



1. Serve the Public Good: In Latin, pro bono publico means “for the public good.” The present need for legal services for those of limited means both in Colorado and nationwide is astounding. Over 12 percent of Colorado’s population is financially eligible for free legal services from Colorado Legal Services or Metro Volunteer Lawyers, meaning they earn less than 125 percent of poverty level income. Even more do not qualify for free legal services but cannot afford to hire an attorney. And according to the American Bar Association, at least 40 percent of low to intermediate income households experience a legal problem each year. Metro Volunteer Lawyers (MVL) currently has 115 cases that have yet to be placed with an attorney. This means that 115 clients are unable to access the legal system. They wait with their legal rights in limbo in the hope that an attorney will agree to take the case on a pro bono basis. This situation is untenable. Clients who desperately need legal assistance deserve private counsel. As attorneys, we should embrace the opportunity to respond to this need.

2. Champion Professional Aspirations: Under Colorado Rule of Professional Conduct 6.1, “every lawyer has a professional responsibility to provide legal services to those unable to pay. A lawyer should aspire to render at least fifty hours of pro bono publico legal services per

year.” The comments to this Rule further remind us of the oath of admission to the Bar, which requires a lawyer to never “reject, from any consideration personal to myself, the cause of the defenseless or oppressed.” Clients need us, and we, as attorneys, should step up to meet this goal of providing them services.

3. Earn Continuing Legal Education Credits: You can receive CLE credits for pro bono work. Under C.R.C.P. 260.8, Colorado attorneys who provide uncompensated pro bono legal representation may apply for one general CLE credit for every five billable-equivalent hours of representation, up to a maximum of nine credits in each three-year compliance period. Colorado attorneys must earn 45 general CLE credits, including seven ethics credits, during each compliance period pursuant to C.R.C.P. 250.2. This means that every three years, you can receive nine credits of your 45 required credits through pro bono work. Earning CLE credits by providing pro bono services is much more rewarding than sitting in a classroom!

4. Achieve Self-Fulfillment: It is richly rewarding to personally participate in bridging the gap to equal justice by providing quality legal services to those in need and contributing to our community and society as a whole.

5. Broaden Your Expertise: Providing pro bono representation permits attorneys to expand their horizons by handling cases outside their area of expertise. If this causes some trepidation, don’t worry! MVL has a formal mentoring program that pairs mentees with experienced attorneys. MVL also has an informal panel of experts who provide practical advice on an as-needed basis either by phone or in person. These resources are available to all attorneys who provide services through MVL. For all these reasons, reach out to MVL today at denbar.org/mvl. 📍

TANYA AKINS is a founding shareholder and the Chief Financial Officer of Sherr Puttmann Akins Lamb PC. She brings a unique perspective to her work through her eight years of experience as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker conducting custody evaluations and providing courtroom testimony of her custody findings and recommendations. Tanya currently serves on the Board of Metro Volunteer Lawyers.

ANDREW GOERTZEL of Palmer, Goertzel & Associates, P.C. practices family law, child custody, divorce, traffic violations, driving while intoxicated and personal injury. Andrew is the recipient of the Arapahoe County Bar Associations Outstanding Young Lawyer Award from 2003 and currently serves on the Board of Metro Volunteer Lawyers.