



**The TBBBA Wins Grants for Pro Bono
Legal Service and the C.A.R.E. Program**
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In tribute to our mentor, friend, and first president, Don Stichter, the TBBBA has focused much of its attention this year on improving service to *pro se* parties and to our Tampa Bay community. To assist in financing our efforts, the TBBBA made grant funding requests of the Bankruptcy Law Education Series (BLES) Foundation to support our C.A.R.E. Program (chaired by Dan Etlinger) and of the American College of Bankruptcy Foundation (ACBF) to support our *Pro Se* Assistance Clinic (chaired by Michael Barnett). I am delighted to report that the TBBBA has received grant funding from both BLES and the ACBF.

The C.A.R.E. Program-BLES Grant

BLES awarded the TBBBA a generous grant to assist in our efforts to promote financial literacy in the Tampa Bay community. The Credit Abuse Resistance Education Program, or “C.A.R.E.” for short, is a national, nonprofit financial literacy organization. It was created in 2002 by retired bankruptcy judge, John C. Ninfo, II (U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Western District of New York), and blossomed into approximately fifty-five chapters nationwide, with dedicated chapter volunteers serving in over half the states, Washington D.C., and Puerto Rico.

At its core, C.A.R.E. provides an opportunity for volunteers to address middle school, high school, and college kids about the best practices and pitfalls regarding their credit in an attempt to start them off on the right path. Tampa’s C.A.R.E. Program got off to a robust start in 2007, but it recently went temporarily inactive because of the Covid-19 pandemic and other factors. Under the leadership of Dan Etlinger, Tampa has resumed its C.A.R.E. Program. So far this (fiscal) year, Tampa’s C.A.R.E. Program has reached over 365 students in six presentations, with many presentations still to come.

If you have a connection with a school or youth organization in the Tampa Bay area, the TBBBA would love an introduction. Or, if you are interested in becoming one of our presenters, we are happy to get you involved. In either case, please contact the TBBBA’s C.A.R.E. Program chair, Daniel Etlinger, at detlinger@jennislaw.com.

The *Pro Se* Service Clinic-ACBF Grant

The TBBBA also applied for a grant from the ACBF to support its work in the *Pro Se* Assistance Clinic. While the ACBF was considering our grant application, we wasted no time and kept hard at work on other improvements in our efforts to aide *pro se* parties. This fiscal year, the TBBBA has:

- reopened the in-person clinic on Wednesdays from 2 – 4 p.m. in Room 964 (the Attorney Resource Room) on the 9th Floor of the Sam M. Gibbons United States Courthouse, 801 North Florida Avenue, Tampa, Florida;
- streamlined noticing procedures for whole-case or trial pro bono opportunities, enabling volunteers to locate and take on pro bono representation of their choosing;
- partnered with Judge Brown and Judge Burgess as they kickstart a new district-wide virtual pro bono assistance platform; and
- showed our appreciation to our invaluable pro bono service volunteers by recognizing them in news blasts, CLEs, *The Cramdown*, and with monthly gift card raffles.

All of this hard work was rewarded when, in mid-November 2022, the TBBBA received notice that the ACBF approved our grant application. The funding will allow us to update the technology in our *Pro Se* Assistance Clinic, provide professional interpreter support when needed, and defray the costs associated with administering, marketing, and supplying the *Pro Se* Assistance Clinic.

Please consider taking at least one pro bono case this year or donating just one hour of pro bono time each month. In-person opportunities are available in the TBBBA's *Pro Se* Assistance Clinic by emailing tbbbaprobonoclinic@gmail.com. Virtual opportunities are available by visiting the Middle District of Florida Bankruptcy *Pro Se* Assistance Clinic at <https://www.bankruptcyproseclinic.com/> and following the link and instructions to register as a volunteer.

If you come in to contact with an unrepresented party in a bankruptcy case that could benefit from a consult with an attorney, please consider sharing this information with them. If you have any questions, please contact the Middle District's clinic administrator at info@bankruptcyproseclinic.com. We Love Our Pro Bono Volunteers!