



Bankruptcy Lawyer Wins Prestigious Jimmy Kynes Pro Bono Service Award

Fehintola “Kemi” Folasade Oguntebi, a solo practitioner with a consumer bankruptcy practice, received this year’s Jimmy Kynes Pro Bono Service Award from the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit Pro Bono Committee. Congratulations to her and thanks for her service!

This award recognizes a Hillsborough County attorney who for many years has made significant contributions to ensure legal services are available to persons who otherwise could not afford them. It is dedicated to the memory of Jimmy Kynes, who served as Florida Attorney General and later as General Counsel of the Jim Walter Corporation in Tampa. Following the establishment of Bay Area Legal Services’ Voluntary Lawyers Program (VLP) in 1982, Mr. Kynes worked with the program to recruit local bar members to provide pro bono assistance. Mr. Kynes’ own pro bono service over many years, as well as his recruiting efforts, inspired private attorneys (including corporate counsel from local companies) to interview and advise indigent clients at intake sessions. Mr. Kynes’ commitment to the provision of pro bono assistance is reflected by, and continues through, the efforts of the recipients of his award.

Given Mr. Kynes’ connection with the VLP, it is fitting that the VLP nominated Ms. Oguntebi for the award. Her involvement with the VLP dates back to 1999. Her passion for pro bono is evidenced by her consistent contribution of services to the VLP in the 20 years since then. For example, from 2000-2016, she regularly volunteered for VLP’s Domestic Violence Assistance Project (DVAP) assisting pro se domestic violence litigants in completing their Petitions for Injunction packets. Throughout her time with the VLP, she has also continued to serve on its Mentor Panel by mentoring Bay Area Legal Services staff attorneys and volunteer attorneys and on its Case Referral Panel by accepting referrals of clients for consultation and representation in the areas of divorce/custody, adoption, and probate. She recently accepted four cases at one time when the VLP’s Case Referral Manager reached out and let her know that the manager was going to have to turn away some clients whose cases had not been placed.

Aside from the VLP, Ms. Oguntebi consistently volunteers for other organizations. Over the years, she has devoted her time to the Florida legal profession through her involvement in a program entitled “Lawyers Helping Lawyers.” Through this program, the Florida Bar refers young lawyers to more experienced lawyers so they can obtain advice and assistance in their efforts to represent clients. For more than seven years, she has also regularly volunteered for the Tampa Bay Bankruptcy Bar Association’s Pro Bono Clinic in our courthouse, where she has provided advice and assistance with the preparation of court documents for pro se bankruptcy litigants. She has volunteered for this project for over seven years. She has also regularly participated in the Ask a Lawyer Project with Fox 13 since she began practicing over 24 years ago. She is an active member of the George Edgecomb Bar Association and participates in its pro bono events. Finally, she has participated in a number of speaking engagements to church groups, typically on the topics of immigration and estate planning.

Ms. Oguntebi received her J.D. degree from the University of Florida in 1994 and opened her solo practice in 1995. In addition to her consumer bankruptcy practice, she also handles family law, probate, guardianship, wills, and immigration matters.

Ms. Oguntebi is only the fifth member of the insolvency legal community to have received the award since its inception almost 30 years ago, the prior four being Kathy McLeroy (2004), Scott Stichter (2005), Judge Cathy McEwen (2008), and A.J. Stan Musial (2019).