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## Participation triples in PD's pro bono program

03/08/2010

from staff

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Participation in the Public Defender's Pro Bono Opportunities program has tripled since the initial training held in January, something Public Defender Matt Shirk attributes to the legal community's ongoing support of volunteerism.

"Jacksonville Bar Association President Dan Bean has done a tremendous job guiding local attorneys to prioritize Pro Bono work," said Shirk. "Combine that with the thorough training and assistance our office provides to participants and you have a model for success. I thank Cynthia Hunold and Kelly Naik from our staff for coordinating the program and their dedication to making a difference; I'm thrilled with those volunteers seeking designation as Special Assistant Public Defenders (SAPDs) as they take on their new criminal cases."

Friday in the First Floor Conference Room of the Public Defender's Office, 15 private attorneys were enrolled and spent an afternoon getting preparation, continuing legal education and direction from local experts of the law. At the end of the five hour training, each was designated SAPD with a case assignment to come shortly thereafter.

New to the Public Defender Pro Bono Opportunities training are program segments from area attorneys and judges. Among them, Senior Circuit Judge Michael Weatherby who will offer a lecture on Criminal Procedure, attorney David Robbins who will be discussing DUI law and attorney Hugh Cotney on Ethics and Professionalism.

"When we gain new attorneys through this program, everyone benefits," said Shirk. "The clients receive great attention from their SAPD, the participant receives valuable experience in criminal law and the Public Defender's Office is able to do more without additional burden to taxpayers."

Public Defender Pro Bono Opportunities is similar to a program recently launched in Miami. In a short three months of existence in Jacksonville, it has garnered considerable attention in the legal community. It has also received statewide recognition as it was featured in the March 1 edition of The Florida Bar News.

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- Eastern Standard Time  
 Daylight Savings Time

What's your opinion on the issues? The Daily Record will have a question each week and it's your chance to make yourself heard.

### Poll Results

Sunday 02/21 - Saturday 02/27  
**What's your personal preference?**  
The results through in-person and Internet voting:  
Burial - 52%  
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