

PRO BONO

HONOR ROLL



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Attorneys who participated in clinics, Ask-A-Lawyer or Lawyer in the Library programs, or taught pro bono CLEs:

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BOLD honors multiple cases accepted and/or sessions conducted within the month.

ONE FOCUS

A SPOTLIGHT ON PRO BONO

BY SHANE JASMINE YOUNG, ESQ.

Synopsis of the case

A couple of years ago, I took a case representing two pre-school aged children, a brother and a sister, who lost both of their parents in a homicide-suicide. When my clients were toddlers, they witnessed their father shooting and killing their mother and then turning the gun on himself. The children's maternal grandparents, who had received a frantic phone call from their daughter minutes before the killings, rushed to the family's house and found the children covered in blood and screaming hysterically. As if it wasn't bad enough that these young children had lost their parents, both sets of grandparents fought over custody of the children. The paternal grandparents made claims of sexual abuse against the maternal grandparents. The claims were ultimately unsubstantiated; however, the process of investigating and adjudicating those claims was a long and very difficult one.

The Attorney's Angle

What I remember most about this case

As a mother of five, with children the same age as my clients, I felt a natural instinct to protect my vulnerable clients. Because the maternal grandmother's primary language is Spanish, communicating was a bit of a challenge, although it forced me to reach back in time to my four years of high school Spanish and adapt to the circumstances. Translation services were available, but I chose to get through it on my own, which was my own personal goal. I quickly bonded with the family and felt great satisfaction when the maternal grandparents were released from the sexual abuse allegations, and we finalized a permanent custody situation and adoption for my clients, who wanted very much to remain with their maternal grandparents. Knowing that I helped them close a terrible chapter in their lives and move into a new, more positive one, was the most fulfilling part of the case.

Tips for attorneys interested in, or considering taking, a pro bono case

Don't be scared. Prior to taking cases with the Legal Aid Center, I had little to no experience in family law, other than teaching a guardianship class as part of my graduation requirements for law school. My

background is in business and commercial litigation, so the thought of representing abused children or a father appealing his terminated parental rights was a little daunting. I started with one case, having been promised that I could call on staff and other members for help as needed. Now, several cases and clients later, I still reach out for help. Resources are there so no one is left to figure out how to navigate unfamiliar practice areas alone. In addition, the Legal Aid Center offers training and mentoring.

Don't worry about the time commitment. Hopefully, your firms or employers provide credit in one form or another for pro bono work. Even if they don't, giving back to the community is the least we, as attorneys, can do. Between work and home, my schedule can be extremely hectic, but I have made it part of my practice to have at least one open pro bono case at all times. I budget time for my pro bono cases, just like I do my other work. It is all about time management and prioritizing. There is always time to do something positive for another, and chances are, you will enjoy it and continue. Your clients and the community will thank you. My pro bono clients have been the most appreciative clients; they keep things in perspective and provide a balance to my other professional demands. ■



SHANE J. YOUNG

is a 2004 graduate of Boyd School of Law and has been in practice since April 2005. Her practice is focused primarily on commercial

litigation as well as transactional business and regulatory matters. She currently serves as the chair of the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada's Advisory Council and has been a regular recipient of the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada Pro Bono Project "100 Hours Club" Award (2008-2013). Further, she has worked with the Children's Attorney Project and represented over 10 minors in the system. Young's other pro bono efforts include Veteran Stand Down and Homelessness Prevention Clinic.