



Jacqueline Rowley is the Allegratti Scholar at Metro Volunteer Lawyers. While at Metro Volunteer Lawyers, she will primarily work within Adams and Broomfield counties to recruit volunteer attorneys and facilitate greater access to justice by expanding MVL programs.

Want to learn more about your own unconscious biases? Take the Harvard Implicit Association Test constructed by Project Implicit.

implicit.harvard.edu

A Legacy of Giving People a Chance & Metro Volunteer Lawyers

For as long as I can remember, my father has been a criminal defense attorney.

As a young girl, I heard family friends ask how he could defend criminals. “Is your client guilty?” “Wait, so you believe your client?” I knew from listening to his stories that some of his clients had done something illegal and certainly almost all of them had done something “wrong,” even if it fell short of a crime.

Now having grown up and completed law school, I know that the accused are innocent until proven guilty. I also now realize that even when a person is innocent, any successful outcome — reduced sentences, probation instead of jail time, or staying out of jail altogether — increases dramatically with a lawyer’s representation. Even if the party is guilty, avoiding conviction of a greater crime can depend on the involvement of an attorney. My father always said that the reason he became a defense attorney was because he wanted to give folks a fighting chance.

What does this have to do with Metro Volunteer Lawyers?

While our program falls in the civil rather than criminal arena, Metro Volunteer Lawyers connects individuals in tough situations with attorneys who can help. Attorneys who can give people a fighting chance.

I’ll always remember my dad helping people when they needed assistance. I’m proud of him taking on clients who might otherwise have been overlooked by attorneys unable to see past an accusation. My dad saw people going through some of the worst circumstances of their lives. He had the expertise and ability to help and the compassion to actually do something about it.

As attorneys, we are capable of seeing legal issues in a different way than members of the public in difficult situations. Our legal training, beginning with Socratic questioning in first-year torts, prepares us to think critically about the issue before us. Law school and our bar exam preparation taught us how to come up with a myriad of solutions to the presented problem.

Individuals with limited access to justice — usually due to lack of monetary resources, family situations, or age — can greatly benefit from your help. At Metro Volunteer Lawyers, we connect volunteer-attorneys with applicants who need legal assistance. Attorneys can volunteer for limited-scope representation, such as one-on-one consultations or to take on a full-referral case. Attorneys are protected through our client agreements or our malpractice insurance for referral cases. ●

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1290 Broadway, Ste. 1700
Denver, CO 80203

PHONE 303-824-5319
FAX 303-861-5274

