

Pro Bono Spotlight - Allison Mosher

By Will Glasson, Scarborough, McNeese et al and YLS Pro Bono Committee member.



Allison Mosher

Mention immigration policy and you'll have many people's full attention. Immigration issues provoke complex and often incongruous economic, political and social opinions. Opinions that fuel animated debate, partisanship, even extremism. Yet if immigration, the word, describes a marketplace, the commodities exchanged are people. It is Allison Mosher's focus on people, her clients, that

so distinguishes her pro bono immigration law services.

An attorney with the immigration law firm of Nelson Smith, Allison's practice touches on many contentious immigration issues, such as deportation and removal litigation, asylum projects and work visa applications.

Allison's willingness to confront difficult issues is evident in the pro bono projects she accepts and in her practice. Many of her pro bono activities involve assisting clients who are victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse with U-visa applications.

Created under the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act in 2000, the U-visa provides eligible immigrants with temporary authorization to stay and work in the US. To qualify, an individual must show that she or he was the victim of criminal activity resulting in substantial physical or mental harm, and cooperated or is willing to cooperate with the investigation or prosecution of the crime.

Unfortunately, there is no shortage of individuals seeking U-visas. Some pro bono clients begin as regular Nelson Smith clients. Others are referrals from one of the few nonprofit organizations in the Portland metro area providing pro bono immigration services.

U-visa cases are frequently complex and emotionally taxing. For Allison, these challenges are part and parcel with the reward. "It's satisfying [to] see that you made a positive difference in that individual's life," she said.

Allison is a graduate of PSU and the U of O School of Law. An active member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, Allison is fluent in Spanish. Prior to law school, Allison worked with the Virginia Garcia Health Center Migrant Camp Outreach Program as part of a team that traveled to labor camps to provide screening, medical treatment and health education to migrant and seasonal farm workers.

Mentoring Makes Sense

By Josh Ross, Stoll Berne and YLS Futures Committee member.

In his 2008 Professionalism Award acceptance speech, Jeff Batchelor shared a list of the traits of lawyers and judges that, throughout his career, had inspired him. At the top of that list, Jeff described the inspiration he felt from seeing lawyers and judges share their time, experience, and wisdom with young lawyers. Jeff, I believe, was speaking of lawyers and judges who are and were great mentors; that he placed mentoring at the top of his list, I am certain, was no accident.

Quality mentoring is unquestionably valuable. Dedicating the time, resources and effort needed to guide a new lawyer to a successful career benefits not only the mentee, but the bar generally and the mentoring lawyer or firm who, in many ways, stands to gain the most from the new lawyer's success. Mentoring helps new lawyers build confidence, boosts efficiency, reduces the risk of malpractice, and sends the invaluable message that the mentoring lawyer or firm wants to invest in its new lawyers. Mentoring helps new lawyers become productive lawyers. Mentoring makes sense.

Those facts, perhaps, are obvious.

And yet are we as a profession, proactively dedicating the time and resources necessary to maintain the high standards of the bar? The 2006 Generation Gap Survey suggests we may have some work to do. Over 50% of responding lawyers said that

they want and would benefit from additional mentoring, training or coaching - and it's worth noting, over 70% of the responding lawyers had been practicing for over seven years. Of greater concern, only 16% of us strongly agreed with the statement "My firm offers sufficient mentoring and/or training to support success." Because mentoring does in fact support success, those statistics should concern us.

At a minimum, there is always room for improvement. To be sure, effective mentoring takes proactive planning, time, and a willingness by the mentee and mentor to make sacrifices (read: forego billable hours). Thus, many lawyers and firms stick to the basic model of pairing new lawyers with willing partners or senior associates. That model, no doubt, provides new lawyers a great resource and helps to develop relationships.

However, a few local firms have developed mentoring programs aimed at teaching skills and providing resources that new lawyers need. At Tonkon Torp, all new lawyers attend weekly discussions of nuts and bolts topics like the firm's internal processes, working with staff and work-life balance. Tonkon also matches new lawyers with an entry-level mentor and, after the new lawyer acclimates to life at the firm, a separate professional mentor is chosen, in part, by the mentee. Tonkon also provides frequent individual evaluations and a weekly forum for dialogue among new lawyers.

In addition to pairing new lawyers with mentors, Gevurtz Menashe requires its new lawyers to complete the "Mentoring Protocol." There, new lawyers must seek out partners who help them complete a substantive training checklist that guides them through the firm's specific practice. For example, new lawyers must read through and discuss all relevant statutes with a partner, sit in on intake meetings and participate in discovery. At Smith Freed & Eberhard, new lawyers have the option to enroll in the "Black Belt Trial Skills Program," in which new lawyers present mock opening statements and receive critiques from partners, watch a series of trial skills videos, and attend classes - taught by acting coaches, and specially designed by the firm - that teach trial skills such as speaking, presentation and body language.

While these programs vary in scope and focus, each aims to provide new lawyers with the skills needed to successfully practice law. As a return on their investment, these firms have seen improved job satisfaction, efficiency and skills, and believe their programs have a direct impact on their ability to retain talent for the long term. The Generation Gap Survey teaches us that, as a profession, we can share more of our time, experience and wisdom with young lawyers. We should make an effort to do so. For ideas on what steps you can take, consider contacting the following people and obtaining a copy of books mentioned.



YLS and Barran Liebman Host Author Jeff Benedict

The YLS Membership Committee and Barran Liebman teamed up to host Jeff Benedict, author of *Little Pink House: A True Story of Defiance and Courage*, the story of *Kelo v. City of New London*, on March 16. Thank you to Barran Liebman for sponsoring the book reading and reception.



Community Service Days

The YLS Service to the Public Committee had three fun volunteer events at the Oregon Humane Society in March and April. About 30 animal-loving volunteers socialized and played with the dogs and cats at the Humane Society to give the animals the attention and the social skills necessary to help them find new forever homes. Volunteers had a great time and appreciated the opportunity. Everyone, including the animals, enjoyed themselves.

Thank you sponsors of the 2009 Community Law Week

Executive Producer Sponsors

Ater Wynne LLP
Barran Liebman LLP
Stoel Rives LLP
Sussman Shank LLP

Legal Aid Services of Oregon
Meyer & Wyse LLP
Oregon State Bar
Pacific Northwest Paralegal Association
Sather Byerly & Holloway LLP

CLW Sponsors

Bodyfelt Mount LLP
Davis Wright Tremaine LLP
Lane Powell PC

Banner Sponsors

Barran Liebman LLP
Cosgrave Vergeer Kester LLP

YLS wine tasting event - May 20

The YLS Membership Committee is organizing a Wine Tasting Event at Vino Paradiso (417 NW 10th) in the Pearl District, Wednesday, May 20, 5:30-7 p.m.

FREE to the first 35 members to sign up! Special preference will be given to legal aid attorneys, solo practitioners, judicial clerks, public defenders and individuals who are currently unemployed.

Sign up by emailing Kathy Maloney at kathy@mbabar.org.

- Loree Devery, Manager of Recruiting & Professional Development at Tonkon Torp www.tonkon.com
- Saville Easley, Shareholder at Gevurtz Menashe www.gevurtzmenashe.com
- Jeff Eberhard, Managing Partner at Smith Freed & Eberhard www.smithfreed.com
- Todd Cleek, Chair of the MBA Professionalism Committee www.k-hlaw.com
- *Being an Effective Mentor: 101 Practical Strategies for Success* and *The Lawyer's Guide to Mentoring*, both by Ida Abbott, Esq., and available (with many other resources) at www.nalp.org.