

For the Public GOOD ATTORNEYS ENGAGED IN COMMUNITY SERVICE

BY LYNNE MEYER

WHEN I DO GOOD,
I FEEL GOOD. ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Our opportunities to do good are
our talents. COTTON MATHER

DO A GOOD DEED DAILY. BOY SCOUT OATH

The phrase *pro bono publico* is from Latin and means “for the public good.” The term “pro bono” is used to describe professional work undertaken voluntarily and without payment as a public service.

Greater Cleveland attorneys give thousands of hours of pro bono service to nonprofit organizations, schools and community causes every year.

RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND REALITIES

The Cleveland Bar Association (CBA) champions pro bono service to its more than 5,000 members through the 3Rs. Established in 2006, the program is the centerpiece of the association’s community outreach efforts.

The 3Rs stand for rights, responsibilities and realities. A partnership with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and East Cleveland City Schools, the program has three goals: improving students’ understanding and respect of the rule



Steve Giblin of Jones Day with a group of 10th graders at Martin Luther King High School

of law and the Constitution, facilitating their passage of the Ohio Graduation Test and providing them with practical career counseling.

Mary Groth, CBA’s director of pro bono and community programs, explains that teams of lawyers are matched with tenth graders in social studies and American history classes in 20 high schools in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, as well as Shaw High School in East Cleveland. “The

teams are on site one day a month at their designated school interacting with small groups of students,” Groth says. Lawyers from 49 area law firms, large and small, participate in the 3Rs program. Groth estimates that nearly 700 attorneys, judges and law students will volunteer for the 2007-08 school year.

The bottom line of the 3Rs program is to bring students a message of hope for the future. Kerin Kaminski, newly elected CBA

president, talked about the 3Rs program in her inaugural speech to members in June. “By our collective efforts, we have delivered a loud and clear message to the youth of Cleveland that we care and they matter,” she stated.

Lexis-Nexis recently recognized the value of the 3Rs program by awarding CBA with its Community and Educational Outreach Award.

ACCESS TO REPRESENTATION

Many legal firms strongly encourage attorneys to clock a certain number of hours working on pro bono cases. Thompson Hine takes its pro bono obligation so seriously it has an official pro bono committee. “Most pro bono legal services we provide involve litigation on behalf of individuals who would otherwise not be able to afford or access legal representation,” Jennifer Roach, a member of the committee, says. “We act as advocates for abused, neglected and dependent children. Our lawyers also represent individuals in a variety of matters such as landlord-tenant disputes, housing issues, worker’s compensation and unemployment benefits problems.”

Roach reports that in 2006, 60 percent of the firm’s associates and 33 percent of the partners participated in pro bono work, for an average of 53 hours per attorney.

Scott Campbell, another member of the Thompson Hine pro bono committee, notes an exceptional example of services donated by one of the firm’s associates. “He recently

rejoined us after having served as associate legal officer in the Chambers of the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha, Tanzania,” Campbell says.

MOTIVATED BY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Attorneys occasionally focus on offering legal and philanthropic services to organizations because of personal experiences. Candace Pollock, principal and sole practitioner in the firm of Hahn and Pollock, became interested in multiple sclerosis when her sister was diagnosed with the disease.

Pollock serves on the board of the National MS Society-Buckeye Chapter. She has attended public policy conferences in Columbus and Washington, D.C. to advocate for issues important to people dealing with MS. “I also taught a class on estate planning for people who are served by the local chapter,” she says. In addition, she participates with other attorney volunteers in “Ask the Attorney” programs to address questions on topics like Medicaid and employment discrimination.

Her sister, who lives in New Hampshire, is a source of inspiration for Pollock. “Working with the New England MS chapter, she advocated for and successfully achieved special legislation in New Hampshire. It beefed up enforcement against violators of parking access lanes to enable people in wheelchairs to get in and out of their vehicles,” she says.

Jones Day law firm has a special community involvement initiative called “The Practice of Giving Back,” whereby lawyers provide pro bono services, volunteerism, public service and philanthropy. “We sincerely believe that giving back is a privilege as well as a responsibility,” James Young, partner and the firm’s public service coordinator, says. “We strive to help secure a brighter future for Greater Cleveland and its citizens.” He adds that Jones Day provides significant financial support to local arts and culture organizations, civic and community programs, educational initiatives; and health and human services efforts.

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Local attorneys also hit the pavement for charity. Steve Forbes and Mike Golding of Norchi, Barrett & Forbes have logged hundreds of miles in runs and marathons to support causes. A prominent effort of theirs is to raise money for research into rare pediatric cancers, with proceeds going to Rainbow Babies and Children’s Hospital. Golding’s daughter died of histiocytosis in 2001, and the entire firm provides significant support for research of this and other rare childhood cancers.

Managing partner Kevin Norchi says, “Our lawyers are naturally drawn to performing pro bono work because of our fundamental understanding of the needs of the community and our social obligations as lawyers.”

It’s clear that the attorneys of Greater Cleveland are remarkably committed to the concept of *pro bono publico*. They freely give their time, talent and treasure to prove it. ■

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Attorney Candace Pollock talks with Greg Kovach, director of outreach services of the Ohio Buckeye Chapter of the National MS Society