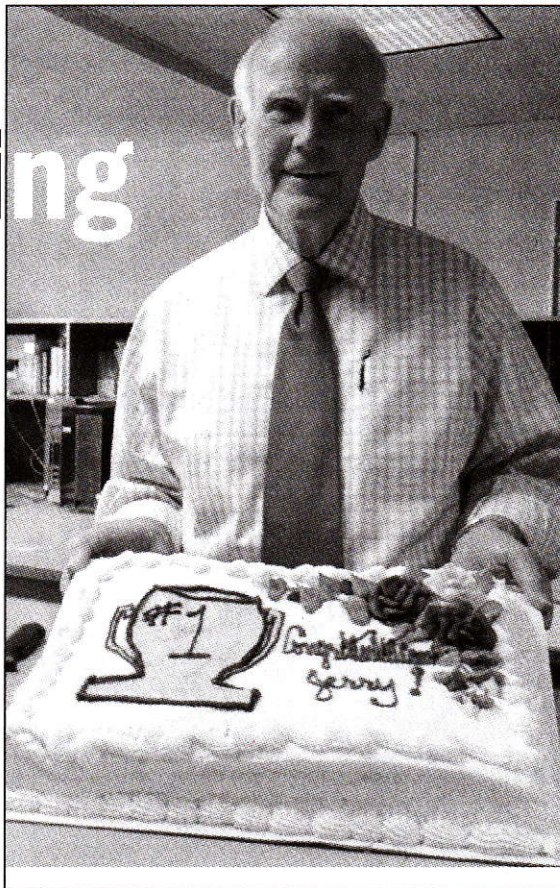

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Neil Haight Pro Bono Award

Three Montana attorneys have earned the 2009 Neil Haight Pro Bono Award for free work on behalf of low-income clients:

■ Shahid Haque-Hausrath, Helena

By **Katherine Haque-Hausrath**

Shahid Haque-Hausrath is the managing attorney of the Border Crossing Law Firm PC. He devoted a considerable amount of time last year to providing pro bono services to immigrants in Montana and nationwide. Immigrants are an underserved community here in Montana, because they often cannot afford to pay for legal services, but usually don't qualify for services from the Montana Legal Services Association. Mr. Haque-Hausrath has attempted to fulfill this need and provides pro bono legal services to immigrants who fall below the federal poverty line, are not receiving sufficient support from family or friends, and cannot afford to pay for legal services.

In his pro bono practice, Mr. Haque-Hausrath has won asylum for seven refugees who fled from their home countries to escape torture, persecution, and death on account of their political beliefs. He spent much of his time last year representing his eighth pro bono asylum client, who is in removal proceedings in Chicago. This client is from Eritrea – a country that is ruled by a brutal dictator who is responsible for mass killings of political opponents. The final hearing in this case will occur in April 2009.

Last year, Mr. Haque-Hausrath also assisted a married couple that was referred by the Montana Legal Services Association. They needed assistance with the husband's application for adjustment of status, but were facing several roadblocks from the Department of Homeland Security. In addition to applying for a green card, the husband needed to obtain work authorization in order to support their five children. They were trying to feed a family of seven on a single Wal-Mart salary. Mr. Haque-Hausrath has submitted part of their application and is continuing to work with them to resolve other issues in their case.

Mr. Haque-Hausrath also represented a homeless Cuban refugee who was referred by the Poverello Center. This client had fled from Cuba in the 90s and swam to U.S. soil. However, he never obtained a green card, and ended up home-

less for many years. Upon discovering that he had a valid claim to legal permanent resident status, Mr. Haque-Hausrath began work on his petition. The lengthy process is ongoing, but he is now close to obtaining his green card.

Mr. Haque-Hausrath is listed as a free legal service provider with the Department of Homeland Security. When individuals are arrested and placed in deportation proceedings, they are given his phone number to call. Mr. Haque-Hausrath provides free legal advice and assistance to these detainees without any compensation. He represents many of these individuals with bond requests and removal proceedings.

Mr. Haque-Hausrath has served on the Helena International Affairs Council since September 2008, which is tasked with promoting the city as an international gateway and embracing the cultures and traditions of our international residents and visitors. Mr. Haque-Hausrath has recently begun lobbying efforts to defeat anti-immigrant legislation that is being proposed by the Montana Legislature. There were more than 10 bills proposed this session that would have an adverse affect on immigrants in Montana. Mr. Haque-Hausrath testified at each and every one of these hearings, without receiving any compensation for doing so.

It is important to note that all of Mr. Haque-Hausrath's pro bono activities are purely volunteer efforts. He receives no grant money or other compensation for these services. He balances these free services along with his ordinary workload.

