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## **SOUTH CAROLINA BAR FOUNDATION TO RECEIVE THE 2008 NCBF AWARD FOR BAR FOUNDATION EXCELLENCE**

The South Carolina Bar Foundation is the recipient of the 2008 National Conference of Bar Foundations (NCBF) Award for Bar Foundation Excellence in Public Service Programming. This award is given annually to a bar foundation demonstrating excellence and impact in either its programs or grant-making awards to its community. In establishing this award, NCBF seeks to recognize and honor the noble work of bar foundations that quietly and effectively build communities, understanding and hope.

*Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI)*, is an initiative conducted by the South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families and serves non-violent, low-income fathers who are underemployed or unemployed and behind in their child support payments. ATI components are successfully integrated into seven fatherhood programs around the state. Fathers may be ordered to participate by the court or may enter the program voluntarily. The South Carolina Bar Foundation funds ATI through its IOLTA program.

Research shows that 40 percent of South Carolina births are to single mothers, compared to the national figure of 34 percent. Research also reveals that children from fatherless homes are five times more likely to be poor, twice as likely to drop out of school and become incarcerated and four times as likely to need help for emotional and behavioral problems. ATI increases non-custodial, low-income fathers' ability to financially, emotionally and spiritually support their children.

The program coordinates services that allow participants to find employment, resolve legal issues and receive instruction on money management. Seven program sites throughout South Carolina offer fatherhood classes that cover topics such as job readiness and retention, parenting, legal rights and responsibilities, communications skills and child support/visitation issues. Successful completion of the program is defined as a father who works full time and has paid child support consistently for six months.

During its first year, the South Carolina Bar Foundation made a grant award of \$72,000. In that year alone, \$61,000 was paid by participating fathers in child support. In addition, the fathers also earned \$186,000 in gross wages. Without this program, most of these fathers would have spent time in jail at the expense of taxpayers.

In the 2008 grant cycle, the Marlboro County ATI program enjoyed an even higher return on the foundation's investment. Within the first six months of operation, the 33 active court-ordered participants paid over \$77,000 in child support payments and saved over \$250,000 in incarceration costs.

The ATI effort funded by the Foundation has served as a model for the South Carolina Judicial Department in the importance of investing in ATI programs for non-violent offenders. The programs puts much needed child support dollars in the hands of the neediest citizens and saves millions of dollars in incarceration costs.

The South Carolina Bar Foundation will receive the award at the Joint Luncheon of the National Conference of Bar Presidents, NABE and the National Conference of Bar Foundations, on Friday, August 8, 2008, at the Annual Meeting in New York.