

PRESS RELEASE

VOLUNTEERS RECOGNISED FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS AT THE MINISTRY OF LAW'S APPRECIATION DINNER 2012

More than 20 volunteers were recognised at the Ministry of Law's (MinLaw) Appreciation Dinner this evening (18 October 2012) for their contribution as Community Mediators and volunteer lawyers, and for lending significant legal expertise on insolvency and other matters.

2 The volunteers, who offered their services at the Community Mediation Centres (CMC), the Legal Aid Bureau (LAB) and the Insolvency and Public Trustee's Office (IPTO), received awards from the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Law, Mr K Shanmugam.

About the awards

3 MinLaw introduced its new awards framework last year, which saw the scope of recognition given to our volunteers expanded from two to seven categories. This year, we also introduced the new "CMU Most Outstanding Newcomer Award", which recognises volunteers for their outstanding work as newly appointed mediators.¹

4 Three law firms received the "LAB Best Contribution from Law Firm Award", which recognises law firms that made invaluable contributions by supporting and partnering LAB in the area of legal aid.

LAB's inaugural Annual Review

5 During the event, guests were presented with copies of LAB's inaugural Annual Review. The publication highlights LAB's work in the past year to enhance access to justice and promote the pro bono spirit in the legal fraternity, including the formation of a Pro Bono Development Unit. The Unit oversees, among other things, the recruitment and engagement of Assigned Solicitors as well as publicity and outreach activities to raise awareness of the Bureau's work. The Annual Review

¹ This year's award categories are: Minister for Law Outstanding Volunteer Award, Minister for Law Appreciation Award, LAB Appreciation Award, LAB Amicus Award, LAB Best Contribution from Law Firm Award, CMU Appreciation Award and CMU Most Outstanding Newcomer Award. There was no nominee for the LAB Distinguished Service Award.

also included testimonials from LAB volunteers and officers, who shared their personal experiences in handling cases.

6 A soft copy of the Annual Review will be available on LAB's website at www.lab.gov.sg after the event.

Appreciating our volunteers

7 Our volunteers have contributed selflessly in a wide range of areas, from helping parties to resolve community and social disputes, to providing needy members of society with access to justice and helping to modernise insolvency practices so that they remain relevant to the needs of today's society.

8 In recognising the contribution of our volunteers and the pivotal role they play, MinLaw has also introduced a number of initiatives, such as CMC's Mediator Management Framework, aimed at raising the professionalism of CMC's panel of community mediators², and LAB and the Singapore Academy of Law's Credit Dollars Scheme for Assigned Solicitors³.

9 MinLaw and its departments are indebted to our volunteers, who have offered their invaluable time, effort and expertise. Together with our volunteers, we will continue to work towards making Singapore a more gracious, generous and inclusive home for all Singaporeans.

10 The list of award recipients, along with information on each award, is in Annex A. A list of the volunteering opportunities available at LAB and CMC is in Annex B.

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² The MMF will institute and formalise criteria for the appointment, re-appointment and training of its mediators. Through this framework, community mediators can look forward to more training opportunities for professional development and growth. More information on the framework is available at <http://app2.mlaw.gov.sg/Highlights/tabid/168/Default.aspx?ItemId=683>

³ The Credit Dollars Scheme is a non-monetary reward for Assigned Solicitors who have made significant contributions. Credit dollars, sponsored by the Singapore Academy of Law (SAL), will be given to these Assigned Solicitors for their use from 2013, to register for places in SAL seminars, courses, workshops or to acquire books, journals and other publications by SAL.

LIST OF AWARD RECIPIENTS**Minister for Law Outstanding Volunteer Award**

The Outstanding Volunteer Award is given to volunteers who have made invaluable contribution in the areas under MinLaw's jurisdiction. Recipients include external parties (individuals or organisations) who have actively contributed their time, resources and services without payment.

S/No	Name	Designation / Company	Area of contribution
1	Michael Hor Yew Meng	Professor Faculty of Law National University of Singapore	Contributed substantially to various law reform projects by MinLaw involving criminal law and criminal practice. Attended consultation sessions and submitted supplementary materials and further proposals for MinLaw's consideration.
2	Chee Yoh Chuang	Executive Director & Head (Corporate Recovery & Forensic Accounting) RSM Chio Lim LLP	Provided expertise in the review of insolvency law as a contributor in insolvency law focus group meetings and as a member of the Insolvency Law Review Committee
3	Mohamed Muzammil Bin Mohamed	Sole Proprietor Muzammil & Co.	Took on a significant number of cases as an Assigned Solicitor in the past year and participated in LAB's Continuing Legal Education programme by giving talks to LAB staff

Minister for Law Appreciation Award

The Appreciation Award is given to volunteers who have been serving for 10, 20, 30, etc, years. Recipients must have rendered commendable services as a volunteer.

S/No	Name	Role	Law firm / Company
1	Mohamed Muzammil Bin Mohamed	Panel Solicitor LAB	Muzammil & Co.
2	Renganathan Nandakumar	Panel Solicitor LAB	RHTLaw Taylor Wessing LLP
3	Tan Kim Chiang	Panel Solicitor LAB	Angela Wong & Co.
4	Lau Hooi See Larry	Mediator CMC	LHS Consulting Services

Legal Aid Bureau Appreciation Award

The LAB Appreciation Award is given to volunteers to recognise their commendable contribution in their fifth year of service.

S/No	Solicitor Name	Firm Name
1	Chan Hian Young	Allen & Gledhill LLP
2	Rabi Ahmad s/o M Abdul Ravoof	Rabi Ahmad & Co.
3	Soo Poh Huat	Soo Poh Huat & Co.

Legal Aid Bureau Amicus Award

The LAB Amicus Awards are given to organisations/individuals who are not Assigned Solicitors. These organisations/individuals have been recognised for their efforts and valuable contributions to LAB in areas which include giving talks to LAB staff, promoting and supporting LAB's work, and in assisting LAB with non-legal services like counselling.

S/No	Solicitor Name	Designation	Category of Award
1	Maximilian Koh	Senior Counsellor Thye Hua Kwan Family Service Centre	Give Another Lifeline Counsellors
2	Lim Tanguy	Director Pro Bono Services Office Law Society of Singapore	Friends of LAB
3	Ong Siew Ling Debbie	Associate Professor NUS, Faculty of Law	

Legal Aid Bureau Best Contribution from Law Firm Award

The LAB Best Contribution from Law Firm Awards are given to law firms which have made invaluable contribution by supporting and partnering LAB in the area of legal aid. Awards are given to law firms who have encouraged their lawyers to volunteer, take on significant number of cases of varying complexities amongst others.

S/N	Firm	Number of Assigned Solicitors	Award
1	Drew & Napier LLC	15	Large Firm – Silver
2	Bih Li & Lee	4	Medium Firm - Gold
3	Michael Khoo & Partners	3	

Community Mediation Unit Appreciation Award

The CMU Appreciation Award is given to volunteers to recognise their commendable contribution in their fifth year of service.

S/No	Volunteer Mediator's Name	Occupation
1	Chan Kong Thoe	Financial Advisor
2	Lee Kay Swee	Senior Legal Executive
3	Lim Sing Lip Philip	Director
4	Loh Choong Seng	Head of Department
5	Sarjit Singh	Consultant
6	Vataramathi Ramanatha Kurukkal	Executive Director
7	Yeo Kim Neo	Director

Community Mediation Unit Most Outstanding Newcomer Award

The CMU Outstanding Newcomer Award is given to volunteers to recognise their outstanding work as newly appointed mediators.

S/No	Volunteer Mediator's Name	Occupation
1	Haji Mohamed Rafeeq s/o Mohamed Yusoof	Self-Employed
2	Mohamed Fareez Bin Mohamed Fahmy	Social Worker

PROFILES OF AWARD RECIPIENTS FOR MEDIA INTERVIEWS

Legal Aid Bureau

1. Mr Mohamed Muzammil Bin Mohamed (Muzammil & Co)

63-year-old Mr Mohamed Muzammil Bin Mohamed has been providing outstanding service to LAB since he joined its Panel of Assigned Solicitors in September 2002. Mr Muzammil has handled a total of 369 cases over his 10-year period of service with LAB. He took on 56 cases in the past year, many of which took up a substantial amount of time because it required him to interview applicants in prison. Mr Muzammil has shown care and dedication in his work, sometimes attending at LAB's office to discuss cases with its in-house Legal Officers. He also gave talks at the Bureau for its staff as part of its Continuing Legal Education Programme. Mr Muzammil is the proud recipient of two Minister for Law awards – the Minister for Law Outstanding Volunteer Award and the Minister for Law Appreciation Award.

2. Mr Tan Kim Chiang (Angela Wong & Co)

58-year-old Mr Tan Kim Chiang has served on LAB's Panel of Assigned Solicitors since July 2002. Mr Tan, who specialises in family law, took on 15 cases in the past year. Since his appointment as an Assigned Solicitor, he has handled a total of 120 cases. Mr Tan will be honoured with the Minister for Law Appreciation Award for his 10 years of sterling service to the Bureau.

3. Messrs Bih Li & Lee (Representative: Ms Loh Wai Mooi)

Messrs Bih Li & Lee, a medium-sized law firm, has contributed valuable services to LAB by supporting the LAB's work. There are a total of four lawyers from the firm, including Ms Loh Wai Mooi, on LAB's Panel of Assigned Solicitors, and they readily lent their support to the Bureau's Assigned Solicitors Scheme after learning more about it during a talk by LAB to their law firm in October 2011. After joining the Scheme, they assisted in handling 11 assigned cases within a short span of two months in 2011.

Ms Loh, a partner in Bih Li & Lee's Litigation Department, handled three cases in that year. Her areas of practice are civil litigation, and probate and administration. Ms Loh will be representing her law firm to receive the LAB Best Contribution from Law Firm Award (Medium-sized Firm – Gold Award).

1. Mr Mohamed Fareez Bin Mohamed Fahmy

A social worker with Ang Mo Kio Family Service Centre, 31-year-old Mr Mohammad Fareez joined CMC's mediator panel in 2010 because of his passion to help the community. As part of his job, Mr Fareez does counselling and works closely with people from all walks of life. He feels that he can apply what he learns as a social worker to his role as a mediator, and vice versa. Mr Fareez is also a committee member of the Singapore Association of Social Workers. He will be receiving the Community Mediation Unit Most Outstanding Newcomer Award.

2. Mdm Josephine Yeo Kim Neo, PBM

51 year-old Mdm Josephine Yeo, Director of Pana Harrison (Asia) Pte Ltd, joined CMC's mediator panel in 2007. Mdm Yeo sees mediating as a learning journey for herself to understand disputes in the neighbourhood. She feels that the main cause of most neighbourhood disputes is the lack of communication which makes the situation hostile. As such, she believes that mediation is a good platform for people to sort out their differences. Mdm Yeo is also a volunteer with the North-West Community Development Council and helps out at meet-the-people sessions. She is receiving the Community Mediation Unit Appreciation Award.

3. Vataramathi Ramanatha Kurukkal

An Executive Director of an events company, 52 year-old Mdm Vataramathi Ramanatha Kurukkal joined CMC's mediator panel in 2007. With a strong passion for working with people, she joined CMC as a mediator to give back to the society. Mdm Vataramathi believes that the CMC is the best avenue for people who cannot afford lawyers, and for those who want to settle their disputes quickly without having to blow up the matter. She also helps out at the meet-the-people sessions and is a member of the Women's Wing. Mdm Vataramathi is receiving the Community Mediation Unit Appreciation Award.

VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LAWYERS AT LAB

Since its inception, LAB has provided quality legal aid and advice to persons of limited means. This would not be possible without its panel of Assigned Solicitors and Volunteer Lawyers.

1. Assigned Solicitors Scheme

Assigned Solicitors are lawyers from private practice who volunteer their time and services to LAB. They have been a key pillar of the Legal Aid Scheme since its inception.

Under Section 4(1) of the Legal Aid and Advice Act (Cap 160), the Director of Legal Aid is empowered to maintain a panel of solicitors (Assigned Solicitors) who are willing to:

- (a) Investigate, report and give an opinion upon applications for the grant of legal aid;
- (b) Act for persons receiving legal aid; and
- (c) Give legal advice under the provisions of the Legal Aid and Advice Act.

A solicitor-client relationship exists between an Assigned Solicitor and a legally aided person. An Assigned Solicitor has the responsibility to act for the legally aided person as if the latter is his private client, until the proceedings are complete. Examples of cases assigned to Assigned Solicitors include:

- (a) Cases in which both the Plaintiff and the Defendant have applied for legal aid, in which case there is a conflict of interest in the LAB acting for both of them; and
- (b) Cases involving specialised areas of the law such as the law of medical negligence and Syariah Law.

2. Volunteer Scheme for Lawyers

Launched in 2008, the Bureau's Volunteer Scheme for Lawyers gives lawyers without practising certificates an opportunity to assist the less privileged in litigation-related matters. Volunteers on this Scheme include lawyers who have retired from full-time practice, lawyers who are on sabbatical or who have taken time up to bring up their children and academics⁴. Volunteers will be gazetted as Assistant Directors of Legal Aid.

Volunteers on the Scheme fall into two categories: Advice and Support Lawyers, who undertake work that a Legal Officer would do, such as research, drafting opinions and court documents, as well as giving legal advice as a duty officer; and

⁴ Participants must be qualified persons, within the meaning of the Legal Profession Act (Cap. 161).

Case Lawyers, who would be assigned cases, just like any other solicitor on LAB's Panel of Assigned Solicitors.

- *Advice and Support Lawyers*

This group of volunteers would be expected to attend at LAB on a regular basis – for not less than half a day a week during office hours, – for a minimum period of three months. They will be provided training in LAB's work, and may attend its continuing education programmes. They will also be given an in-house Legal Officer as a mentor.

- *Case Lawyers*

This group of volunteers would be expected to take on a certain quota of cases from LAB over the course of a year⁵. They need not attend at LAB on a regular basis, though they will be provided training in LAB's work, and may attend its continuing education programmes. They will also be provided with a mentor. However, they will be expected to be fully responsible for, and to conduct the cases they are assigned as independently and professionally as any Assigned Solicitor, and to see the case to its conclusion. LAB will provide support services in matters such as e-filing and the service of documents.

⁵ Quota of cases to be agreed upon by LAB and the volunteer.

VOLUNTEERING AS A COMMUNITY MEDIATOR WITH CMC

About CMC's community mediators

CMC's mediators are volunteers who are respected members of society from all walks of life, different age groups, ethnicities and professions. They comprise leaders from grassroots and other community organisations, and are chosen for their commitment, passion and dedication to community service.

Volunteers who successfully complete the basic mediation training and assessment will be eligible to be appointed as a 'Mediator'. Mediators who have achieved a requisite level of expertise and experience in mediation with positive peer and customer feedback, and have displayed commitment to serve at the CMC for a sustained period of time, may be promoted to 'Master Mediator'. Mediators who have accumulated vast experience during their years with the CMC and are recognised for their expertise in mediation may be promoted to 'Executive Master Mediator'. The highest title accorded is 'Principal Master Mediator', a new pinnacle appointment where the mediator assumes a mentoring role - training, leading and developing other community mediators.

Volunteering as a community mediator

Individuals interested in joining our panel of mediators may fill in the online volunteer registration form available at www.cmc.gov.sg. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an initial interview and successful applicants will be required to attend CMC's basic mediation training programme.

Candidates assessed to be suitable will then be eligible for appointment as a CMC mediator. Mediators are formally appointed by the Minister for Law for a three-year term, renewable upon review, at an appointment ceremony held every three years.