

Lakshmi Challa to receive Bar's Pro Bono Award

Lakshmi Challa of the Challa Law Offices, PLC is the 2011-2012 recipient of the John C. Kenny Pro Bono Award. The award is presented annually to an individual or law firm that demonstrates a dedication to furthering the delivery of pro bono legal services to the poor and underserved in the Richmond Metro area. The Association will convey the award to Ms. Challa on Thursday, January 19, 2012 at the RBA's monthly luncheon meeting at the Omni Hotel.

In 2009, working with the Virginia Poverty Law Center, Ms. Challa established the immigrant Victims of Domestic Violence Project. This project provides pro bono legal assistance to undocumented immigrants who are victims of domestic or sexual violence in obtaining legal status in the U.S. without reliance on their abusers. Ms. Challa and two members of her law firm took on the project with fervor, advertising and holding quarterly sessions in the evenings throughout Richmond. Ms.

Challa has also recruited the University of Richmond School of Law as a partner in this project, using law students to assist on a pro bono basis.

Since the clinic's inception two years ago, Ms. Challa and those attorneys she has recruited and trained to assist her in the clinic have helped over fifty women remain in the United States, work legally, and provide for their families and their children. Since 2009, Ms. Challa and the Challa Law Offices have dedicated over 1,000 hours to the success of this program alone, a staggering achievement for a three person firm.

Ms. Challa has changed the lives of victims of domestic violence, giving them an opportunity to lead a life free from fears of domestic violence and deportation.

Ms. Challa has also been of great assistance to Commonwealth Catholic Charities, an organization offering numerous support services to individuals and families throughout Virginia. Ms. Challa offers her

support specifically with respect to unaccompanied minors who are brought into the United States. In addition, she is a member of the Board of Directors for the Virginia Poverty Law Center and has done pro bono work for the Red Cross.

The nomination letter submitted by members of the Bar's Pro Bono Committee states, "Her commitment to the underprivileged members of our community should not go unnoticed, and her dedication to these activities should serve as an illustration to us all of the good that can be achieved, even by one inspired individual donating only her own time and those of her small firm."