

# The Williams Companies, Inc. WITH Hall Estill AND Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma, Inc.

Corporate Pro Bono is proud to present the 2008 CPBO Pro Bono Partner Award to the legal department of The Williams Companies, Inc. (Williams), in partnership with Hall, Estill, Hardwick, Gable, Golden & Nelson, P.C. (Hall Estill) and Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma, Inc. (Legal Aid), for their significant efforts representing low-income and elderly Oklahomans with civil legal problems and for serving as guardians ad litem in family and probate court.

The partnership among Williams, Legal Aid and Hall Estill developed after a local program closed that had provided estate planning and related services to the elderly poor, and the local guardianship court experienced a dearth of volunteers willing to serve as guardians ad litem. Calling a town meeting of its legal department, Williams began to organize an effort to expand the capacity of services provided by Legal Aid. With the support of its General Counsel, James Bender, Williams reached out to Hall Estill and created a project to provide coverage for those underserved matters.

Once established, the partnership supported its efforts by designing comprehensive training sessions, preparing online video of those trainings, and creating and posting legal research and forms online. It also developed social networking processes, such as establishing work teams among lawyers and non-lawyers, frequent updates, and quarterly experience sharing sessions. These innovations have proven effective – sustaining

volunteers, facilitating repeat volunteering, and encouraging peer-to-peer recruitment.

The support of the partnership by Williams General Counsel James Bender, who took the first Legal Aid case, and Hall Estill Managing Partner Michael Cook has also been an integral part of the partnership's success.

"It is a win-win situation for Tulsa..." said Karen Langdon, Pro Bono Coordinator, Legal Aid.



"[T]hose in poverty who have a legal problem are treated with dignity and receive wonderful services. Legal Aid Services is supported in its role of providing legal assistance, and the corporate counsel at The Williams Companies and their outside counsel have found work that brings rewards and fulfillment very different from that received in their corporate work."

The relationship among Williams, Hall Estill and Legal Aid has encouraged Williams to challenge other Oklahoma companies to support legal pro bono efforts and has spurred the partnership to expand the range of services it provides to address the needs of the Tulsa community.

Corporate Pro Bono congratulates The Williams Companies, Inc., Hall, Estill, Hardwick, Gable, Golden & Nelson, P.C., and Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma, Inc. for their important efforts.