



Legal Services of Southern Piedmont

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw LLP sponsors Low Income Taxpayer Clinic at Legal Services of Southern Piedmont

The law firm of Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw LLP is establishing a \$40,000 sponsorship of the Low Income Taxpayer Clinic at Legal Services of Southern Piedmont (LSSP). The LSSP Low Income Taxpayer Clinic provides legal assistance in tax matters to eligible low-income workers and families in western North Carolina.

Since the federal welfare reform changes of 1996, an overwhelming proportion of low-income people work, have taxable earnings and pay taxes. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is now the nation's largest income transfer program for low-income working people with children. Over 18% of North Carolina's tax filers received the EITC in 1998. The IRS audits a larger proportion of returns claiming EITC than any other category of returns, yet without the Low Income Taxpayer Clinic, these individuals may not have the resources to defend themselves effectively in the audits.

In addition to EITC disputes, the clinic also provides assistance in other tax controversies for low-income people, such as innocent spouse relief requests. Many recently separated or

divorced spouses, especially victims of domestic violence, are charged with their former spouses' tax debts, for which they may be eligible for protection under innocent spouse relief rules.

Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw LLP is among the 10 largest law firms in the world. Its founding U.S. and U.K. firms, which combined last year, both began over a century ago. They now have more than 1,300 lawyers in seven U.S. and six European cities. The legacy U.S. firm serves 65 of the Fortune 500 companies and one out of every three U.S. banks.

Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw LLP has a long history of pro bono work, with many of their local attorneys volunteering with clients. The Charlotte office's managing partner, Frank Blanchfield, and partner, Bob Duffy, were instrumental in establishing the sponsorship of the Low Income Taxpayer Clinic. The Firm believes that this is a natural extension of its extensive tax practice, as well as its commitment to give back to the community.

Founded in 1967, **Legal Services of Southern Piedmont** is a non-profit law firm providing free legal services in civil matters to low-income people in the Charlotte area and in west-central North Carolina. Staff attorneys, paralegals and many volunteer attorneys provide services to people in need. United Way, the NC State Bar, State and local government, private foundations, individual contributions and other funding support LSSP.

In addition to the Low Income Taxpayer Clinic, LSSP has the following programs:

The Family Support and Health Care Program works to ensure that low-income children, the elderly, disabled persons, immigrants and their families have access to health care and public

services. In addition to its work for all low-income persons, it has projects to serve special populations: HIV/AIDS Legal Assistance Project and the Disability Rights Project

The Immigrant Justice Project works to protect low-income, non-English-speaking Hispanic residents and immigrants of other national origins from exploitation, to ensure accessibility of public services, to stabilize the immigration status of clients, and to provide remedies despite considerable barriers to redress. In addition to its work in many areas of civil law, it assists immigrants with immigration law problems through the Justice For All Immigration Law Project.

The Consumer Protection Program works to improve financial literacy for low-income people, preserve home ownership and home equity, provide legal assistance with predatory lending, foreclosures, used car problems, unfair trade practices, warranties, debt collection and other consumer and housing matters.

The LSSP Low Income Taxpayer Clinic is partially funded through a matching grant provided by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) pursuant to the Internal Revenue Service Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998. The Clinic is NOT part of the Internal Revenue Service, the U.S. Tax Court, the North Carolina Department of Revenue, or any other government agency.

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