

PRO BONO THROUGH C AID PROVID

There are four general practice and two senior practice civil legal aid providers in Nevada including two established self-help centers in the south. Chief Judge Connie Steinheimer in the Second Judicial District reports plans are very close to completion of a merge of the law library and self-help resources in that jurisdiction into one comprehensive self-help center.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES

NEVADA LEGAL SERVICES (NLS), EST. 1982

NLS is the only statewide provider of civil legal aid in Nevada, including the rural counties. NLS is also the only recipient of Legal Services Corporation (LSC) funding in Nevada. Services are provided, and volunteers are needed, in the following areas:

- Public Housing and HUD
- Private Housing (Self-Help Center)
- Public Benefits
- Consumer
- Foreclosure Assistance
- Guardianships
- Medicare/Medicaid
- Persons with Disabilities
- Native American Tribal Sovereignty
- Rural Services
- Seniors (including a senior hotline)

In addition to attorneys, NLS has need of non-attorney volunteers who can consistently donate time as intake workers, preferably one morning or afternoon per week. Because of the time required to train, however, volunteers should be able to commit on a consistent basis.

Rural Outreach Program

NLS attorneys travel to the rural counties to do in-person outreach, usually at local community centers, and NLS does take requests for new outreach sessions. Many clients will forego teleconferencing opportunities and wait weeks for these 15- to 20-minute in-person sessions.

NLS Private Attorney Involvement Plan

Nevada Legal Services offers CLE classes and clinics to train attorneys who would like to volunteer time in tax, small claims, tenants' rights, bankruptcy, elder law, mortgage foreclosure and consumer law matters. Classes are in Pahrump, Las Vegas and Mesquite. If there is an interest, classes will be scheduled in other outlying areas.

Contact NLS

530 South Sixth Street, Las Vegas, NV 89101
204 Marsh Avenue, Reno, NV 89509
841A East Second Street, Carson City, NV 89701
www.nlslaw.net/ www.nevadalawhelp.org
(702) 386-0404 / (775) 284-3491 / (877) 693-2163
Executive Director: Anna Johnson, Esq.
Pro Bono Coordinators: Steven McDonald, Esq, and Renee Kelley

PRO BONO PROFILES

This month, *Nevada Lawyer* magazine features profiles of those attorneys who have contributed time to pro bono work. Each shares a unique perspective on the value and experience gained by their contributions.

ERIN FLYNN



As a transactional attorney with no children of my own, I was a little nervous when I took on my first pro bono client through the Children's Attorney Project (CAP). Erik (name and age changed to protect identity) was 11 years old. He had recently been diagnosed with insulin-dependent diabetes. His mother, who had serious psychological issues, was overwhelmed by his condition. His father was unwilling to assume his care, so his mother relinquished custody and Erik became a ward of the court. It was then that he came to live at Child Haven. That was where we met, nearly three years ago.

Erik was big for his age, with droopy eyes and a bowed head. All I got out of him that first day was one giant tear that he valiantly tried to blink back. He never looked up and he didn't say a word. But he did hold the door for me when I got up to leave. "Don't worry, kid, we'll figure it out together," I told him. In retrospect I don't know if I was reassuring him or me.

In the three years I have been his CAP Attorney, Erik has been in five foster homes, with stints in detention, Monte Vista and Child Haven in between. As a CAP attorney, it is my role to provide a voice for Erik so he has some say in what happens to him while he is "in the system." It is my belief that, even more than being his voice, it is my role to help him find his own. I believe in the adage, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for life." I have sought to teach Erik

pro bono profiles continued on page 17

continued on page 16

PRO BONO OPPORTUNITIES

continued from page 15

LEGAL AID CENTER OF SOUTHERN NEVADA (LACSN), EST. 1958

Formerly known as Clark County Legal Services, LACSN is the oldest and largest provider of civil legal aid services in the state, serving Clark and Nye Counties. LACSN operates a robust pro bono program along with many other services including the Clark County Pro Bono Project, Children's Attorneys Project, Consumer Unit and a Foreclosure Mediation assistance program.

LACSN also manages the newly-opened RJC Civil Law Self-Help Center in the Eighth Judicial District and jointly manages the Eighth Judicial District Family Law Self-Help Center Ask-A-Lawyer program (along with NLS and the court).

What you should know about LACSN pro bono clients:

Pro bono clients must meet LACSN's financial income guidelines to be eligible for consideration for participation in its program. Some applicants are required to attend one of its free legal information classes in order to begin the intake process. Once all necessary intake information has been provided, the case will

be considered by a review committee. The committee will determine whether or not LACSN will assist the applicant based on a variety of factors, including, but not limited to, merits of the case, reasonableness of the client, and availability of volunteer attorneys. If the committee decides to accept the case, the applicant will then be placed on a waiting list while LACSN begins the process of trying to match the case with an available volunteer attorney. This process typically takes between 30 and 90 days. While volunteer attorneys do not charge clients for representation, pro bono clients are instructed to be prepared to pay any costs associated with their cases that cannot be waived.

Available Support Services

Training/CLE: LACSN offers at least five pro bono CLE classes each year. These are free to attorneys who sign up to take one pro bono case at the training. Topics vary based on need.

Mentoring: LACSN has attorneys available, upon request, to provide support and mentoring on the cases accepted through its

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program. With cases taken through the Children's Attorneys Project, a staff attorney mentor is assigned to each case.

Feedback Luncheons: Family Law and Children's Attorneys Project luncheons are held every other month. These luncheons are very informal, are held at LACSN's office and last about an hour. Staff attorneys are on hand to provide suggestions, feedback and mentoring.

Fee Waivers: In each pro bono case involving state court actions, clients are eligible for waivers of filing fees. By filing a Statement of Legal Aid Representation, which LACSN prepares and provides, clients approved for services are entitled to defend their action without costs.

Litigation Support Services: If a pro bono case requires court reporters, court interpreters, private investigators, assessors, etc., LACSN will work with attorneys to attempt to secure the necessary services for free or at a discounted price.

Malpractice Insurance: Volunteer attorneys are covered by LACSN's malpractice insurance. It serves as the primary insurer for volunteers on work done through the program.

continued on page 18

PRO BONO PROFILES

continued from page 15

to advocate for himself, all the while letting him know I will do it for him until he is ready.

Recently, we believed Erik would be adopted by his foster family. He had been in the home for over a year and was excelling both academically and behaviorally. But circumstances changed and the family was unable to adopt him. So, Erik is once again at Child Haven. However, gone now is the little boy with the bowed head. As I sat with him and discussed the options for his next foster care placement, he looked me in the eye and told me his hopes and concerns. He also told me

pro bono profiles continued on page 19

PRO BONO OPPORTUNITIES

continued from page 17

Volunteer Opportunities

Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada's Pro Bono Project is continuously in need of volunteer attorneys to assist clients who cannot afford a lawyer, and strives to provide meaningful volunteer opportunities to attorneys while providing services to clients who otherwise could not be helped by legal services organizations with limited resources.

LACSN coordinates the following volunteer opportunities:

Representation in a Case: The Pro Bono Project matches private attorney volunteers with people in need of legal assistance in the following areas:

- Adoption
- Bankruptcy
- Child Abuse/Neglect (Representing Children)
- Civil/Consumer Fraud
- Divorce
- Domestic Violence
- Guardianship (Uncontested)
- Estate/Trust
- Immigration (Representing Victims of Domestic Violence and Other Crimes)
- Nonprofit Organizations
- Predatory Lending
- Real Estate Fraud

LACSN does not provide assistance with criminal, employment, personal injury or traffic matters. Volunteers can choose a case from a list of descriptions that the project will provide based on clients waiting for assistance and the specific volunteer's experience and interest.

Ask-A-Lawyer: Pro bono attorneys are needed to staff this program and provide pro se litigants with free 15-minute consultations at the Family Court each Thursday from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Bankruptcy Pro Bono Litigation

Panel: Pro bono attorneys are needed to join the panel list to handle midstream bankruptcy cases. Cases are referred to the project by the Bankruptcy Court. LACSN assigns income-eligible clients on a rotating basis to volunteer lawyers on the panel list.

Friends in the Desert: LACSN pro bono attorneys join with Friends in the Desert to provide ask-a-lawyer services to the homeless during free meals provided by local charities.

PRO BONO PROFILES

continued from page 17

what he can contribute to help achieve what he wants with respect to his next family. And I smiled as I watched him cast his line.

Erin Flynn is an associate in the Business Law Department of Lionel Sawyer & Collins, where her practice focuses on health care and transactional matters. Flynn was the 2008 Recipient of the Myrna Williams Children's Pro Bono Award, and was also named to the Pro Bono One Hundred Hours Club in both 2008 and 2009 by the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada.

DAN R. WAITE



Winston Churchill once said: "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." As attorneys, we have been very blessed with education, skills and a desire

to assist others in ways they cannot help themselves. Few of us, however, would be where we are today without the help of someone else – e.g., generous and loving parents who initially opened doors of opportunity for us, kind employers who allowed us to walk through some of those doors and spouses/significant others who simply put up with us. Providing legal services free of charge to those unable to pay allows a spirit hibernating within each of us to waken and we come to realize that making a difference in the life of someone who has no financial ability to give us anything in return has, in the very act of our pro bono service, indeed given us something of inestimable worth.

Dan R. Waite grew up in North Las Vegas, graduating from Rancho High School in 1977. A partner with Lewis and Roca LLP, he has practiced law for 20 years, mostly in the area of commercial litigation. Waite is married with three children and five (soon to be six) grandchildren.

Nevada Microenterprise Initiative: LACSN joins Nevada Microenterprise Initiative in providing small businesses with start-up and technical training through seminars and specialized ask-a-lawyer sessions. Over 75 small business owners received help through this new program in 2009.

Pro Bono Bankruptcy Facilitators: Pro bono attorneys are needed to cover Motion for Relief from Stay Calendars to provide pro se litigants with referrals, advice, sample forms, brief representation and/or to negotiate on the litigant's behalf. Facilitators do not become attorneys of record for the litigants.

Pro Bono Mentors for New Attorneys: Experienced attorneys are needed to donate their time to mentor newer attorneys who take pro bono cases from the project.

Partners in Pro Bono: Experienced attorneys are needed to work on pro bono cases with law students. Volunteers become the attorney of record and assist pro bono clients. Second- and third-year law students from the UNLV Boyd School of Law are given the opportunity to work on a pro bono case with a private attorney through this program on cases involving family law, domestic violence, bankruptcy or consumer fraud. The mentor attorney allows the law student to participate in all aspects of the case, from the initial interview of the client, to writing the demand letter, to possible litigation.

Frequently Asked Questions about LACSN

Can I refer a potential client to LACSN?

Yes. Please give potential applicants the LACSN main number, (702) 386-1070, and instruct them to follow the prompts for the type of legal problem they have. Please do not give out direct extensions.

Can I refer a client that I have screened and would like to help through the Pro Bono Project?

Yes. Contact the Pro Bono Project at (702) 386-1070 ext. 137 or probono@lacs.org and ask for a client referral form. By completing the form, you let the project know that you will accept the case and will refer the client to our office for intake. Again, please do not give out direct extensions.

I already do pro bono work in my practice, so why should I volunteer with the project?

If you're doing pro bono work in your practice, you are to be commended. What the Pro Bono Project provides is an institutional way to mobilize the legal community to help a segment of the population that cannot help itself. LACSN thoroughly screens clients, so by taking cases through them, you are sure to be helping clients in need who have meritorious cases. Additionally, you are eligible for support and assistance through the project, as well as awards and recognition.

Am I expected to finish the case I'm given? What if it takes a long time?

While LACSN does not expect volunteers to necessarily take a case up on appeal or handle every subsequent legal problem that a

continued on page 21

pro bono profiles continued on page 21

PRO BONO OPPORTUNITIES

continued from page 19

pro bono client brings to them, they do expect volunteers to complete the specific matter for which the client was referred for assistance. If you would like to help the client again with future matters that arise, LACSN can arrange that and would be incredibly grateful. However, it is not necessarily expected. Additionally, while in an ideal world all volunteers would complete all matters they accepted, LACSN realizes that in the real world, circumstances change. Attorneys become ill, retire, move out of state, etc. In such circumstances, the project will work with the volunteer to get the case(s) reassigned.

Am I expected to give pro bono clients the same level of service I give to my paying clients?

Yes, yes and yes! Pursuant to the Rules of Professional Conduct, a client is a client, whether she or he is a paying client or a pro bono client. Additionally, the way you treat all of your clients reflects on your reputation in the community.

What's in it for me?

Besides having something to report on your annual mandatory reporting form, making yourself eligible for awards and recognition, and generally doing good and giving back to the community in which you live and work, you can also feel what it is like to have a profound impact on the life of a person in need.

If you are interested in volunteering or want to learn more please contact LACSN at probono@lacsnc.org or (702) 386-1070, ext. 137. Please refer potential clients to the main number only.

Contact LACSN:

Clark County
800 S. Eighth Street
Las Vegas, NV 89101
www.lacsnc.org
(702) 386-1070
Executive Director:
Barbara Buckley, Esq.
Pro Bono Director:
Kimberly Mucha Abbott, Esq.

continued on page 22

PRO BONO PROFILES

continued from page 19

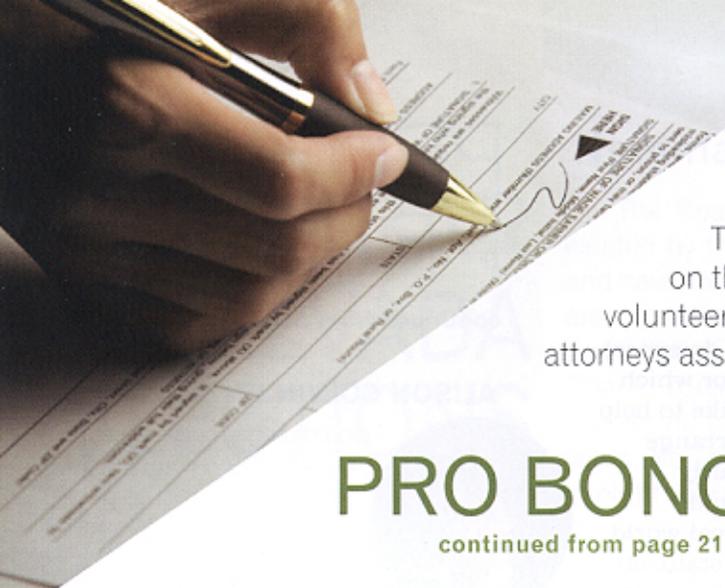
ALISON COLVIN



I would recommend pro bono work to every member of the bar. The practice of law is a privilege. We are often swept away with the concerns of running an office, planning a case or longing for some free time, and we far too frequently forget the many people who simply cannot afford our help. I am a former legal service paralegal and lawyer and I am thrilled to recall the many people I have helped.

The simplest advice can be enough. I once spent an hour with a young man, organizing his evidence for a hearing

pro bono profiles continued on page 23



The success of the Family Self-help Program depends on the generosity of the family law attorneys who volunteer and donate their time each week. In 2009, volunteer attorneys assisted 1,701 pro se litigants with family law issues.

PRO BONO OPPORTUNITIES

continued from page 21

EIGHTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT FAMILY LAW SELF-HELP PROGRAM, EST. 1999

The Clark County Family Law Self-Help Center has been serving the community since 1999. Each month, the center assists thousands of pro se litigants to represent themselves in Family Court. In 2009, the center helped more than 80,000 walk-in customers.

Recently, the center has focused on enhancing services through the use of technology and creation of bilingual legal information. With the support of the District Court Library Commission, the center was able to secure funding to automate its forms. The automation will significantly simplify the forms and reduce the time it takes litigants to complete a form. Additionally, the automation ensures that only complete forms are submitted to the court. This will increase the court's efficiency since court staff will spend less time reviewing documents.

To augment the automation process, the District Court Library Commission judges are assisting the center in completing a comprehensive overhaul of its forms and instructions. The forms are being modified for simplicity and the instructions are being recreated with the addition of visual instructions. The overhaul is essential to the center's dedication to improve access to justice in the state of Nevada.

In addition to providing court-approved, fill-in-the-blank forms, the center provides the public with legal information, access to community resources, and helps guide people through the complicated legal process. While the center handles most common family law issues, there are limitations. There are some customers whom the center is unable to assist because the person's legal problem deals with a significant legal right or involves several complicated legal issues.

The center's customers often depend on the Ask-A-Lawyer program. In coordination with LACSN, the center hosts this program every Thursday, excluding holidays. Participants are required to sign up by 8:30 a.m. to get a number. Starting at 2 p.m., each person receives a free, 15-minute consultation with an experienced family law attorney.

The success of this program depends on the generosity of the family law attorneys who volunteer and donate their time each week. In 2009, volunteer attorneys assisted 1,701 pro se litigants with family law issues.

Contact Clark County Family Law Self-Help Center:

601 N. Pecos Rd., Las Vegas, NV 89101

www.clarkcountycourts.us/shc

(702) 455-1500

Program Director: Amber Candelaria, Esq.

EIGHTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT REGIONAL JUSTICE CENTER SELF- HELP CENTER, EST. DEC. 2009

In its first 18 days of operation, the RJC Self-Help Center served 2,133 people in Clark County presenting a number of legal issues including appeals, auto sale/lease, repair, towing, consumer debt or loan, contract dispute, employment dispute, garnishment or execution, guardianship, harassment or protection order, homeowner foreclosure or eviction, landlord-tenant or eviction, mediation, mobile home sale/repair/eviction, neighbor dispute, personal injury/property damage, and small claims.

Services provided by the center are on a walk-in basis and consist of Q&A from brief to in-depth, document analysis, form provision and/or preparation assistance, assistance with computer research and electronic filing, and provision of mediation information. The program will soon be launching an ask-a-lawyer program providing more opportunities for pro bono services. Attorneys interested in volunteering should contact LACSN.

Contact Eighth Judicial District Regional Justice Center:

Civil Law Self-Help Center

200 Lewis Ave, Las Vegas, NV 89101

www.clarkcountycourts.us/CivilSHC/index.html

Executive Director: James Berchtold, Esq.

continued on page 24

PRO BONO PROFILES

continued from page 21

and preparing his statement. He prevailed at the custody hearing. The next time he saw me he stopped his car and ran over, with open arms, crying with joy at getting the chance to parent his small child and to keep her safe. I have taken custody, divorce and bankruptcy cases and always see the gratitude for the help I have given. It is a small act of kindness that multiplies in our society.

***Alison J. Colvin** practices primarily in the area of family law. After receiving her Juris Doctorate from New England School of Law she took the position of director of Washoe Legal Services. She worked for several private firms before starting her own practice.*

LARRY WHEELER

As a transactional attorney working in the casino industry, getting the opportunity to assist others by providing pro bono services has given me a chance to stay connected with the neighborhood and, at the same time, to use skills that might not otherwise be required of me in my day-to-day practice. Whether answering questions regarding housing and benefits, or creating forms for various animal welfare organizations, pro bono work has allowed me the self-satisfaction of being involved and giving back to the community.

As an animal lover, pro bono work has been especially rewarding, as it allows me to provide legal assistance to various humane society organizations, as well as to develop lasting friendships, assisting in the adoption of homeless pets and playing “Santa Paws” each year for Christmas.

***Larry Wheeler** is associate general counsel for Venetian Casino Resort, LLC (The Venetian and The Palazzo). His focus is primarily in contracts and licenses.*

JENNIFER ROBERTS

Every year, my pro bono hours are primarily reported as “improving the law, the legal system, or the legal profession,” pursuant to Nevada Rules of Professional Conduct 6.1(a)(2)(ii), due to my involvement in law

pro bono profiles continued on page 25

PRO BONO OPPORTUNITIES

continued from page 22

CITY OF LAS VEGAS SENIOR CITIZENS LAW PROJECT (SLP), EST. 1978

The Senior Law Project serves residents of Clark County 60 years and older without regard to income, although over 80 percent of its clients statistically do meet poverty income guidelines. Services are provided in the following areas: Simple wills, advance directives and powers of attorney, nursing home issues, consumer issues, debt collection matters and identity theft, landlord/tenant, mobile home issues, homeowner association disputes, social security and other public entitlements, court-appointed guardian ad litem assignments, prevention of elder abuse and financial exploitation, and document preparation assistance including homesteads, termination of joint tenancy, beneficiary deeds, affidavits of entitlement, name changes, and sealing of records.

Rural Outreach Classes

In 2010, the SLP launched a rural legal services delivery outreach program for seniors in Mesquite, Searchlight, Jean, and Boulder City. Upcoming sessions include:

- March 5: Jean, 1 p.m.
- March 31: Mesquite, 11:45 a.m.
- April 7: Boulder City, TBD
- April 21: Mesquite, 11:45 a.m.

Future programs will be scheduled throughout the year. Contact SLP for more information.

The Senior Law Project works in conjunction with LACSN, placing pro bono matters and putting on clinics and classes throughout the year. Attorneys interested in volunteering to provide pro bono help for seniors in Clark County should contact the SLP directly.

Contact City of Las Vegas Senior Citizens Law Project:

310 S. Ninth Street,
Las Vegas, NV 89101
www.lasvegasnevada.gov
(702) 229-6596

Executive Director: Sugar Vogel, Esq.



WASHOE LEGAL SERVICES (WLS), EST. 1965

Washoe Legal Services provides legal aid to Nevadans in Washoe County in the areas of immigration, housing discrimination, alternative dispute resolution, landlord/tenant, foreclosures, consumer law, debt collection and bankruptcy, family law, domestic violence, immigration, and abused/neglected children.

WLS has many pro bono opportunities for lawyers interested in taking cases. Like LACSN, WLS offers mentoring and training, provides malpractice coverage, and participates in many programs throughout the year including national pro bono week.

Monthly free clinics are offered, for which attorneys are needed to volunteer services. These include bankruptcy and divorce clinics (English and Spanish).

continued on page 26

PRO BONO PROFILES

continued from page 23

school competitions. Although I was always too nervous to fare very well in such competitions during my law school tenure, I enjoy volunteering as a judge for the moot court, negotiation and client counseling competitions at the UNLV William S. Boyd School of Law. Up until recently, I helped coordinate these events as co-chair of the New Lawyers' Committee at the Clark County Bar Association. However, I am no longer a "new lawyer," so now I just help judge and give feedback to the competing law students.

I also enjoy participating as a judge in the Nevada Mock Trial competition for high school students sponsored annually by the State Bar of Nevada (and, at the same time, witnessing several future lawyers and a few future actors). Additionally, I frequently volunteer for the regional competitions sponsored by the American Bar Association. At some competitions, they even provide formal black robes to wear to make it look truly official!

***Jennifer Roberts** is an associate with Lionel Sawyer & Collins' gaming and regulatory law department. Her practice emphases are in gaming and liquor licensing and administrative law. She is also an adjunct professor for the class 'Introduction to Gaming Law' at William S. Boyd School of Law, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.*

DARA GOLDSMITH



Every attorney excels in at least one area of law in which she has honed her skills over the years or has another special ability (i.e., the ability to speak another language), whereby economies of scale are created

allowing that attorney to handle matters more expeditiously than other attorneys in the community. At our firm, we have two attorneys and one legal assistant who speak Spanish. We have found that we are better suited than other firms to assist pro bono clients who speak Spanish because of our language skills. Thus, we have advised Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada of our skills in that area and our willingness to be on the top of the list for the Spanish-speaking cases that fall within the purview of our practice.

pro bono profiles continued on page 29



PRO BONO OPPORTUNITIES

continued from page 26

WASHOE COUNTY SENIOR LAW PROJECT (WSLP), EST.1980*

The Washoe Senior Law Project (WSLP) is a non-profit law firm operated by the Washoe County Department of Senior Services. The WSLP provides legal services to persons 60 years and older, who are residents of Washoe County, without charge, although donations are welcomed. The project provides counseling and representation in a wide variety of cases and legal assistance in a broad spectrum of substantive areas. The types of services provided by the SLP vary widely, often depending on the subject matter, the client's objective and the complexity of the problem. There are types of matters for which other resources do exist or for which, based on a lack of resources, the WSLP has determined not to provide comprehensive services. However, even in those areas, the WSLP will provide realistic referrals, and depending on the issue, specific legal advice.

Services provided include Social Security, simple wills, health care documents, consumer law, landlord/tenant, real property, elder rights, and housing counseling. Pro bono assistance is also provided in bankruptcy, guardianships, housing assistance, income tax litigation and wrongful termination.

Attorneys interested in providing pro bono assistance to seniors in Washoe County should contact the WSLP directly.

**Prior to 1980, Washoe Legal Services operated the Senior Law Project. Between 1980 and 1990, the Nevada Division for Aging Services funded its legal service dollars in Washoe County through a private attorney. Since 1991, services have been provided as a full legal service program for seniors within the county administrative structure (Washoe County Department of Senior Services).*

Contact Washoe County Senior Law Project:

1155 E. Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada 89512
(775) 328-2592

www.washoecounty.us/seniorsrv/legal.htm

Executive Director: Ernie Nielsen, Esq. ■

PRO BONO PROFILES

continued from page 25

Since our firm's practice focuses on areas of law that include domestic matters and guardianship, we are more than happy to assist in those areas. Additionally, over the past year, due to the increased demand for bankruptcy assistance and the fact that I have the ability to speak Spanish, I have had the attorneys in my office help me learn the basics of Chapter 7 bankruptcy. I can now handle relatively simple Chapter 7 for Spanish-speaking pro bono clients. The Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada offers training to attorneys who want to learn a new area of law. There are probably Nevada attorneys there who speak Spanish, Tagalog or Chinese who could develop skills in a new area of law and assist non-English speakers in accessing justice.

It is so important to give back to the community. Not only does it help the community, it provides a sense of personal satisfaction in knowing that you made someone else's world a better place. Although many of us coach teams and volunteer at our houses of worship, it is important to use the special skills that we possess, unlike our non-attorney peers, to help provide access to justice to all.

Dara Goldsmith is a shareholder at Goldsmith & Guymon, the largest female-owned law firm in Nevada. She received her Juris Doctorate at Pepperdine University School of Law in Malibu, California, in 1990, and joined the State Bar of Nevada in 1991. She is a former member of the state bar's board of governors.

pro bono profiles continued on page 31