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**ILLINOIS DISABILITY RIGHTS ADVOCATE, LESTER T.  
PRITCHARD, TO RECEIVE 2008 PAUL G. HEARNE AWARD**

WASHINGTON, D.C., May 7, 2008 – The American Bar Association Commission on Mental and Physical Disability Law has awarded the 2008 Paul G. Hearne Award to **Lester T. Pritchard, chairperson of the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities**. Pritchard will receive the award at the Commission’s annual reception at the 2008 ABA Annual Meeting on Monday, August 11 in New York City, NY.

The **Paul G. Hearne Award** is presented each year to an individual or organization that has performed exemplary service in furthering the rights, dignity and access to justice for some 54 million Americans with disabilities. The award is being co-sponsored by the Starbucks Coffee Company.

**Lester T. Pritchard** is a disability rights advocate and mentor who was born with cerebral palsy. While working in the disability rights field for more than 33 years, Lester has embraced a vision for individuals with disabilities, namely that they are to live independent lives that are meaningful and purposeful. This philosophy was evident early on in his career, as Lester worked to gain physical access to businesses, public accommodations and residencies in Urbana, Ill. In 1997, he co-founded Citizens for Housing Options Meeting Equity Standards, which helped pass one of the nation’s first ordinances that require publicly funded buildings to be accessible to individuals with developmental disabilities. He also co-founded the Campaign for Real Choice in Illinois, a grassroots organization that promotes the rights and independence of individuals with disabilities.



As chair of the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities, Lester has helped initiate reform of the state's disability policies. He is also a member of the Disability Rights Action Coalition on Housing. In addition to receiving various awards for his continual service for people with disabilities, Lester has devoted many hours to speaking about disability rights in both academic and professional settings.

**Paul G. Hearne** (1950-1998), for whom the award was named, was born with a connective tissue disorder that physically limited his growth and restricted his movement. Through tenacity, intelligence and initiative, he created opportunities for himself and others, and proved a leader for all people with disabilities. Hearne's life was marked by many pioneering endeavors in the legal and disability communities. He served as the director of Just One Break, Inc., the nation's first private job placement agency for people with disabilities; the National Council on Disability; the Dole Foundation for Employment of People with Disabilities; the International Center for the Disabled; the Very Special Arts International Fund; and the Osteogenesis Imperfecta Foundation.

With more than 413,000 members, the **American Bar Association** is the largest voluntary professional membership organization in the world. As the national voice of the legal profession, the ABA works to improve the administration of justice, promotes programs that assist lawyers and judges in their work, accredits law schools, provides continuing legal education, and works to build public understanding around the world of the importance of the rule of law.