



Pro Bono Legal Service: Increase Your Reach in 2019

by Laurie Heer Dale and Carol Cleaver, Volunteer Lawyers Project



As we look toward 2019, legal needs in Nebraska will continue to surpass the number of attorneys able to serve them. More than 300,000 low-income Nebraskans are eligible for free legal services. Although Nebraska lawyers have a longstanding commitment to give back to the community through pro bono service, individual legal needs continue to be greater than the number of available volunteers.

Doing pro bono work is on the mind of most lawyers and law firms. The American Bar Association recommends that lawyers aspire to render at least 50 hours of pro bono legal services each year. Many lawyers and law firms fulfill this aspirational goal every year. For others, time always challenges the best intentions.

There is good news for lawyers wanting to do pro bono work this year. VLP programs and co-sponsored events are designed to help every lawyer do pro bono work. Many cases available for limited scope and extended representation are uncontested. Nebraska Free Legal Answers, a virtual legal clinic, allows lawyers to do pro bono anytime and anywhere the lawyer has Internet access. Self-Help Centers offer the opportunity to meet with walk-in visitors a few hours a month. Special walk-in clinics, such as those noted below, allow lawyers to earn CLE credit, network with other lawyers and do pro bono work as a team. They are a popular option among new and corporate attorneys.

A trial is never an ideal situation and is even more daunting for the self-represented litigant. Volunteering can bring hope and encouragement during a challenging time. When you represent someone who would otherwise go unrepresented, you provide a valuable service to the client, the courts, the community, and the legal profession.

Volunteers are essential to providing equal access to justice. Visit the new VLP Website at www.NeVLP.org or contact Laurie Heer Dale at lheerdale@nevlp.org to learn how you can add pro bono work into your busy schedule. Let us help you increase your reach in 2019.

Lawyers in the City (October 26, 2018)

Lawyers in the City is a one-day legal clinic where volunteers meet with walk-in visitors from the community to

provide brief advice; referrals to a legal aid service provider; and give self-help forms, brochures, and other helpful resources. This was a collaborative event with VLP, Creighton University School of Law Legal Clinic, Immigrant Legal Center, Legal Aid of Nebraska, Midlands Bar Association, Omaha Bar Association, Women's Center for Advancement, the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and students from Metropolitan Community College and Doane University.

During this event, a free one-hour ethics CLE was offered to volunteers. That day, 58 walk-in visitors were provided quality limited legal representation by 21 volunteer attorneys, 7 law students, 1 paralegal, 7 paralegal students and 2 certified American Sign Language interpreters.

The event was held at the South Omaha Campus, Metropolitan Community College and will occur again in 2019. Contact Laurie Heer Dale at VLP@nevlp.org or (402) 475-7091 for more information.

Legal Aid of Nebraska Set-Aside and Record Sealing Clinic (November 3, 2018)

The Set-Aside and Record Sealing Clinic is an event where volunteers meet with visitors from the community to provide limited legal representation in setting aside and sealing criminal records. This was a collaborative event with Legal Aid of Nebraska, Creighton University School of Law and Family First Call to Action. Attorneys from the Omaha City Prosecutor's Office were on site to review requests for set-asides and record sealings.

During the event, 23 pre-registered visitors were provided quality legal representation by 14 volunteer attorneys, 6 law students and 6 paralegals. Since that date, 22 set-aside pleadings have been filed and 8 records have been sealed.

The event was held in North Omaha and will occur again in 2019. For more information, contact Muirne Heaney at mheaney@legalaidofnebraska.org or (402) 348-1069. To learn more about pro bono opportunities with Legal Aid of Nebraska, contact Christine Stolarskyj at cstolarskyj@legalaidofnebraska.org.



VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROJECT

Here's what volunteers are saying about their pro bono experiences. **Are you ready to join them?**

Pro bono work – and participating in legal clinics specifically – is important to me because it is a great way to give back to the community. There is a large segment of the population that does not have ready access to legal services. By giving a few days per year to pro bono work and volunteerism, I feel like I am at least helping bridge that gap. – Eric Adams

I have found that, for the most part, what the people you see need is someone to help them understand where they are in the legal system and what they need to do to navigate it. They are so grateful to get this basic information; and, all it requires is you give a little time. – David Blagg

I decided it was time to give back to the Omaha legal community by doing some pro bono service. I am a corporate lawyer; so, Lawyers in the City was a good avenue for me to “get my feet wet” since I would be paired with at least one lawyer/paralegal who had been through the process already. VLP did a great job in coordinating and had a lot of material to reference. I enjoyed it and will definitely keep on volunteering. – Denise Hill



Joshua R. Woolf and Abigail Johnson, Lawyers in the City

Growing up, I was taught that when you are in the service of your fellow beings, you are in the service of your God. Because of this, I feel that pro bono work is a way I can use my talents and knowledge to help others who haven't been as fortunate as me. I find pro bono work to be very rewarding, as you know the help you are providing is changing people's lives. – Alan D. Leidig (Law Student)

I choose to participate in pro bono services because it is the right thing to do. It helps me engage with my community. It broadens my knowledge from listening to people and finding the appropriate resources and tools for them. – Peng Li



Nicole Albers (Paralegal), David A. Blagg and Denise A. Hill, Lawyers in the City

Working as in-house for a large company, it can be challenging to see how your day-to-day work has impact on an individual level. With pro bono work, you can see exactly who is benefitting from just a little bit of your time; and, often clients share with you exactly what impact your services have on their lives. In addition, my employer's vision is to create economic opportunity for every member of the global workforce. Employees are strongly encouraged to participate in pro bono work; and, the Set-Aside and Sealing Clinic aligned perfectly with its vision. Many clients cited their records as an impediment to obtaining employment; and, helping set-aside or seal records will hopefully allow them access to new or higher quality jobs, which can truly be life changing. – Molly Mazour

Providing pro bono legal services to individuals without the means to obtain representation is a very rewarding experience. Being able to help even a small percentage of those individuals ensures that a greater number of Nebraska residents have access to justice, which is a crucial need in our state and nationwide. For me, it is truly gratifying to know that we, as attorneys, have the ability to impact others by simply taking the time out of our schedules to share our knowledge with those who need it. – Brock Pohlmeier

I do pro bono work because people really need help and at times are without the resources to obtain that help. If we don't, who will? – Judith Wells

I feel incredibly lucky to be in a position where I have something to give back to my community. I feel it is my duty as someone who has the particular training and education required to navigate the complex legal system to give some of that back to individuals who cannot do that themselves and who are unable to procure legal help. In addition to the feeling of duty, it also just feels good to be able to give something back and have someone walk away from our interaction with their life, hopefully, a little better having found some answers. – Joshua R. Woolf



VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROJECT

Here's what attendees had to say about the events. **Are you ready to help them?**

"Jason Stapelman was an awesome attorney to work with. He did a great job of getting questions answered and had no problems with seeking guidance to ensure things were handled in a proper fashion. It was a pleasure to work with him and I thank Jason and Legal Aid for the assistance. This was an eye-opening experience and a greatly needed service to the community."

"I am very satisfied with the legal services I received from John Rogers and William Heaton. They were very personable and amazing! I would recommend Lawyers in the City to others. The attorneys there will take care of you!"



Molly Mazour, Jen Muller (Paralegal), Emily McElravy, Jennifer Racine, Jason Stapelman, Eric Adams, Dan Fried (Paralegal), Matt Breuning, Set-Aside and Record Sealing Clinic



Matt Breuning, Eric Adams, Jason Stapelman, Jerrell Norman (Law Student), Talia Hughes (Paralegal), Phil Martin, Alan Leidig (Law Student), Hattie Miller (Law Student), Lisa Sexton (Paralegal), Matt Kuhse, Bridget DeLeo (Paralegal), Jennifer Racine, Jen Muller (Paralegal), Laurie Heer Dale, Jen Gaughan, Kate Mahern, Ellen Prochaska (Law Student), Alex Clark, Emily McElravy, Muirne Heaney, Pastor Tony Sanders, Kaitlin Logan Wimmer (Law Student), Oscar Aguilar (Law Student), April Kirkendall, Set-Aside and Record Sealing Clinic



VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROJECT

VLP extends its appreciation to the lawyers, law students, paralegals and college students who volunteered October-November 2018. Thank you for your service.

Pro Bono Cases

Kelly Davis, Omaha
Julie Fowler, Omaha

Michelle J. Oldham, Hastings
Sally A. Rasmussen, Lincoln

Self Help Centers

Buffalo

Melodie T. Bellamy,
Coordinator
Jack W. Bessee
Elizabeth J. Chrisp
Nicholas J. Ridgeway
Thomas W. Tye II

Judith A. Schweikart
Karine E. Sokpoh
David D. Sommers
J.G. "Gerry" Sullivan
Hon. Stephen M. Swartz, *ret.*
Kenneth M. Wentz III

Hall

Shawn J. Farritor,
Coordinator
Grady C. Erickson
Stacie A. Goding
Jennifer D. Kearney
Charles Maser
Erin M. Urbom

Douglas

Christina Thornton,
Coordinator
Angela L. Burmeister
James F. Busse
Katelyn Cherney
Kelly R. Davis
Joseph S. Dreesen
Michael J. Haller, Jr.
Karisa D. Johnson
Kendall K. Krajicek
Catherine "Kate" Mahern
Christopher A. Mihalo
Hon. Patrick McDermott, *ret.*
Michael P. Moran
David J. Myers
Melany O'Brien
Ralph E. Peppard
Justin A. Quinn
Alan C. Schroeder

Madison

Ryan J. Stover, *Coordinator*
Joel E. Carlson
Dennis W. Collins
Alexander Ganseboom
Christopher A. German

Scotts Bluff

Stacy C. Bach, *Coordinator*
Jonas Longoria
Astrid Mumm
Libby Stobel

Lawyers in the City, Omaha, October 26

Attorneys

David A. Blagg
Mindy Rush-Chipman
Caitlin J. Ellis
Amanda J. Fray
Ross M. Gardner
William P. Heaston
Denise A. Hill
Abigail Johnson
Peng Li
Catherine "Kate" Mahern

Christopher A. Mihalo
Patrick M. Patino
Ralph E. Peppard
Brock J. Pohlmeier
Kory L. Quandt
John T. Rogers
Judith A. Schweikart
Karine E. Sokpoh
Judith A. Wells
Kenneth M. Wentz III
Joshua R. Woolf

Law Students

Zach Bieber
Jessica Gilgor
Callie Kanthack
Daniel McDowell
Kali Roundy
Regina Ann Smith
Lauren Suchan

Paralegal

Nicole Albers

Students

Mae Adkins
Brianna Jackson
Shelby Logan
Brooke Loweis
Dak Thon
Naomi Wellman
Maren Westra

Sign Language Interpreters

Teresa Hevner
Jenny Corum

Nebraska Free Legal Answers

New Registrations

Sydney C. Aase, Lincoln

Kory L. Quandt, Omaha
Kent A. Schroeder, Kearney

Limited Legal Service

Angela L. Burmeister, Omaha
Larry W. Beucke, Kearney
Carla J. DeVelder, Omaha
Quinn R. Eaton, Omaha
Timothy R. Engler, Lincoln
Michael J. Haller Jr., Omaha

Kent A. Schroeder, Kearney
Peter J. Sitzmann, Lincoln
Rachael A. Smith, Omaha
Ryan P. Sullivan, Lincoln
Richard W. Tast, Lincoln
Christina L. Usher, Lincoln

Legal Services Committee

The following law students were appointed to the Committee:

Alexander Kelly, Creighton University School of Law
Ella Newell, University of Nebraska College of Law
Ellen Prochaska, Creighton University School of Law

Legal Aid of Nebraska Set-Aside and Record Sealing Clinic, Omaha, November 3

Attorneys

Eric Adams
Matt Breuning
Alex Clark
Makayla Danner
Jen Gaughan
Muirne Heaney
Laurie Heer Dale
April Kirkendall
Matthew M. Kuhse
Kate Mahern
Phil Martin
Molly Mazour
Emily Z. McElravy
Jennifer Racine
Jason L. Stapelman
Christine Stolarskyj

Law Students

Oscar Aguilar
Alan Leidig
Kaitlin Logan Wimmer
Hattie Miller
Jerrell Norman
Ellen Prochaska

Paralegals

Bridget DeLeo
Dan Fried
Talia Hughes
Jen Muller
Lisa Sexton
Susan Willis