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MINNESOTA MONTHLY / JUNE 2012 / DOING WELL BY DOING GOOD: PRO BONO REPRESENTATION

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## Doing Well By Doing Good: Pro Bono Representation

SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION



Pro bono service, unlike traditional volunteerism, uses the specific skills of professionals to provide services to those who are unable to afford them. It is most common in the legal profession and increasingly seen in marketing, architecture, business, design, and law. According to the Taproot Foundation, "For those who feel drawn to high-powered jobs and to public service, pro bono work offers the opportunity to live richer, more fulfilling lives by putting their specialized professional skills to work for the greater good. Perhaps more importantly, pro bono work fundamentally changes the identity of the profession and brings a sense of nobility and purpose to the craft."

An interview with Brent E. Routman, President 2011-2012, Minnesota State Bar Association

### Why is it valuable for attorneys to promote pro bono efforts?

As lawyers, we have a special responsibility in society to ensure that everyone has adequate and effective access to justice, and that our judicial system functions well. There is an overwhelming need for lawyers to step up to the plate at a time when state and federal funding of civil legal services and public defender services have been reduced by nearly 20 percent and the need for assistance has grown by the same amount in the last three years. We also have an obligation under the Rules of Professional Conduct (Rule 6.1) to provide pro bono representation to clients who can't afford our services. Volunteering pays dividends in terms of practice experience reminds many why they became lawyers in the first place.

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services. Why do you think this is true?

We have a long history of collaboration between the private bar, civil legal services providers, and the court system in Minnesota. For example, the MSBA created the Legal Assistance to the Disadvantaged Committee over 30 years ago to provide a forum for addressing the legal needs of low-income people. I think our colleagues—years ago—recognized that we have an obligation to ensure access and were forward-thinking in how they chose to do this. Many of our larger private firms were leaders in national efforts such as the Pro Bono Challenge to institutionalize pro bono work in law practices.

### Are there any "unwritten rules" to working with pro bono clients?

You have to provide the best quality representation regardless of whether or not you are getting paid by your client. That's an ethical obligation. Also, it's important to remember that pro bono clients come to you in times of distress and you need to remember that you are helping them navigate a system that seems foreign

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and hard to understand.

### What can you tell our readers about ProJusticeMN?

ProJusticeMN is a collaboration between the MSBA, Minnesota Legal Services Coalition and ProBonoNet (a non-profit based in New York that provides websites for pro bono lawyers nationally). It was started over a decade ago as a way of providing practices resources to pro bono and legal services lawyers on the web. It has grown and changed over the years to include truly helpful case materials and trainings to help lawyers in practice, and now includes a case placement feature that allows lawyers to search for volunteer opportunities as well as set up email alerts. It's the singles best practice resource for the pro bono lawyer on the web.

### Are there requirements set by the State Bar to do pro bono work?

The Minnesota Supreme Court sets forth the professional responsibility rules for lawyers and adopted Rule 6.1 many years ago. It strongly encourages, but does not require, lawyers in private practice to do 50 hours of pro bono service each year for low-income clients. We are the only profession that has such a rule, as far as I know.

### Does the State Bar offer reimbursement opportunities for pro bono work?

The pro bono programs are managed by each individual non-profit legal services organization. The State Bar assists them with finding volunteers and supporting pro bono work overall, but each organization handles the logistics. Each organization varies on whether they will help volunteers with the cost of expenses such as court filings or mileage.

### Would you like to add anything else?

If you are an attorney in Minnesota, we need your help to meet the justice gap in our state. Please contact Pro Bono Development Director Steve Marchese at the MSBA at [smarchese@mobar.org](mailto:smarchese@mobar.org) and he can connect you with legal services organizations that can use your assistance. We also urge all licensed attorneys within the state to join the AMICUS Society. It is free to join and members commit only to providing five hours of time in a year to educate the public on the rule of law, role of the courts, and adequate funding for the entire judicial system (the courts, civil legal services, and public defenders). For more information, please contact Brent at [brentr@mobar.org](mailto:brentr@mobar.org).

### Giving Back

Many local companies give back to the community, whether through pro bono efforts, direct giving, foundations, donations, volunteer programs, or matching gifts. Here is a list of top corporate giving programs in Minnesota:

**3M Company** | St. Paul

**Minnesota Twins** | Minneapolis

**ADC Telecommunications, Inc** | Eden Prairie

**Minnesota Vikings Football Club, LLC** | Eden Prairie

**AgStar Financial Services, ACA** | Mankato

**Minnesota Wild Hockey Club, LP** | St. Paul

**Alliant Techsystems Inc.** | Minneapolis

**Nash Finch Company** | Minneapolis

**Allianz Life Insurance Company of North America** | Minneapolis

**Northwest Airlines Corporation** | Eagan

**Ameriprise Financial** | Minneapolis

**Opus Corporation** | Minnetonka

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**Deluxe Corporation** | Shoreview

**Donaldson Company, Inc.** | Bloomington

**Dorsey and Whitney LLP** | Minneapolis

**Ecolab Inc.** | St. Paul

**Edina Realty, Inc.** | Edina

**Federated Insurance Companies** | Owatonna

**First National Bank Bemidji** | Bemidji

**General Mills, Inc.** | Minneapolis

**Graco Inc.** | Minneapolis

**H.B. Fuller Company** | St. Paul

**Hickory Tech Corporation** | Mankato

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**Hormel Foods Corporation** | Austin

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**RBC Wealth Management** | Minneapolis

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**Riverway Co.** | Bloomington

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**Schoeneckers, Inc.** | Minneapolis

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**Security State Bank** | Hibbing

**Sit Investment Associates, Inc.** | Minneapolis

**SJE-Rhombus Controls** | Detroit Lakes

**St. Jude Medical, Inc.** | St. Paul

**Stahl Construction Company** | St. Louis Park

**Star Tribune Media Company LLC** | Minneapolis

**SUPERVALU INC.** | Eden Prairie

**Target Corporation** | Minneapolis

**Tastefully Simple, Inc.** | Alexandria

**TCF Financial Corporation** | Wayzata

**Tennant Company** | Minneapolis

**The Mosaic Company** | Plymouth

**The Prophet Corporation** | Owatonna

**The Schwan Food Company** | Marshall

**The Specialty Mfg. Co.** | St. Paul

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