

PRO SPOTLIGHT BONO

JULIAN GREGORY

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A simple calendar change in the municipal court's specialty drug court proved to be an incredibly fortuitous event for Las Vegas attorney Julian Gregory. Gregory, who works for the Law Office of Gabriel Grasso, frequented Department 3 of the Las Vegas Municipal Court, and as such witnessed many defendants going through the Habitual Offender Prevention and Education (HOPE) program. When the calendar for the program changed and program participants were left without a public attorney, Gregory was asked by Judge Heidi Almase to step in and help out.

Those who participate in the HOPE program are, in Gregory's words, "Caught in the nexus of addiction and homelessness." Participants who are diverted into HOPE are assigned an attorney, counselors and social workers and are provided with a sober living facility, in-patient treatment for their addiction(s) and job training. Working with clients who are battling addiction, convictions and inner demons can be a bit difficult: "The first obstacle you have to surmount is the fact that by the time they have demonstrated they can benefit from HOPE, they have been through the system ... they understand the worst penalty they can get is six months in jail. [You have to] convince them that probationary court is more worth it." In addition to trying to help his clients understand why HOPE is a better option than jail, once in the program, Gregory and the team he works with face another huge hurdle: "Trying to break through whatever defense mechanisms they [the clients] have set up in order to not deal with their issues."

Although the work Gregory does has many challenges, when clients graduate and break free of their addictions, the emotional reward is tremendous. One client in particular sticks out in Gregory's mind. The client, who we will call "Jane Doe," had been released on her own recognizance with Gregory's help; upon her release, Gregory said to her "Don't disappoint me, come back to court, don't run." When Doe's next court date came up, she was a couple hours late, but she made it. In court, she said she had considered running, but remembered Gregory's words and decided to catch a bus and make her court date. Doe's next appearance was made telephonically from her in-patient treatment facility. "I don't know if he's there," Doe said during the appearance, "... but I want to thank my long-haired attorney." Doe's gratitude moved Gregory very deeply.

One of the reasons Gregory took advantage of the opportunity to assist with HOPE was not only to help the clients, but also to help improve the image of public attorneys and attorneys as a whole. He said too often public attorneys are seen as plea negotiation factories, conveyor belts, and he hopes his work with the program will help to combat that stereotype. ■

PRO HONOR ROLL BONO

The State Bar of Nevada Board of Governors and the Access to Justice Commission extend a special thanks to the following attorneys who generously accepted cases in September 2013, through the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada, Washoe Legal Services, Nevada Legal Services and Volunteer Attorneys for Rural

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