

BACK STORY

A REALLY GOOD START

BY NANCY HARKESS, ESQ.

Question:

What do you call 1,000 lawyers at the bottom of the ocean?

Answer: A good start.

You know how we're too-often viewed: slippery, greedy, sly, dishonest, abrasive, disingenuous, cunning, deceitful, shifty, treacherous, duplicitous — and those are our good points. We are also the first ones people call when there's legal trouble.

In response to all the abuse, we declare, "Pro bono!" They counter with, "Yeah, for free CLEs."

But wait a minute. Who are those men and women in hairnets, serving meals to the homeless on the last Wednesday of each month? They're attorneys — members of the St. Thomas More Society, best known for bringing U.S. Supreme Court Justices to Nevada each year for an annual gala.

Maybe they should be better known for the good they quietly accomplish in the community.

That man in the black robe — he's no judge. He just plays one for the Clark County School District's Truancy Court Program. As one of the many attorney volunteers who visit an area school each week to encourage students to show up for school, he counsels and cajoles, and then reaches into his pocket to pay for rewards for those who stay in school. Sometimes the reward is a book, the first one the child has ever owned.

How many CAP attorneys only see the children they represent while they're in the courtroom? Few to none? They become friends, almost family, with no thought of payback.

They're not investing in their own careers or law firms; they're investing in the future.

Who are those women reading scripture with and ministering to the inmates of the Clark County Detention Center? One is an accountant and the other is an attorney. No CLEs earned here. And those young lawyers of Washoe County, who annually collect business suits and attire to help the unemployed find a job; their only payment is the enrichment of their souls, and that's enough.

Silently, anonymously, with no vested interest, attorneys make a difference in this state every day. They sit on the boards of local charities, lead Boy and Girl Scout troops, and collect winter coats for the homeless. They don't hesitate to fight for the issues in which they believe, and they give their time, talent and resources to the less fortunate.

Question: What do you call 10,000 Nevada lawyers helping others without recompense?

Answer: A really good start. ■

NANCY HARKESS' biography can be found on page 5.