

AHLA

November 2014 Volume 18 Issue 11

connections

For the health and life sciences law community



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Encouraging Pro Bono Engagement

Given the success with last year's initiative, the AHLA's Young Professional Council and the AHLA Public Interest Committee are once again working together this year to produce a multi-part interview series focused on encouraging pro bono engagement and acknowledging the tremendous contributions that AHLA lawyers make to our community.

Similar to last year, each article in the series features two or three interviews with AHLA members from a variety of work settings and practices who have devoted a substantial amount of time to pro bono legal service in the health care/health law field.

This month, **Megan Rooney** from McDermott Will & Emery shares her experience with New Age Services Corporation, a non-profit organization that provides adult outpatient drug treatment services for individuals, families and significant others in the far west side of Chicago. **Harvey Tettebaum** from Husch Blackwell, and an AHLA Fellow, provides his perspective as someone who provides pro bono service to individual clients and through his service in associations, including in his capacity as a liaison to the AHLA Public Interest Committee.

I encourage you to remain mindful of that which only lawyers can provide—increased access to justice for those who otherwise go without. Whether it is volunteering through AHLA's Public Interest initiatives or another organization, I hope the

selfless efforts of your fellow AHLA members described in this article inspire you to do the same.

To learn more about ways you can get involved, please visit www.healthlawyers.org/probono. Additionally, if you know someone who has been actively involved in pro bono service and would be interested in sharing their experiences for future articles, please contact me.



Thomas (T.J.) Ferrante
Carlton Fields Jordan Burt PA
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T.J. Ferrante (tferrante@cfjblaw.com) is an associate at Carlton Fields Jordan Burt in Tampa, FL, where he focuses his practice on a wide range of transactional and related regulatory issues for health industry clients, including for-profit and not-for-profit hospitals and health systems, multi-specialty physician practice groups, and long-term care providers. He also advises health care clients in all aspects of federal and state regulatory matters and handles federal and state tax matters with respect to individual, corporate, tax exempt organization, and pass-through entities. Mr. Ferrante received a BA in Philosophy and in Spanish from the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA, and an MBA in Finance from the Sykes College of Business at the University of Tampa. Mr. Ferrante then received his JD and LLM in Taxation from Boston University School of Law.



Megan R. Rooney
McDermott Will & Emery LLP
Chicago, IL

Interviewed by
Ashley Thomas
Presence Health
Chicago, IL

What type of pro bono work are you involved in?

Through a referral from the Law Project of the Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, I have been privileged to work with New Age Services Corporation, a non-profit organization that provides adult outpatient drug treatment services for individuals, families and significant others in the far west side of Chicago (NASC).

As an avid animal lover, I also devote my time to animal rescue organizations such as Be Fido's Friend (BFF) and the Animal Care League (ACL). I provide counsel to BFF on corporate governance and tax-exempt matters, and I currently serve on the Board of Directors for ACL. I also volunteer for ACL on the weekends as an adoption counselor and enjoy watching animals find the right home.



How did you become involved in pro bono work?

Attorneys often like to take on projects that are within their area of expertise. This is what I like to call “working in your wheelhouse.” I focus my practice on health care transactions and advise hospitals, health systems, and health care providers on regulatory compliance matters so my work with NASC is “in my wheelhouse.” In addition, many attorneys take on pro bono projects when they are personally passionate about the subject matter. They feel a personal connection to the project and want to pursue it. My passion for animals led to my involvement with BFF and ACL.

Pro bono opportunities come to McDermott Will & Emery LLP in a variety of ways. NASC was referred to McDermott by The Law Project of the Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights, a pro bono agency that strengthens Chicago area communities by providing high-quality, pro bono legal services to community based nonprofits and small businesses. McDermott receives referrals from several pro bono agencies. Pro bono projects may also be personally referred to McDermott.

How is your pro bono work different from your day-to-day work? How do you balance between the two?

There is no difference between my pro bono work and my day-to-day work. My goal is for every client, pro bono or not, to receive high quality legal services, and to walk away from the engagement with a feeling that McDermott made a positive, measurable impact. You should never compromise the quality of your work. You have an ethical obligation to always do the best job you can do for your clients. I am fortunate to work for a firm that supports its attorneys’ pro bono efforts and enables me to follow through on this commitment.

Have you ever taken on a pro bono case or project that ended up being too much for you to handle alone?

No, I haven’t, but I would advise young attorneys, at the outset of a pro bono engagement, to meet with the potential pro bono client to get a full understanding of the client’s needs. From this initial consultation, you will be able to determine what resources you will need to proceed with the project and if you will need to involve additional attorneys to provide the necessary expertise. I cannot stress enough the importance of communicating with clients. It is essential to fostering a good relationship with any client.

What is your favorite memory from this experience?

I enjoy helping my clients bring their goals to fruition. It is an honor to work with NASC as they consider ways to expand the scope of medical services they can provide to their vulnerable patient population. As for volunteering with animal rescue organizations, I always enjoy watching an animal find the right family and home.

Does McDermott Will & Emery LLP support your dedication to pro bono work?

McDermott has been incredibly supportive in my commitment to pro bono work. McDermott recognizes and appreciates the need to give back to the communities of which it is a part and to assist those who are unable to afford legal services. McDermott offers a comprehensive pro bono and community service program managed and led by full-time pro bono counsel and the chair of its Pro Bono & Community Service Committee. McDermott strongly encourages its lawyers and staff to participate in pro bono initiatives, volunteer services, and charitable activities, and recognizes lawyer time dedicated to pro bono and community service as equivalent to billable hours for all purposes.

What suggestions do you have for young professionals who may be hesitant to get involved in pro bono activities because they feel they lack expertise?

Young attorneys should be willing to reach out to those around them, whether it be a partner or fellow associate, to ask for help. Working on a pro bono project can be an excellent opportunity for young attorneys to develop relationships with more senior attorneys in their firm, including attorneys in different departments.

Furthermore, pro bono work can play a critical role in your professional development. Pro bono work allows young attorneys the opportunity to work directly with clients, gain confidence, and boost their listening skills and speaking ability. As a young attorney, you will need to develop client management skills as they are important to your practice. Volunteering can prove invaluable in the development of client management skills.

If young professionals do not have a pro bono program in place where they work, what would you suggest they do to find a pro-bono program?

Start with your local bar association. It will be able to refer you to local legal aid agencies. If a young professional is hesitant to get involved with pro bono work due to time constraints, many legal aid clinics offer discrete projects.

Member Forum

What other advice do you have for young professionals?

Be engaged. Be engaged in your personal and professional development as an attorney. Be engaged in your workplace. Be engaged in your field of law. Be engaged in your community. Engaged people are interesting people and fulfilled people. This engagement will surely lead you to a pro bono or community service opportunity, which is yet another way we can make a difference as attorneys.

Megan R. Rooney (mrooney@mwe.com) is a partner in the law firm of McDermott Will & Emery LLP based in Chicago, IL. She focuses her practice on the representation of hospitals and health systems and other health industry providers and investors. Ms. Rooney has experience in all aspects of health care transactions, including mergers, acquisitions, affiliations, joint ventures and system restructurings for hospitals and other health care providers. She also advises hospital and health system clients on regulatory compliance with licensure, accreditation and other state and federal regulatory matters. In 2013 and 2014, *Law & Politics* named Megan an Illinois Rising Star.

Ms. Rooney is a member of the American Health Lawyers Association, Illinois Association of Healthcare Attorneys, American Bar Association and Chicago Bar Association and is admitted to practice in Illinois. She serves on the Publications Committee of the Illinois Association of Healthcare Attorneys, and as an adjunct professor of law at Northwestern University School of Law, teaching “Legal Issues in Health Care Delivery Systems.” Ms. Rooney received her JD from Northwestern University School of Law and her Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) from the University of Michigan.



Ashley Thomas (Ashley.Thomas@presence-health.org) is a Legal Fellow for the Office of Legal Affairs at Presence Health in Chicago, IL. She assists the Legal Department with regulatory and transactional matters. Before her Fellowship, Ashley gained experience at the American Medical Association, American Dental Association and Vanderbilt University’s Center for Patient and Professional Advocacy. Ms. Thomas received a BA in Political Science from Northwestern University (2009) in Evanston, IL and a JD from Vanderbilt Law School (2014) in Nashville, TN.



Harvey M. Tettlebaum

Husch Blackwell LLP
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Interviewed by
Lisa M. Luetkemeyer
Husch Blackwell LLP
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What kind of pro bono work do you do?

I do pro bono work for individual clients, for the American Health Lawyers Association, for the Missouri Bar Association, and for the American Bar Association. For individual clients, I have done pro bono litigation work. I recently finished a major case that lasted for several years. We were able to win a case for an indigent woman who was being harassed by the government. We were able to get her \$40,000 and get her life back. That was a hard fought case ultimately decided by an appellate court. For my work with AHLA, I am a liaison member of the AHLA Public Interest Committee. I have presented at AHLA in-person meetings and public interest sessions and have written chapters for various public interest books and studies. For the Missouri Bar, I am on the Legislative Committee. I help draft legislation, most of which is public interest legislation. I recently reviewed some legislation that had been prepared by one of the bar committees. For a number of years, I have provided general feedback and revisions to a number of legislative proposals.

What suggestions would you have for young attorneys who want to get involved in pro bono activities—especially ones who feel they may not have the expertise to do so?

If young attorneys want to provide individual representation, I think the important thing for them to do is to make sure that they look carefully at the subject area of the law in which they are going to get involved and make sure that there is someone within their organization, be it a law firm or in-house counsel department for a company, who can properly mentor them. The worst thing that can happen is failing the client by getting involved in a pro bono project for an individual without