

## Making A Difference: Pro Bono At Jones Day

The Editor interviews **Laura Tuell Parcher**, Partner in Charge of Pro Bono at Jones Day.

**Editor:** We have had the good fortune to interview you for our pro bono pages since you became Jones Day's firm-wide partner in charge of pro bono in 2008. What experience over this five-year period stands out as the one that has brought you the greatest gratification?

**Parcher:** There's no specific project, but there are two areas that have been the most gratifying for me in terms of seeing growth. First is an increase in global participation in pro bono. The international offices have exhibited tremendous interest in growing their pro bono program, and they are very excited about the various opportunities. Second is our Day of Service, which started in Washington, DC about eight years ago. Since then the concept has spread across the firm to over 20 offices including numerous international offices, such as Hong Kong, Shanghai, Dubai, Madrid, Milan and London. All of the offices participating in the Day of Service have found the experience to be a rewarding opportunity to make a difference in the communities in which we practice. For example, Atlanta and Cleveland performed work with food banks; Beijing planted strawberries for a non-profit to sell; Boston repaired a school; Houston helped fix up a local city park; Washington helped renovate a shelter; and Mexico City worked on a library that serves underprivileged children. These are public service projects, not direct legal services, but they are a way for our offices to give back in the communities in which we live and practice in really different and interesting ways and a great way for us to come together as a team in each of these offices.

**Editor:** One of the awards of the many you have received for your efforts was the recognition you received in being named DC Bar Pro Bono Lawyer of the Year. Which of your activities in DC brought you this acclaim?

**Parcher:** Soon after I became partner, I received recognition for the commitment I had made over the course of my career to build pro bono activities in DC. As a first-year lawyer in 1996, I had helped establish the DC Bar's Free Legal Advice and Referral Clinic, where anyone regardless of income can come for legal advice if he or she has a DC non-criminal legal problem. Clients can meet with a lawyer for whatever amount of time it takes to discuss a problem. If they actually need a lawyer to represent them, then we refer them to a pro bono lawyer. We discovered that a significant portion of most clients' unmet legal need was satisfied by just talking to a lawyer. We give people some tools that they can actually use on their own without having to engage a lawyer.

Thereafter, I continued to engage in various pro bono activities including asylum cases, death penalty appeals and litigation regarding civil rights. The award was recognition for my work on a particular housing discrimination matter but was also a recognition of many years of dedication to pro bono legal services.

**Editor:** I understand that you and one of Jones Day's West Coast partners have been doing groundbreaking work in the "social enterprise" area. Please explain the nature of this work.



Laura Tuell Parcher

**Parcher:** The primary leader in this effort is Todd Johnson in our Silicon Valley office. He is widely recognized as one of the most significant leaders in the field of social entrepreneurship in the United States. Social enterprises are often for-profit companies that seek to address a social need, often in the developing world. While they may make a profit, their primary goal is to make the world a better place. For example, we worked with a company called Embrace, which had developed a very low-cost pouch that functions as an infant incubator. Very few organizations in the developing world can afford the cheapest incubators at \$20,000. Often, they can be found only in city hospitals, even though 80 percent of the population lives in rural areas. Embrace developed a \$200 incubator in an effort to save the lives of the two million infants that die every year in the world due to hypothermia. Embrace began as a non-profit but needed significant additional funds to manufacture and distribute their incubators. Our Jones Day team led the effort for financing of a new social enterprise to scale the manufacture and distribution of this product and save the lives of thousands of babies in the developing world. Todd has been at the forefront of our firm's representation of many of these organizations that are creating technology, products and services that significantly improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of people across the globe, among them Grameen, Ashoka, RoadTrip Nation and Nuru International. We are very proud to support organizations such as these.

**Editor:** Please describe the pro bono case that you and your Columbus colleagues just recently won in the Supreme Court.

**Parcher:** Again, I can't take any credit. My colleague Chad Readler, partner in charge of pro bono in the Columbus office, and a team of lawyers from a couple of different offices worked on a case entitled *McQuiggin v. Perkins*. The Supreme Court recently issued its decision holding that actual innocence, if proved, serves as a gateway through which a petitioner can pass, whether the impediment is a procedural bar or the expiration of the statute of limitations. If there are procedural bars to reopening a case but the petitioner has a credible claim of actual innocence, he or she is actually entitled to pursue the case. It was a very important case for incarcerated individuals who have claims of actual innocence.

**Editor:** Please discuss some of the organizations the firm is currently supporting. Are there any entirely new areas in the last 12 months? Where do you see the need expanding in the nonprofit community?

**Parcher:** We have been doing work on an ongoing basis with Lawyers Without Borders for several years. This year we expanded our work to a project in Liberia, providing trial training to lawyers on the topic of human trafficking. We were very proud to send two of our partners, Alison Marshall in our DC office and Lee Ann Russo in our Chicago office, to join LWOB to help make that effort successful.

Another exciting project, which has the blessing of Vice President Joe Biden, involves the APBCo (Association of Pro Bono Counsel), with whom we are working to address ways to improve access to justice and bridge the gap for those who do not have access to legal representation. Cities across the country are doing very exciting initiatives in areas of immigration; reintegration of people who have been convicted of crimes; victims of domestic violence; and access to Social Security and SSDI. Jones Day is very excited to be a leader in the Washington office, and we'll also be participating in offices across the country. I expect in the next few months that there will be more to talk about.

**Editor:** Please keep our readers informed about the progress of this project.

**Parcher:** We will probably have something to report in a few months. It is an exciting initiative with a lot of energy and enthusiasm across the country focused on addressing different needs.

**Editor:** There is a misconception that most pro bono work revolves around litigation. Please describe some of the pro bono activities undertaken by attorneys from other practice areas in the firm.

**Parcher:** Projects such as those involving social purpose corporations are very complicated, intense corporate transactional illustrations of setting up corporate structures and negotiating between multiple sophisticated parties. That type of pro bono work is increasingly available. We also have always undertaken a great deal of work for nonprofit organizations in terms of helping with their 501(c)3 incorporation. We recently assisted Make-A-Wish foundation with an employment dispute. They were so thrilled with our work that they actually granted a wish in our honor, a rare accolade in the history of that organization. We also do IP work around the world with a group called Room to Read, an international nonprofit that builds schools and libraries and gives girls scholarships in Asia and Africa. Increasingly, as nonprofit organizations become more sophisticated and more international, there are many opportunities to do corporate counseling very similar to what we do for our paying clients.

**Editor:** What is Jones Day's pro bono infrastructure? Does each of your offices have a pro bono committee or partner? How is this participation encouraged? How are their activities linked to your office?

**Parcher:** I am the full-time partner in charge of pro bono for the entire firm. Every office has a partner in charge of pro bono for that office who maintains a reg-

ular billable practice but takes on the administrative responsibility of running the pro bono program within each office. Many of the offices have very active pro bono committees that assist the partner in facilitating and growing pro bono. There are a variety of ways we encourage pro bono within the firm. We have an intranet where we announce pro bono opportunities. We publish a quarterly newsletter called the *Pro Bono Press*, available on our website, which lists all kinds of awards for successes and also highlights offices and individual lawyers on significant accomplishments. We make opportunities available to lawyers within the firm, support them once they undertake the project, and see that a partner in every office mentors junior lawyers. We make sure that the cases are moving along in a way that all the lawyers feel supported and guided appropriately.

**Editor:** Do you normally encourage pro bono work more among your junior lawyers who would then have a more senior lawyer as a mentor?

**Parcher:** Every pro bono case will have a partner supervisor. Depending on the size and requirements of the case, the partner might be joined by a junior or a mid-level person. For example, a typical immigration case before an immigration judge might have a fairly junior lawyer doing the leg work, a mid-level lawyer organizing and orchestrating the case, and a partner supervising the associates as the case progresses.

**Editor:** How does pro bono work expand the professional experiences and development of individual attorneys within the firm?

**Parcher:** Large law firms are experiencing the phenomenon of seeing our junior lawyers having fewer opportunities to stand up in court. Cases are not going to trial as frequently, since other options for settlement are occurring. So it is important for our younger lawyers to appear in court, to take depositions as well as to take ownership of cases. Pro bono cases create a great opportunity for our young lawyers. There were several mid-level and junior lawyers who helped draft the brief and attended the argument in the *McQuiggin* case mentioned earlier. Another example of a pro bono case was *Aycock vs. Texas* in the Northern District of Texas, a case tried by three of our junior lawyers in Dallas. It was a 1983 case involving excessive force by police officers against a prisoner. While we lost this case, which the court had asked the firm to take, the judge commended our lawyers for their outstanding work. They ran the case with a lot of support from very senior partners in the firm who helped them plan their strategy and did prep sessions with them. We also undertake civil protective order cases that usually result in a short trial. In addition, we handle a fair number of custody matters that require our lawyers to attend numerous hearings and culminate in a trial. There are many opportunities for young lawyers to take a leadership role where they both counsel the client and run a litigation matter. Those experiences are invaluable to junior attorneys as they transfer that experience to their paying client cases.

Please email the interviewee at [lparcher@jonesday.com](mailto:lparcher@jonesday.com) with questions about this interview.