

## AN ENDORSEMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF OREGON'S PRO BONO PROGRAM

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At least eighteen firms, including mine, have agreed to participate in the District of Oregon's Pro Bono Program. I have had the opportunity to serve as the coordinator of this program for Stoll Berne for several years. There are very good reasons to do pro bono work. The litigants applying for pro bono assistance really

need your help, and your participation also provides a service to the Court and our community. I hope that sharing some of my experiences will encourage others to join.

My law practice focuses on complex business and intellectual property litigation. Not exactly the type of "real life" legal issues most people face. The Pro Bono Program has given me perspective by affording me the opportunity to help individuals deal with serious legal problems that affect their daily lives. I have been exposed to areas of the law that are new to me. The cases have been challenging and rewarding. Some of these cases have given me a first-hand and eye-opening understanding of the meaning of "access to justice."

I offer two examples of the pro bono matters assigned to me. One example is probably fairly typical of most participants' experiences. I expect that the other example is very far from typical.

In the "typical" case, I was appointed to represent a homeowner facing foreclosure. I had no prior experience in this area. As a volunteer, you will likely receive cases that are outside of your expertise. Be not afraid! There is nothing like a client faced with losing the roof over his head to motivate you, and you are well equipped to learn new areas of law. Help is available when you need it. I found experienced practitioners at other firms who were happy to guide me when, for example, I needed to advise my client about the reasonableness of the lender's settlement proposals. That you are not an expert may prove to be an advantage. It is sometimes difficult to think

outside the box when dealing with issues you have addressed many times. In this case I had no box to hem me in, and I believe my client benefitted from my unorthodox strategy. My client came into my office facing a looming foreclosure sale and, in the end, the foreclosure was cancelled. For perhaps forty hours of my time, I was able to keep a person in his home, and I count that among my most satisfying experiences as a lawyer.

I offer the second example to emphasize that your services provide benefits that extend beyond the immediate needs of your client. I was appointed to defend a convicted child pornographer in a civil action brought by his victim. My now former client is serving a 50-year sentence in a federal penitentiary. These are the types of cases that challenge a lawyer's commitment to the foundations of the legal system. I got off easy when I was able to negotiate a settlement. That settlement avoided much unpleasantness for all involved and very likely would have been impossible without the participation of a pro bono defense lawyer to negotiate on behalf of the prisoner. I feel that my service in this case benefitted not only my client but also the plaintiff, the plaintiff's counsel, the Court and the public.

Please consider joining the Pro Bono Panel. You can find more information on the Court's website at <http://ord.uscourts.gov/en/attorneys/pro-bono-service-opportunities>, or by contacting the Court's Pro Bono Panel Administrator, Nicole Munoz, at (503) 326-8014.

## THE ASHMANSKAS TRIVIA BOX

*An FBA tribute to the memory and humor of  
Magistrate Judge Donald C. Ashmanskas*



What organization held regular meetings at which Judge Ash was a consistent attendee (one of the most consistent attendees) over several decades, even though he was not a member?

Answer on page 8.