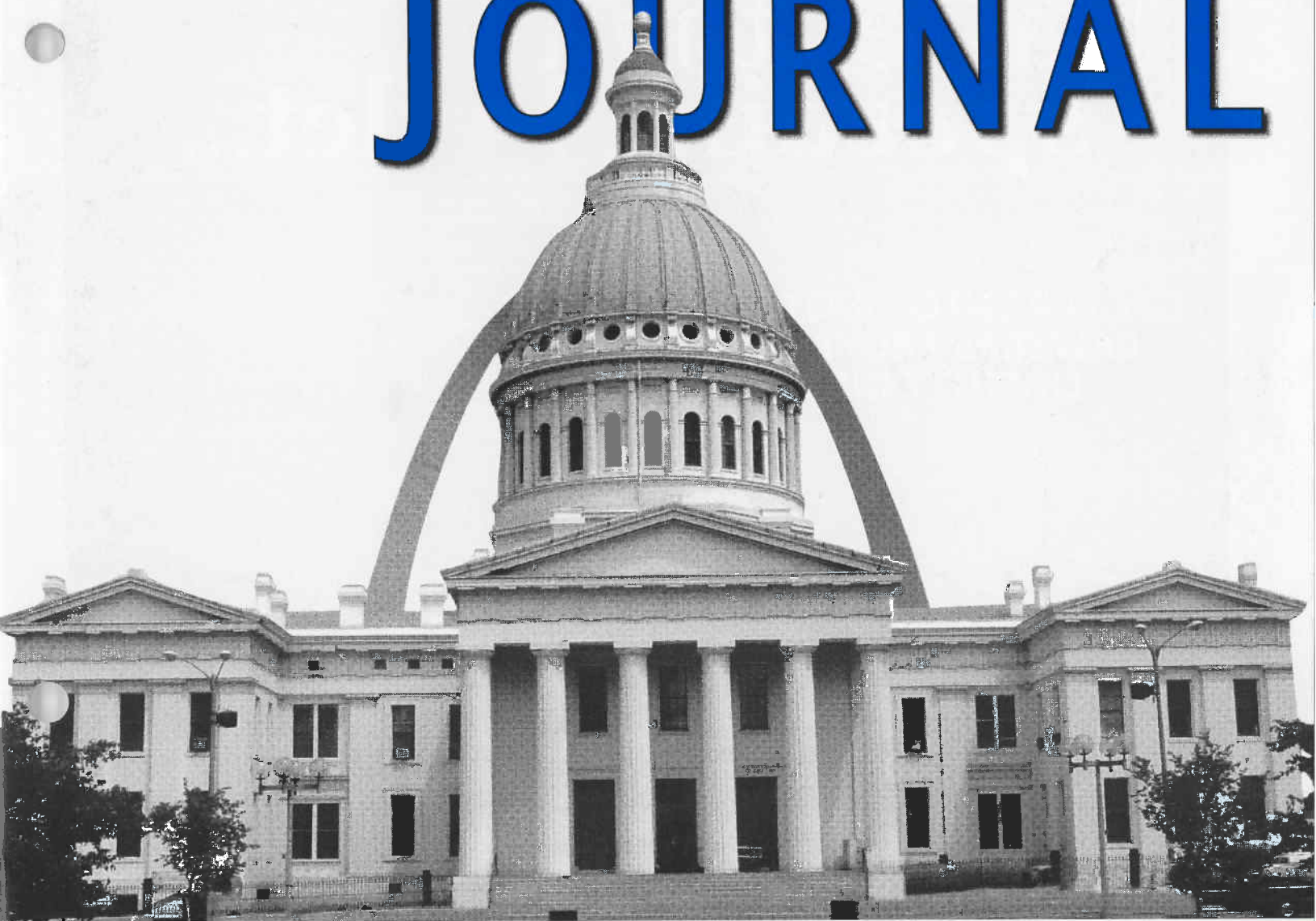


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The President's Page

By Thomas G. Glick

The Legal Profession Helping its Own: BAMSL Assist



I am pleased that my term as President of The Bar Association has included the launching of BAMSL Assist, a new program to assist lawyers and the legal community. I am even more pleased that this program is explicitly about lawyers helping each other. This program is a moderated list service where members submit requests for help or opportunities for other lawyers to a list moderator. The moderator then publishes appropriate requests to the list as a whole for suggestions, assistance, or other efforts to assist members of the legal community in need.

The program was modeled on a similar program that has received national attention. The original program is called SOLACE (Support of Lawyers/Legal Personnel – All Concern Encouraged), which operates through the Louisiana State Bar Association. It is the creation and continued project of U.S. District Court Judge Jay Zainey. The SOLACE program in Louisiana enjoyed substantial success and incorporates a network of 4,500 volunteers, and has provided aid or support to more than 500 families since its inception in 2002.

The services provided by SOLACE vary widely: donations of office furniture and equipment for a solo practitioner whose office was lost in hurricane Katrina, boarding for a pet while a lawyer received extended medical treatments out of state, housekeeping during extended illnesses, and the coordination of blood drives, amongst many others.

The new BAMSL Assist program, launched in July of this year, has already enjoyed substantial success in providing financial assistance to one

family as emergency international medical transportation for their sick infant.

The BAMSL program is the work of John Fischesser, of Eckenrode Maupin, who moved to St. Louis after having been a part of Louisiana's SOLACE program. John already leads a team of dozens of volunteers.

The program is not designed to replace or overlap other efforts which lawyers can and should take advantage of in certain situations; for example, advice on issues of legal ethics will be directed to The Missouri Legal Ethics Counsel, Sarah Rittman, at (573) 638-2263. Similarly, if someone contacts the list with psychological problems, including substance or other addiction problems, then they will be referred to another appropriate program currently offered through the Missouri Lawyers Assistance Program. You may contact this program at (573) 635-4497.

The BAMSL Assist program is meant to fill the gaps not covered by other programs. The idea is to harness the substantial network of acquaintances that can be brought to bear upon any number of problems experienced by the legal community including attorneys, their families, and their staff.

Although I cannot specifically take credit for the idea behind this program, it is precisely the sort of program that I believe BAMSL should be involved in. I am pleased to have supported its launch during my term as president because BAMSL is ultimately about serving as a social community to support members of that community. This program is a prototypical example of how and why voluntary bar associations can and do exist.

The program has been created and is administered by the Young Lawyer's Division of BAMSL, and is open to all members of the legal community, including lawyers, their staff, and their families who are not members of BAMSL. Potentially, any member of the broader legal community can e-mail the program free of charge without any qualifications. Of course, the success of the program is entirely dependent upon the depth of the network of volunteers who receive and review e-mail requests submitted to the program. I am confident that the necessary effort to support this program is present within the St. Louis legal community, as is apparent through my travels to other parts of the country and interaction with other bar associations. The St. Louis area legal community, including The Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis, is among the most open and most willing to assert itself within the community. Moreover, it seems obvious that as a profession dedicated to helping others resolve their problems, it is natural that legal professionals would therefore be prepared to sign up and offer their assistance to our own members of the community.

You may sign up for the program by sending an e-mail to assist@bamsl.org.

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