



Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys

Women Helping Women

GABWA had a great time at the last meeting! We were enlightened about Atlanta's various needs by an outstanding panel of guests, including members of several community organizations that help women. The community organizations included Sister to Sister, Aid Atlanta, the Civil Pro Bono Project, the Eastlake Project, YWCA of Greater Atlanta, Cascade House, and GABWA's own Committee for Community Service.

But the names only tell so much. What made the discussion really hit home for GABWA members were the individual inspirational, yet often painful stories the panelists told us. Speakers from two of the organizations made a particularly strong impression on the group.

The Civil Pro Bono Project assists incarcerated mothers, especially those who have been deprived of their parental rights. The program provides legal seminars at each of the 3 local prisons, directs legal assistance through volunteer attorneys, helps the women keep in contact with relatives, and assists them with navigating the legal system. The panelist was a young woman who was recently released from prison. Her legal rights to her son were almost terminated while she was incarcerated. Thanks to the Civil Pro Bono Project, she learned how to keep records and contact logs. She even needed help with seemingly simple things like obtaining access to stamps, paper, and copying equipment. Because of her diligence and the Project's assistance, she was able to maintain legal rights to her son.

The YWCA of Greater Atlanta is the only homeless women's shelter in the area that allows women to bring their older/teenaged boys up to age 17. The homeless women are domestic violence survivors and mothers. Often faced with leaving their child with an abusive partner, the YWCA serves a great need. Because the YWCA can only serve up to 18 people, 5 mothers and their children, they hope to open an emergency shelter soon. The YWCA offers transitional housing for time periods from 6 to 18 months. The panelist who spoke to us is a domestic violence survivor herself. She told us her harrowing story of abuse and escape from her ex-husband, a police officer. She understands firsthand what the women she helps have been through, and is committed to helping them find a way out also.

The Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys appreciates the participation of each panelist. These organizations do a wonderful job servicing the community, and we learned a great deal about how we can offer our help as well.