

# LAWYERS Assistance

By J.E. (Buddy) Stockwell

75 YEARS OF HOPE, RECOVERY AND JLAP

It is my humble honor to contribute to this issue of the *Louisiana Bar Journal* celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA). It's a great opportunity also to reflect upon the history of our Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program, Inc. (JLAP) and how far it has come in its mission to confidentially save lives and protect the public from impaired lawyers and judges.

In 1941, when the LSBA was formed, in that very same year, Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Curtis Bok, then owner and publisher of *The Saturday Evening Post*, had just learned about a new organization called Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). According to AA history,<sup>1</sup> Justice Bok assigned Jack Alexander, a "hard-nosed reporter," to investigate this new organization called AA: "The resulting 7,500-word article was published in the magazine on March 1, 1941, putting Alcoholics Anonymous on the map of public consciousness and spurring a dramatic increase in Big Book sales and membership alike."

It was big news. With AA, there was hope. Prior to that, the medical profession had all but surrendered that there was no effective treatment for alcoholism and that a chronic alcoholic's likely fate was some combination of jails, institutions and death.

By 1949, the "Minnesota Model" of alcoholism treatment was pioneered by a small not-for-profit organization called the Hazelden Foundation. This new approach developed in the 1950s incorporated the AA principles for living into abstinence-based inpatient treatment, dispensed by teams comprised of alcoholics already in recovery and professional medical staff. It also included addiction education for the patients' families. From 1960 onward, millions of alcoholics from around the world have been successfully treated using practices based upon the Minnesota Model.

While the general public was just beginning to consider alcoholism as an actual *dis-*

*ease* and how one might survive it, in 1958, the Federation of State Medical Boards was already realizing that disciplinary complaints against doctors are often rooted in their own personal alcohol and drug problems. Two missions were presented: 1) saving the lives of addicted physicians and helping them overcome alcoholism and addiction to regain their fitness to practice; and 2) protecting the public from impaired physicians by requiring highly-effective treatment and recovery monitoring.

According to the Federation of State Physicians Health Programs, it was not until 1975 that the American Medical Association officially acknowledged the problem of physician impairment. In the late 1970s, there was an increase in education and awareness about physician addiction, and "by 1980, all but three of the 54 U.S. medical societies of all states and jurisdictions had authorized or implemented impaired physician programs."<sup>2</sup>

The medical profession led the way in designing specific professionals' programming. Other professions soon followed. In the 1980s, Judges and Lawyers Assistance Programs began to spring up in various states. In Louisiana, the LSBA's Impaired Professionals Committee was formed in 1985. Soon thereafter, in 1992 and under the auspices of the LSBA and its newly-created Committee on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, the Lawyers Assistance Program, Inc. (LAP) was formed.

In the last five years, LAP has dedicated unflinching effort and industry toward improving its programming. In 2013, LAP expanded its professional clinical staff and now has three licensed professional counselors, all qualified to diagnose mental health issues. Concurrently, LAP began incorporating necessary medical guidelines and criteria so as to develop a truly comprehensive professionals' program that offers reliable full-service assistance to the legal profession.

In 2014, LAP's governance was re-

structured to facilitate necessary fiduciary oversight by the LSBA, clearing the way for the LSBA's commitment to significantly increase funding for LAP. This provided the level of sponsorship necessary for LAP to finally mature into a top-tier professionals' program.

In 2015, and with the approval of the Louisiana Supreme Court, LAP was renamed the Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program (JLAP) so as to formally acknowledge that JLAP provides full services to all classes of legal professionals, including all members of the judiciary. JLAP's statute on confidentiality and immunity, La. R.S. 37:221, was amended to recognize JLAP's new name and also to formally broaden the scope of JLAP's mission to include *all* mental health issues, not just alcoholism and addiction.

Moreover, in 2015, JLAP launched one of the most comprehensive LAP/JLAP websites in the nation, offering a plethora of mental health information specific to each category of persons JLAP assists, including lawyers, judges, law students, employees and family members. Learn more at: [www.louisianajlap.com](http://www.louisianajlap.com).

JLAP salutes the LSBA's 75 years of service to the profession and is ever so grateful for the LSBA's robust support of JLAP's mission to literally save lives and protect the public. If you or someone you know needs help, make a confidential call to JLAP at (985)778-0571 or visit the website.

## FOOTNOTES

1. [www.aa.org/pages/en\\_US/aa-timeline](http://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/aa-timeline).
2. [www.fsphp.org/about](http://www.fsphp.org/about).

J.E. (Buddy) Stockwell is the executive director of the Louisiana Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program, Inc. (JLAP) and can be reached at (866)354-9334 or via email at [LAP@louisianajlap.com](mailto:LAP@louisianajlap.com).

