

**SERVICE TO MANKIND
2007-2008**

**Richland Sertoma Club
Whitney Woolfolk, President
319 S. Beltline Blvd, 9-H
Columbia, SC 29205
(803) 807-3537**

**George B. Cauthen
1320 Main St, 17th Floor
Columbia, SC 29201
(803) 799-2000**

SERVICE TO MANKIND
GEORGE B. CAUTHEN
Richland Sertoma Club
Columbia, South Carolina

It is with great pleasure that the Richland SERTOMA Club has nominated George Cauthen as its Service to Mankind recipient. Mr. Cauthen's roots run deep in South Carolina. Although born in New Orleans, LA, Mr. Cauthen and his family have resided in South Carolina for ten generations.

Mr. Cauthen began practicing law in the 1980s. In 1982, he left a bankruptcy-related practice to serve as Chief Administrative Office for the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of South Carolina. In this capacity, Mr. Cauthen developed a passion for helping those less fortunate members of our society cope with the challenges of bankruptcy. Mr. Cauthen is quoted as saying the cases he would see "would tear your heart out. It was their only opportunity in six years to go through bankruptcy and they were getting it all wrong. ...I knew they'd never make it out."

After concluding that the current system was not working, Mr. Cauthen contacted his bankruptcy colleagues and asked them to represent individuals in the bankruptcy process on a pro bono basis. According to Mr. Cauthen, "I don't think anybody ever said no. We haven't turned away a bankruptcy case for years." This act helped pioneer pro bono bankruptcy work in the State of South Carolina, which has developed into one of the country's premier programs. In a recent article from *The Deal*, The Honorable John Waites, Chief Judge of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of South Carolina stated, "He's probably the most pre-eminent advocate of pro bono services in our state. He's had a profound impact."

After seven years as a bankruptcy court clerk and a year sabbatical (to sail the Bahamas with his wife), Mr. Cauthen joined the law firm Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP. He assumed that Nelson Mullins wanted him for his bankruptcy expertise, but the firm actually wanted him to develop its pro bono practice. This allowed Mr. Cauthen to take some of the pro bono cases himself. Over the years, due to a growing creditor practice, Mr. Cauthen found himself being conflicted out of numerous pro bono cases. This led him to seeking out what he knew best, helping the South Carolina child support system. Mr. Cauthen approached the South Carolina Department of Social Services, who is now his largest client, in hopes to help individuals who find themselves in the DSS system. He offered his assistance to custodial parents, which allowed those parents to receive child support from deadbeat dads, even if they had filed for bankruptcy. Mr.

Cauthen's work allowed him to become the legal advocate necessary to work through the system and ensure child support is regained. When asked about a reward for his dedication to the community and pro bono work, Mr. Cauthen states "Hugs...I don't think I've ever got a hug from a corporate lawyer."

Today, Mr. Cauthen is a partner at Nelson Mullins, chairs the firm's Bankruptcy and Creditors' Rights Group, and is still able to continue his pursuit of helping those in need. Furthermore, Mr. Cauthen is able to mentor young lawyers and teach them the value of serving others.

Mr. Cauthen's pro bono efforts are not limited to South Carolina. He has also served as chair of the American College of Bankruptcy's pro bono committee. He has made several trips abroad to advise numerous Eastern European and Asian nations on formulating bankruptcy laws. He served on the board of directors of the American Bankruptcy Board of Certification from 1994-2001. He is a Fellow of the American College of Bankruptcy; a member of the Fourth Circuit Council of the American College of Bankruptcy; a member of the College's Foundation Board of Directors; and chair of the College's Pro Bono Committee.

To sum things up, Mr. Cauthen states "At many times in our lives, we have made a pledge to our flag, and closed that pledge with the phrase: '...and justice for all.' Ensuring that all people have access to the courts is crucial to that pledge, and for many of our population, it is a hollow phrase. If one of us does not have access to the courts, then we do not have justice for all in this country." Mr. Cauthen's work has helped ensure that all citizens, no matter what their socio-economic status, have access to our courts and receive equal justice.

The Richland SERTOMA Club enthusiastically presents George Cauthen as its nomination for the Service to Mankind Award. Because of his vision, persistence, and hard work in advancing the status of pro bono work in the state of South Carolina, Mr. Cauthen is most deserving of this award. The Columbia area is quite fortunate to have a member of the community such as George Cauthen and we feel he would make most appropriate representative as the District, Region, and International Service to Mankind Award recipient.