

Bonnie I. Robin-Vergeer Joins the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia
As Director of the Barbara McDowell Appellate Advocacy Project

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The Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia is pleased to announce that Bonnie I. Robin-Vergeer will become the Director of the Barbara McDowell Appellate Advocacy Project. She will start on June 22, 2009. Bonnie is an experienced appellate litigator who comes to Legal Aid after nine years at Public Citizen Litigation Group, where she made three U.S. Supreme Court arguments and numerous others before appellate courts throughout the country in cases involving the First Amendment, access to the courts, and consumer health and safety, among other issues. Prior to her position at Public Citizen, Bonnie worked for then-Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr. on the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act in 2000 and was an associate at the law firm of Zuckerman Spaeder LLP and a Teaching Fellow at the Georgetown University Law Center Appellate Litigation Clinic. Bonnie has a J.D. from Stanford Law School, as well as an LL.M. from Georgetown University Law Center.

“Bonnie is a perfect choice for this position. She is an advocate of extraordinary skill and talent and she is deeply committed to the cause of equal justice. She will leave a very positive mark on the jurisprudence of the District as it applies to persons living in poverty,” said Jonathan M. Smith, Executive Director of Legal Aid.

As Appellate Director, Bonnie will litigate matters before the District of Columbia Court of Appeals and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. Legal Aid established the Appellate Advocacy Project in 2003 to pursue an affirmative poverty law reform agenda. The Project participates in cases that have the potential to influence the development of decisional law in a manner favorable to litigants living in poverty. Through close work with Legal Aid’s practice units and careful monitoring of the courts and administrative tribunals, the Project strives to identify significant emerging or unresolved issues. By developing cases that present these issues and by seeking out amicus opportunities through the Court of Appeals, the Project achieves high-impact, positive legal change. As the only legal services organization in the District committed to full-time anti-poverty appellate advocacy work, the Project has become an integral part of the legal services network.

The Barbara McDowell Appellate Project was named in honor of Barbara McDowell, the first director following her untimely death in January 2009. When Barbara came to Legal Aid, she was already one of the leading appellate litigators of her generation, and she rapidly became the leading anti-poverty voice in the District of Columbia Court of Appeals. During her time at Legal Aid, Barbara handled a broad range of cases that developed important decisional law for families, individuals, and communities living in poverty.

“Barbara was a great advocate who made an enormous difference. The Legal Aid Board and staff are deeply committed to continuing this project in the tradition that Barbara established. We look forward to having Bonnie on staff to continue this important work,” said Marty Klepper, President of the Legal Aid Board of Trustees.