

Pandemic Pro Bono Publico

2020 has been a year of challenges and change to say the least. The world has seen a drastic change dealing with peoples' fundamental way of life for the foreseeable future. However, what has not changed is the never-ending struggle to provide members of our community with access to justice. In fact, our mission at MVL to provide access to justice for the disadvantaged has only grown more complicated and dire. With more courtrooms closed and more trials being delayed now than ever before, we are faced with the seemingly insurmountable challenge of how to help facilitate procedural due process and access to the courts. But, with new problems we are presented with new opportunities to help!

At MVL, our staff and volunteers have been working tirelessly during the COVID-19 pandemic to continue assisting the needy while keeping our volunteers' safety paramount. By way of example, our Power of Attorney Workshop is still actively ready to help senior citizens in obtaining medical powers of attorney, declarations of

disposition of last remains, and living wills and will do so as safely as possible when the opportunity arises. Given that the elderly represent an extremely vulnerable portion of our population, MVL has devised new means and methods of providing these critical legal services to nursing homes remotely by supplying our own sanitized scanners, laptops, and webcams. These permit our volunteer attorneys to get people the help they need once legal assistance can be provided again to nursing homes and care facilities. We also have a remote Power of Attorney program utilizing technology to get POAs finalized virtually, which can use the help of volunteers like you. Now is when people need end of life documents prepared safely, which can only be done if those willing to help make the leap and volunteer with us.

As a result of COVID-19, we are also trying our absolute best at MVL to be prepared for what is to come and to learn from this pandemic the best that we can. We are actively preparing a virtual video series for CLE credit that we

hope to use for years to come to teach new volunteers how our programs work, and show how volunteers can give back to the community at large without ever having to leave the safety of their homes. If this is something you are interested in contributing to as a presenter, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly to discuss the opportunity.

We also foresee the need for our bankruptcy volunteer attorneys to increase drastically in the coming months given the economic hardship the pandemic has caused. If you're interested in volunteering now, MVL is still actively accepting volunteers. Here are just a few of the ways you can help:

- Conduct one-hour telephone consultations on family law matters.
- Volunteer as a remote mentor for our existing volunteers.
- Assist applicants in completing advanced planning documents (Medical and Financial POAs, Living Wills, and Declarations of Disposition of Last Remains) remotely.
- Take a full-representation case.
- Join the Metro Volunteer Lawyers Board as one of our members at large.

MVL even has a Zoom account that can be used and MVL staff can be available to provide the necessary notarization services as well as witnesses when required for probate work. Another safe and easy way to assist MVL during these trying times is to do so financially.

As the 2020 chair of the board for MVL, I take this opportunity to thank our volunteers, past and present, while making a call to action. I also want to leave you with one of the mottos that I have found solace in recently: "You make a living by what you get, you make a life by what you give." 🍷

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