

# DIALOGUE

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## From the Chair...

*By Richard Cassidy*

### Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services

The mission of the ABA Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services is, simply put, to expand access to legal services for those of moderate income. This population, sometimes known as the working poor, does not qualify for legal aid or pro bono legal services, yet lacks the resources to pay for full-service legal costs in most settings. The Louis M. Brown Award for Legal Access honors the work of those who advance this mission in innovative ways. We recognize those who have demonstrated the highest dedication to the creation, development and implementation of methods and means of innovative delivery.

Our journey to find better ways to provide legal services takes a wide variety of paths. Nominations for the 2010 Brown Award came from projects sponsored by bar associations, law schools, non-profit entities, law firms and entrepreneurs. These projects enhance services to the elderly, parents, small businesses, homeowners and those of moderate incomes in general in a wide variety of ways. The sole unifying element of the Brown Award nominees is their dedication to improving access to legal services for those who cannot otherwise afford it. To this end, each project exemplifies the spirit of Lou Brown and his lifetime of dedication to those in need of legal services.

This year, the Delivery Committee honored Richard Granat with a lifetime achievement award. Richard was involved in the national legal aid movement in the 1960s and then went on to develop the first college program training paralegals. But, his decades of work creating, applying and adapting technology for the delivery of legal services are his greatest distinction. Richard was instrumental in the development of the Maryland Peoples Law Library during the advent of the Internet. In the 1990s, he worked on an ABA presidential initiative culminating in an international conference on e-lawyering. Most recently, Richard has created and piloted Direct Law, a business model that enables practitioners to offer online document preparation services to solo and small firm practitioners.

Also this year, the Committee presented meritorious recognition to Illinois Legal Aid Online for its Statewide Virtual Legal Self-Help Center. Illinois Legal Aid Online maintains an exemplary and comprehensive web site that provides free legal information, self-help resources and referrals to legal services. In the past three years, it has led the way to the development of 38 technology-based self-help centers in courthouses and public libraries across the state. Illinois Legal Aid Online has emerged as a rich source of online information that is constantly moving forward exploring ways to support those with legal needs.

The 2010 Brown Award for Legal Access was presented to the CUNY School of Law's Community Legal Resource Network (CLRN). The network originated in 1998 to provide those who begin a law practice with the tools necessary to succeed. Lawyers participating in the Network are community-based practitioners who serve clients in economically depressed areas. The Network provides low-cost Continuing Legal Education (CLE) programming, hands-on advice and assistance in starting a law practice, peer mentoring,

LISTSERV participation and networking opportunities that are all designed to make the lawyers successful in practices that in turn strengthen the communities in which they work. Most recently, CLRN has created the Incubator for Justice. Lawyers participating in the Incubator have an intensive array of support in the establishment of a practice for 18 months. After this incubation period, the lawyers have the tools necessary to sustain their own offices and further develop their caseloads.

The Committee is proud to recognize Richard Granat, Illinois Legal Aid Online and the CUNY Community Legal Resource Center, and to honor all of those projects that participated in the 2010 Brown Award. As we encourage others to embrace, adopt, adapt and advance similar models, information about Brown Award recipients is posted at the Delivery Committee's web site, at [www.abalegalservices.org/delivery](http://www.abalegalservices.org/delivery).

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