

2006

Public Interest Attorney Profiles

Terrance A. Norton

Pro-Bono Partner, Sonnenschein, Nath & Rosenthal, LLP

Gregg McConnell

Dir., Public Interest Law, Winston & Strawn, LLP

Don Hilliker

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Jonathon K. Baum

Partner & Dir. Of Pro Bono Services, Katten, Muchin, Rosenman, LLP

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Public Interest Lawyer Profile

Terrance A. Norton

Pro-Bono Partner

Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal, LLP

Throughout its 100 year history, Sonnenschein has encouraged individual attorneys within the firm to undertake the representation of people and causes on a pro bono basis. In 2003, as part of an effort to structure, formalize and deepen its commitment, the firm, adopted a set of pro bono guidelines and brought in a person, — me, at the partner level, to oversee the re-invigorated program.

That all lawyers, and particularly large law firms, should take on the representation of people who could not otherwise afford their services seems an obvious proposition. We have repeatedly read in authoritative studies that 80 percent of the legal needs of the poor go unmet, and yet we have also been taught that justice is a constitutive element of our democracy. The situation calls forth one of the essential truths we learned in kindergarten: we must share. For our purposes that holds true whether the sharing involves toys or the resources necessary to bring about justice. For lawyers, that common sense dicta is reinforced by the codes that govern us. We and our firms actually have the knowledge and skills necessary to help those who face legal problems, who seek justice. How could we not use them?

The needs are many. Someone must sift through the many requests for legal help and decide which requests can be met. In our firm, that task falls to the Pro Bono Committee and to me. Will we take on a death penalty case, or expand our representation of asylum seekers? Should we, instead, work with groups that are seeking to rebuild broken neighborhoods? Making those decisions requires that we meet with and come to know the various public interest organizations in the cities where we are located and to know and understand their missions. To help them is to help the people and communities where we are located, by sharing our resources.

More information about Sonnenschein Nath & Riosenthal can be found at:
<http://www.sonnenschein.com/>

Public Interest Lawyer Profile

Gregg McConnell

Director Public Interest Law

Winston & Strawn, LLP

I am the full-time Director of Public Interest Law at Winston & Strawn, LLP. As Director, I have the responsibility of managing all administrative aspects of Winston's pro bono practice. Among other activities, I identify appropriate pro bono matters for our 800+ attorneys; recruit attorneys to staff such matters; develop policies and strategies that facilitate attorney involvement in pro bono activities; and oversee the day-to-day aspects of pro bono case management

Large firms play a critical role in the pro bono delivery network. Partly this is due to the sheer mass of lawyers working at such institutions. For the last few years, Winston alone has devoted nearly 40,000 hours to pro bono causes. A friend of mine, who manages one of the nation's largest pro bono agencies remarked, "That's a whole lot of justice." As importantly, large firms have the necessary resources, in terms of attorney hours and finances, to handle the most substantial pro bono matters. By way of example, in February 2006 we concluded a five-week pro bono jury trial for a client who has been civilly detained by the State of Illinois for nearly five years. Only a large firm could have undertaken this trial without seriously undermining its ability to serve its paying clients.

Although internally driven, my activities are in many respects outwardly focused at pro bono agencies from whom we receive new matters. I work closely with these agencies to develop effective strategies for involving not only Winston attorneys but also attorneys at other large firms in service to their clients. If nothing else, I hope that my efforts prove beneficial by increasing accessibility to and communication with Winston attorneys and ultimately lead to more client service by a greater number of attorneys.

More information about Winston & Strawn can be found at: <http://www.winston.com/>

NEWS

Public Interest Lawyer Profile

Don Hilliker

Partner

McDermott Will & Emery

Since my law school years in the late 1960s I have had an interest in pro bono work. At McDermott, we believe it is important to encourage and support our lawyers who take on pro bono representation. Beyond the ethical and moral underpinning to lawyers' commitment to provide legal services to the poor, we recognize that today being a good member of the overall business and wider community means giving back to our less well-off neighbors.

In the past several years, more and more of our lawyers and staff have become involved in work on behalf of the disadvantaged. I now devote my practice virtually full-time to our pro bono and community service initiatives in our U.S. and European offices.

Our Pro Bono and Community Service Committee includes both lawyers and staff. In all of our offices we make a special effort to focus a portion of our pro bono and community service work on the needs of disadvantaged children. Through our Kids First program our lawyers represent at-risk children in court and administrative settings, particularly those relating to children with special education needs. For the past five years, as part of our Partners in Reading initiative, our lawyers and staff have tutored at an inner-city school here in Chicago. We support our community partners in other ways, such as by helping them create brochures, improve their web sites and the like.

Why pro bono? For one thing, helping the less-well off is the right thing to do. Also, it is challenging to expose yourself to unfamiliar areas of the law and clients who often have had no prior dealings with lawyers or the law. In pro bono cases, young lawyers have early opportunities to take responsibility and gain valuable experience. Finally, it is rewarding to know you are doing something to help make an often difficult life a bit brighter or to help a community group do a better job serving its constituency. Although the unmet legal needs of the poor are staggering, every lawyer who volunteers his or her time is doing critical work to give voice in a small or large way to our often voiceless neighbors.

Public Interest Lawyer Profile

Jonathon K Baum

Partner and Director of Pro Bono Services

Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP

I am the Director of Pro Bono Services for, and a partner in, Katten Muchin Zavis Rosenman LLP. When I conceived and assumed this position in 1993, it was one of only a handful of full-time pro bono attorney positions in the nation, and it was the very first of any law firm in the Midwest. In my position, I both administer the firm's pro bono program and personally litigate pro bono cases, principally in the areas of civil rights and civil liberties.

It is important for big law firms to do pro bono work for several reasons. First, of course, it is our ethical obligation as attorneys to give some portion of our time to serve members of our society who cannot afford to pay for legal services. It is particularly important for those in the legal profession who reap the largest financial rewards from our status to render service to the least advantaged among us. Pro bono work feeds the souls of the lawyers who engage in it – and gives them something actually interesting to talk about at social gatherings with non-lawyers. While pro bono work should be done by lawyers at all levels of seniority, it provides particularly valuable training opportunities for young lawyers. Whether transactional work or litigation, it gives young lawyers an opportunity to operate at a level of responsibility that is generally unavailable to them early in their careers, particularly at large law firms. Pro bono work can also help attorneys network with other professionals, corporations, and not-for-profit entities in the community. Finally, from the institutional perspective of the law firm, active engagement in pro bono work is critical in attracting and retaining the best lawyers.

As the head of my firm's pro bono program, my contribution to our public service work takes the form of what I call "the five Ms": motivating, matchmaking, mentoring, monitoring, and marketing. Given the other very intense demands on their time, motivating individual attorneys to engage in pro bono service is critical. At our firm, encouragements to do pro bono work include (1) providing credit toward

(Baum Profile, continued on page 33)