

## Outlook: Perspectives on Law and Practice

### **PILS Awards Jane Shaeffer Homeless Advocate Award and Recognizes Finalists at The Florida Bar Annual Convention**

By **Annie Martinez**  
*Staff Writer*

On Friday, June 22, the Public Interest Law Section presented the Jane Shaeffer Outstanding Homeless Advocate Award at an award breakfast at the Florida Bar Annual Convention, at the Gaylord Palms Resort and Convention Center in Orlando. Recognized at the award breakfast was award winner the Honorable Bob Dillinger, Public Defender for the Sixth Judicial Circuit, and eight award finalists nominated for the award. From the high caliber of nominees, the

committee had the difficult task of choosing eight finalists and one winner for their outstanding, inspirational services and dedication to improving the lives of homeless persons in Florida.

Established by PILS, the Jane Shaeffer Outstanding Homeless Advocate Award recognizes outstanding achievement in advocacy for homeless persons. The award was named after distinguished attorney and advocate Jane Hunter Shaeffer, who was the first statewide Director of the Florida Guardian Ad Litem Program and founded The Shelter, an

emergency shelter for homeless persons in Tallahassee. Much of Ms. Shaeffer's work centered on outreach to the homeless. PILS established the award, which is given biennially, to recognize individual efforts to reach out to the homeless community and to improve the conditions or treatment of the homeless, both locally and state-wide. Award finalists included the following: **Pamela Wiener Dubrule, Dr. Rosendo Collazo, Mary Lou Guthart, Adam Tebrugge, Gregory M. Wagner, Harold Oehler, Jacqueline Dowd, and Helaine Blum.**



Pictured from left to right: Helaine Blum, Adam Tebrugge, Jacqueline Dowd, Pamela Wiener Dubrule, Bob Dillinger, Ron Shaeffer, and Kirsten Clanton.

## Jane Shaeffer Award Winner: The Honorable Bob Dillinger

By **Yanina Zilberman**  
Editor

On June 22, 2012, at the Annual Florida Bar Convention Gaylord Palms Hotel and Convention Center, the Public Interest Law Section (PILS) presented the 2012 Jane Shaeffer Outstanding Homeless Advocate Award to the Honorable Bob Dillinger, the Public Defender for the Sixth Judicial Circuit, for his extensive and tremendous commitment to advocacy for the homeless.

Established by PILS, the Jane Shaeffer Outstanding Homeless Advocate Award recognizes outstanding achievement in advocacy for homeless persons. The award was named after distinguished attorney and advocate Jane Hunter Shaeffer, who was the first statewide Director of the Florida Guardian Ad Litem Program and founded The Shelter, an emergency shelter for homeless persons in Tallahassee. PILS established the award, which is given biennially, to recognize individual efforts to reach out to the homeless community and to improve the conditions or treatment of homeless people, both locally and state-wide.

Mr. Dillinger has served as the Public Defender of the Sixth Circuit since 1997. A graduate of Columbia University, he graduated from Stetson College of Law in 1976. Before becoming the Public Defender of the Sixth Judicial Circuit, which includes Pinellas and Pasco counties, he served as the Assistant Public Defender of the Circuit. In this position, he served on the Capital Crimes Defense team, and was instrumental in publishing Florida's first comprehensive death penalty training manual for defense attorneys. He ran for the office of Public Defender for the Sixth Judicial Circuit in 1996, and since being elected in 1996, he has been reelected four times.

Mr. Dillinger's commitment to the homeless has been long-standing and tremendous. His office has established a Homeless Outreach Program which assists the homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless to stay out of jail. The Program has a diversion component designed to take jailed homeless individuals and divert them to various homeless providers throughout Pinellas and Pasco counties. Assistant public defenders work

to have the arrest converted to a Notice to Appear, after which the individuals can be diverted out of the system. Three or four people are diverted per day.

Mr. Dillinger's office has also taken the step of mapping various homeless camps throughout Pinellas and Pasco counties with the idea of getting much-needed services into the camps, including medical. Additionally, as part of the Nourish to Flourish program, Mr. Dillinger has been working with various food providers to provide food to chronically hungry children. The program is meant to help the almost 15,000 chronically hungry children living in Pinellas and Pasco, meaning these children either go to bed hungry or have insufficient food on the weekends.

Mr. Dillinger's most recent efforts to reach out and tend to the homeless have been remarkable, not to mention creative. He recently worked with Pasco County to procure a van to be used as a mobile medical unit meant to provide much-needed medical services to the homeless. After public organizations and residents of Pasco County were able to raise \$25,000, Mr. Dillinger took title to the van, which used to belong to Pinellas County, and also paid insurance on the vehicle, now called the Pasco Mobile Medical Care Unit.

Equipped with medical equipment and supplies, Mobile Medical ventured out for the first time on April 19. The mobile unit, which has a paramedic and a nurse practitioner on board, has targeted areas where the homeless community is predominant. The ultimate purpose has been to reach out to those without access to health care, both to the homeless and those that are not homeless but without any insurance coverage. Since April 19, Mobile Medical has been out seven times, and tended to about 100 people, which makes it a success. So far, the 37-foot long van has gone to Day Star in Dade City, Homeless Star in Zephyr Hills, Metropolitan Ministries in Holiday, and to Salvation Army in Hudson, as well as to a woman's family shelter. In Dade City, a rural area, Mobile Medical recently performed physicals for children of migrant workers, allowing them to go to camp.



The Honorable Bob Dillinger, Public Defender for the Sixth Judicial Circuit.  
*Photo Credit by: 6th Circuit*

According to Mr. Dillinger, the average age of the people served by Mobile Medical is forty-seven. Most of those tended to have been in pain from some infection, and many have had serious dental issues, including abscessed teeth. Some of the women have been in very bad shape, suffering from conditions including prolapsed uterus. Before July of this year, the van made its rounds about twice a week. With new state funding that became available in July, the van will be going out three days a week, for six hours a day rather than four as before. The new funding will permit the hiring of more people to assist with Mobile Medical. Mr. Dillinger is hopeful more dentists will now be hired, as Mobile Medical has encountered many individuals suffering from dental problems.

During his acceptance speech at the presentation award, Mr. Dillinger announced his office has been working in coordination with Habitat for Humanity to provide housing for those who need it. Mr. Dillinger has met with a property appraiser and compiled a list of all foreclosed houses in Pinellas county owned by banks. After meeting with Pinellas County Code Enforcement, he cross-referenced the properties, and found nine potential homes for housing use. He asked the County to waive the liens on the properties, and the County agreed to do so. Meanwhile, the banks that placed liens on the property are in the process of handing the homes over to the County. Once handed over, the properties will be a source of housing for families in need. ■