



PRESS RELEASE

From the Tennessee Bar Association

Contact:

Stacey Shrader
Media Relations Coordinator
sshader@tnbar.org
615-383-7421 or 800-899-6993

Tennessee Bar Center
221 Fourth Avenue N.
Suite 400
Nashville, TN 37219

Maryville Attorney Named Public Service Attorney of the Year

Award presented to Jerry Williams at capitol ceremony

NASHVILLE, Jan. 23, 2007 — A Maryville attorney who joined the legal profession at age 51 has been honored as the state's top public service attorney by the Tennessee Bar Association.

Jerry J. Williams received the 2007 Public Service Attorney of the Year Award at the Tennessee Bar Association's annual public service luncheon recently. Held as part of the association's leadership conference, the luncheon took place in the state capitol rotunda and featured award winners in several categories as well as a keynote address by Nashville Mayor Bill Purcell.

Williams, who recently retired from Legal Aid of East Tennessee (LAET), has always been interested in making a difference in people's lives – working for social justice causes such as civil rights, racial justice, the War on Poverty, early childhood development and foster care programs. Among her many accomplishments as a non-lawyer, she was responsible for the first Head Start program in Nashville and the first Foster Grandparent program in the country. At age 51, while raising two children and working for Knoxville Legal Aid, Williams decided she could do more good as a lawyer and entered the University of Tennessee College of Law.

After earning her law degree in 1993, Williams continued to work on a wide range of cases at Legal Aid, but gradually began focusing her practice on housing law. Early in her career, she successfully pursued a federal class action suit that permitted the agency to monitor a particular landlord's practices. She also authored a new edition of *An Advocate's Guide to Landlord Tenant Law in Tennessee*, which now is considered the essential resource for attorneys representing tenants. Terry Woods, pro bono director at LAET, says Williams had quite a reputation: "Every major apartment manager (and their lawyer) in LAET's service area knew her, had good reason to fear her, and usually gave in to her. Judges consulted with her. And her clients revered her."

Though Williams recently retired, her life-long dedication to a career in public and legal service makes her the ideal recipient of the Public Service Attorney of the Year Award. The award is

given annually to an attorney who has committed to a career in public service, and over the course of that career, has gone above and beyond the call of duty in representing indigent clients. Recipients are nominated by the Tennessee Bar Association Access to Justice Committee and approved by the Board of Governors. A photograph of Williams is attached.

The Tennessee Bar Association (TBA) is the largest professional association in Tennessee with about 9,000 members. Founded in 1881, the TBA provides opportunities for continuing legal education, professional development and public service. The TBA's dedication to serving the state's legal community is evidenced by its membership roll, which represents the entire spectrum of legal practice: plaintiff and defense lawyers, corporate counsel, judges, prosecutors, public defenders, government lawyers and legal services attorneys.

###