF is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

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OREGON STATE BAR BULLETIN

December 2009

Oregon Lawyer Assistance Foundation

Many Oregon lawyers take the brave step each year of turning to the Oregon Attorney Assistance Program (OAAP) for help with drug and alcohol addiction, mental health issues and other personal challenges.

OAAP is a free and confidential counseling program that provides support, crisis counseling and resource referral to lawyers. Its services do not include treatment, however, so lawyers in financial need were sometimes unable to obtain mental health or addiction treatment.

Recognizing this gap in lawyers' ability to access assistance, Michael Sweeney, an Oregon attorney and recovering alcoholic who served as an OAAP counselor for 18 years, came up with the idea of creating a much-needed fund to help pay for mental health and addiction treatment.

When the family and friends of Deborah Dealy-Browning, an Oregon lawyer who died in 2004 after a long battle with alcoholism, offered to donate money that would help other lawyers seek treatment, Sweeney saw the opportunity to bring the idea of funding treatment to fruition. He created the Oregon Lawyer Assistance Foundation (OLAF). In return for an OLAF grant or loan, attorneys are asked to contribute back to the foundation when they are healthy again. Though OLAF is separate from the OAAP, one of the requirements of getting an OLAF loan or grant is that the lawyer must access the OAAP.

OLAF offers different kinds of grants and loans. One grant is named for Dealy-Browning to honor her life and her efforts to combat alcoholism. Another bears Sweeney's name in recognition of his work as an OAAP attorney counselor and his tireless efforts to help lawyers across the country in their recovery efforts. Sweeney passed away in 2008 from complications associated with Pick's disease.

"One of the most compelling things about Michael was that if he learned about someone who was struggling with drug abuse or alcoholism – it didn't matter if it was a lawyer in a prestigious firm, a lawyer living out of a car, or a friend or relative of someone he just met – he would go out of his way 24/7 to help that person into recovery," says Barbara Fishleder, OAAP's executive director and a member of OLAF's board of directors.

Fishleder says fundraising for OLAF is challenging because of the program's confidential nature. Unlike other nonprofits, OLAF can't provide testimonials or use client photos on a brochure because of privacy issues. At the same time, the need for OLAF's support is growing, especially with cutbacks in state and county services. In addition, many attorneys don't have health insurance.

"People think of lawyers and say, 'Well, don't they have insurance?' A lot of them don't. A lot of them are destitute and may be living out of their cars, or living in their office so they only have to pay one rent. There are a lot of very desperate situations out there," she says. "And, people who have a mental health or addiction issue really need to get treatment as soon as they are ready to accept it."

The up side for OLAF is that donations continue to arrive, even a recent contribution from a treatment center. And Oregon's legal community is doing its best to ensure the program continues to help colleagues recover their physical, emotional and mental health.

"I'm happy to report that we have a wide range of donation sources," Fishleder says. "This includes contributions from large regional firms, small firms and sole practitioners, as well as contributions from family members or friends who wish to commemorate a special occasion or donate in honor or memory of a loved one. We even have folks who make OLAF their holiday donation charity."

*excerpt from
A Helping Hand
by Melody Finnemore*

PARTING THOUGHTS

The Oregon Lawyer Assistance Foundation

Support Change

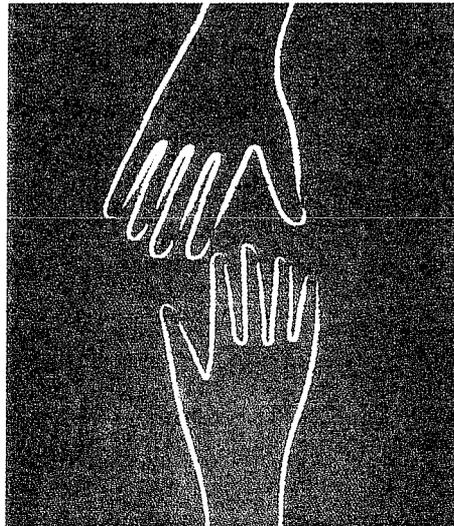
By David Culpepper

We are proud members of the legal profession. We are Advocates. Efficient. Productive. Direct. Powerful. However, many of us are also suffering. Severely depressed. Addicted to legal and illegal drugs. Struggling with alcohol. Bipolar. Problem gamblers. If this doesn't sound like the legal profession to you, consider these humbling statistics:

- Depression is second only to cardiovascular disease for its frequency and for its mortality rate;
- Practicing lawyers exhibit clinical anxiety, hostility and depression at rates that are 8-15 times those of the general population;
- The rate of alcoholism among lawyers is estimated at 18 percent — approximately twice the rate for the general population;
- A Johns Hopkins University study measuring the depression rate for 28 occupations found lawyers were the most likely to suffer from depression — at a rate that is 3.6 times that of the general population;
- An estimated 15-20 percent of lawyers have problems that threaten their ability to practice their profession.

Why are we bringing this to your attention? To let you know about — and to ask your support for — the Oregon Lawyers Assistance Foundation (OLAF). OLAF is a new tax-exempt foundation that provides grants to lawyers who are in financial need for addiction and mental health treatment. OLAF is modeled after similar pioneering foundations in Massachusetts, Maryland and Alabama.

Why should you care? Because lawyers who suffer with these issues may be among your colleagues, your law school alumni and your partners.



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The legal profession in Oregon is very lucky. We have the Oregon Attorney Assistance Program (OAAP), which offers a broad range of personal assistance, including addiction intervention, recovery support, crisis intervention, and counseling — to lawyers, judges, law students and members of the legal community. We are a cohesive and closely connected legal community that encourages health and well-being.

Unfortunately, these resources are not enough. Incredibly, being sufficiently courageous and motivated to accept the need for treatment isn't always enough, either. Treatment often costs out-of-pocket money. Some lawyers lack insurance coverage for needed addiction or mental health treatment or are unable to pay for the uninsured portion of treatment. Sometimes needed treatment is not offered through public assistance or through professionals who offer services for a reduced fee. For many affected lawyers, this inability to pay for treatment is the final insurmountable hurdle.

This need inspired the creation of the Oregon Lawyer Assistance Foundation.

A lawyer in need must meet OLAF criteria, including working with the OAAP. The OAAP helps the qualifying lawyer submit a confidential (no-names) request for a grant. Grants are made directly to the professional service provider. All grants issued by OLAF come with a request that the lawyer contribute back to the foundation when the lawyer returns to health. Funding provided by OLAF is not available from any other organization.

It is especially hard for lawyers to “step out front” and admit the need for help. When they do step forward for help, it is crucial that they receive it. Your financial contribution will help a courageous lawyer access treatment — and will support changing his or her desperate situation into a positive contribution to the legal profession.

We hope that you and your firm will be part of this inspired solution. Your donation will help a lawyer you know and care personally about, a colleague in the community, or someone you will someday meet.

David Culpepper is president of the Oregon Lawyers Assistance Foundation and a partner with the Portland firm Thede Culpepper Moore Munro & Silliman. The author thanks Barbara Fishleder, executive director of the Oregon Attorney Assistance Program, for her assistance in writing this column.

For more information about OLAF, contact one of the foundation's board members: David Culpepper (503) 416-6146; Barbara Fishleder (503) 684-7425; Wallace Carson (503) 364-7250; Lois Rosenbaum (503) 294-9293 or Robert Moore (503) 499-4486.

To make a donation to OLAF, contact David Culpepper at Thede Culpepper Moore Munro & Silliman LLP, 3675 U.S. Bancorp Tower, 111 S.W. Fifth Ave, Portland, OR 97204.