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# Florida Trend

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"It's kind of our duty as attorneys to help out other people. It's our duty as people." - Steven D. Kramer

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Florida's fresh citrus shipments keep declining. Despite the seemingly bad news, there's optimism in the groves.

### » Florida to hire workers to speed unemployment filing

Florida's Department of Economic Opportunity plans to step up hiring to double the number of people who review claims for reemployment benefits.

### » Housing recovery means more seized homes on auction block

The rise in house prices is sparking an increase in home seizures as lenders figure they can sell the property now.

### FRIDAY PREVIEW:

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## OF COUNSEL - FLORIDA LAW

# Bono Fide - Florida's Pro Bono Stars

The Bar is pushing attorneys to donate more hours, but the going is slow.

Art Levy | 4/18/2013

In late 2009, the Florida Bar rolled out its One Campaign in hopes of persuading Florida's attorneys to donate more of their time to clients who can't afford to pay.

The effort, which asks each of the state's attorneys to take on at least one case pro bono, created buzz about pro bono work, says Gwynne Young, president of the Florida Bar, but she's still waiting to see a significant boost in the number of donated hours.

In 2009, Florida attorneys averaged 18.29 hours of pro bono work compared to 18.50 hours in 2011.

"The numbers show that while there has been a slight increase in attorneys taking cases, it's probably not as much as we'd like," Young says. "It's been a little bit

Time & Money  
Pro bono hours donated to legal aid groups by Florida attorneys:

Year	Hours
2007-08	1,489,099
2008-09	1,545,157
2009-10	1,614,676
2010-11	1,622,449



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**Steven D. Kramer, 36**  
 Managing Partner - Kramer Law Firm - Altamonte Springs

**Honor:** Pro Bono Service Award, 18th Judicial Circuit

**Pro Bono Work:** Kramer, whose firm handles business, civil litigation, real estate and family law cases, helped to establish the Foreclosure Legal Clinic in Seminole County that gives free legal advice to low-income residents. His pro bono work includes helping more than 50 homeowners deal with foreclosure issues.

**Motivation:** "I've had people help me out lots of times in my life, and I feel like I'm returning the favor. It's kind of our duty as attorneys to help out other people. It's our duty as people. The reward is feeling good about helping somebody out."

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**Bridget Ann Berry, 54**  
 Shareholder - Greenberg Traurig - West Palm Beach

**Honor:** Pro Bono Service Award, 15th Judicial Circuit

**Pro Bono Work:** Berry, whose practice focuses on civil litigation, labor and real estate law, donates 200 hours a year to local groups and children aging out of foster care.

**Motivation:** "The attorneys who do pro bono work, they do it because they think it's the right thing to do."

---

**Emerson M. Lotzia, 59**  
 Partner - Foley & Lardner - Jacksonville

**Honor:** Pro Bono Service Award, 4th Judicial Circuit

**Pro Bono Work:** Using his skills as a transactional attorney, Lotzia — who typically works for developers — has donated hundreds of hours to community development corporations seeking to build projects in low-income areas of Jacksonville. One example is North Point I, a mixed-use development in the city's northwest side.

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**Motivation:** "Quite frankly, we're coming through a downturn where I had some extra hours to contribute. The firm was happy to let me do it, and I was happy to do it. The award says 'Emerson Lotzia,' but it really should say 'Foley & Lardner' because there are a lot of people here who helped me with these projects."

**Tania R. Schmidt-Alpers, 43**  
Sole Practitioner - St. Augustine

**Honor:** Pro Bono Service Award, 7th Judicial Circuit

**Pro Bono Work:** A child and family law attorney, Schmidt-Alpers devotes her pro bono work to helping victims of domestic violence. She has spent more than 12 years representing victims at the Betty Griffin House, St. Johns County Legal Aid's domestic violence shelter.

**Motivation:** "You see some of the saddest stories you can possibly imagine. These people are marrying someone they love and then this person is hurting them or isolating them or controlling them or threatening them, and they don't feel like they can leave. It's bad for the kids. If you can help someone get out of that situation — and to them that seems like a monumental task — then you're really doing something."

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have gained a foothold in Florida, they're pushing for legal changes that irk big, established beer distributors.

» [Florida Icon](#) - A conversation with Ed Droste, co-founder of Hooters.

### Florida Trend Video Pick



The Florida Forest Service is the first in the nation to equip GPS transmitters so that supervisors can track firefighters' location and keep them out of harm's way.

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### Ballot Box

Are you satisfied with your health care plan?

- » Yes, satisfied with it.
- » Just OK with it
- » No, it needs improvement.
- » What health care plan? I still don't have one.

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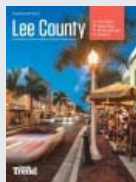
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stagnant.”

2011-12 — 1,675,498

Source: Florida Bar

Pro bono's flat growth comes at a bad time for Florida's poor. The economic downturn and foreclosure crisis have created more demand for pro bono legal services — and, because of budget cuts, fewer legal aide attorneys to meet the demand.

Legal Services of North Florida, which offers legal help to low-income clients in 16 Panhandle counties, had 21 attorneys on staff two years ago, says Kris Knab, executive director. But because of a freeze on replacing lawyers who leave, the agency now has 18 attorneys, including one provided by AmeriCorps. Knab estimates that 20% of the poor who need free legal services are actually getting them.

“This is why it's more and more important to get more pro bono attorneys involved,” she says.

Kathleen McLeroy, an attorney at Carlton Fields in Tampa and co-chair of the Florida Bar's Pro Bono Legal Services Committee, says the Bar continues to push the One Campaign, with pro bono summits scheduled across the state at which attorneys are cajoled to do more pro bono and are given tips on connecting with needy clients. The next event is set for next month in Miami.

McLeroy is optimistic that, as more attorneys are educated about pro bono opportunities, more will contribute. “If you present them with a case,” she says, “very seldom will they say no.”

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**Jeanne Trudeau Tate, 56**

Managing Partner - Law Office of Jeanne T. Tate - Tampa

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**Honor:** Tobias Simon Pro Bono Service Award; Pro Bono Service Award, 13th Judicial Circuit

**Pro Bono Work:** Considered among Florida's top adoption lawyers, Tate's extensive pro bono work includes donating time and money to Bay Area Legal Services and encouraging other attorneys to partake in pro bono activities.

**Motivation:** “Pro bono grabs you by the heart and doesn't let go. The rewards I get are infinite.”

Early in her career, Tate went to work for a staid, nearly century-old law firm that had never had a female partner. Tate wanted to be the first. Although her specialty was complex commercial litigation, she started accepting family law cases — high-end divorce and adoption — basically to beef up her client list and set herself up to become partner later.

“I figured over time I would build up a book of business, get some experience, meet people and generate some business on the commercial side of the equation,” she says. “I eventually did make partner, but it was the adoption work that captured my soul.”

After 18 years in corporate law — and after becoming the first female partner at both Shackelford, Farrior, Stallings & Evans, and at Hill Ward Henderson — Tate started her own firm in 1999 to focus on adoption law. The firm, based in Tampa, has six lawyers and offices in Orlando and Naples.

As part of her pro bono work, Tate handles every adoption-related case referred to her by Bay Area Legal Services. She has also lobbied state leaders to speed up the adoption process for orphaned children and children living in foster care.

“I'm fortunate to work in this field because it gives you compelling exposure to a societal need that you can help fix,” she says.

Tate, winner of the Florida Bar's top pro bono service award in 2013, has donated more than 1,000 hours during her career. She also gives the attorneys who work for her all the time they need for pro bono work.

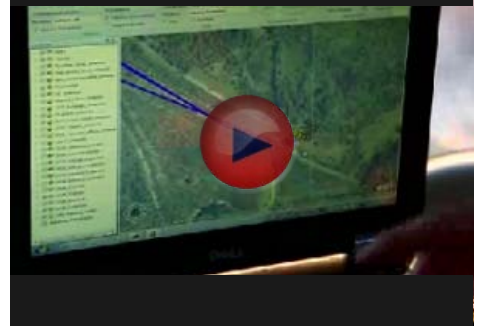
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have gained a foothold in Florida, they're pushing for legal changes that irk big, established beer distributors.

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Florida provides GPS to protect those fighting wildfires



The Florida Forest Service is the first in the nation to equip GPS transmitters so that supervisors can track firefighters' location and keep them out of harm's way.

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to afford our mortgages and put food on the table," she says. "It's not like, 'Can we afford to do this?' It's the right thing to do. I promise. Pro bono won't let you down. It will bring you more fulfillment than anything else you do."

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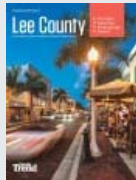
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