

## **“Bankruptcy For Beginners” Pro Bono Seminar**

By Judge Roberta A. Colton

What a wonderful kick off to National Celebrate Pro Bono Week! A free bankruptcy seminar was held October 20th, complete with a boxed lunch, in return for the commitment to take on a pro bono case. The seminar was sold out within days of being advertised, and the participants and speakers enjoyed and were inspired by this unique experience.

One appreciative attendee, Tahirah Payne, had this to say, “I wanted to . . . let [the organizers] know how much I enjoyed the Bankruptcy Basics CLE! It was hands down the most comprehensive basic CLE I have ever taken. The material was extremely organized. As an attorney who does not practice bankruptcy I found the subject matter easy to understand. Bravo!”

The seminar itself offered participants 8.5 hours of free CLE credit, including 1 hour of Ethics credit. Hosts of the program included Bay Area Legal Services, Tampa Bay Bankruptcy Bar Association, Hillsborough County Bar Association, and the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Middle District of Florida. Funding was provided by the Bench Bar Fund of the Middle District of Florida. Materials for the program came from the National Consumer Lawyers Center and were modules and slides developed with funds from the Endowment for Education of the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges. Thomson Reuters provided free flash drives with the program materials, and Blanchard Law, P.A. sponsored a networking Happy Hour at the conclusion of the seminar. This truly was a team effort.

Each attendee agreed to take a pro bono bankruptcy case from one of the following: Bay Area Volunteer Lawyer’s Program, St. Michael’s Legal Clinic, a Bankruptcy Judge from the Middle District of Florida, the Community Law Program, or Legal Aid of Manasota; or, instead, the attendee could choose to provide six hours of pro bono service at the Tampa Bay Bankruptcy Bar Association’s Courthouse Pro Boo Bankruptcy Clinic.

Although the NCLC program was brought to the attention of the organizers by a bankruptcy judge, many lawyers readily and enthusiastically joined together to make this event possible. On behalf of all the judges and bar members of the Middle District of Florida, thank you for your efforts. To all the participants: I truly hope that you enjoy and are inspired by the pro bono cases that you handle this year.