

The Docket

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FEATURE

Soldier's Heart,
Lawyer's Mind

TRAVEL

Fiji's Seashell Cove

OPINION

An Optimist and
a Pandemic



METRO VOLUNTEER LAWYERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Through the Family Law Court Program, volunteers assist clients with uncomplicated, uncontested dissolution of marriage or allocation of parental responsibility cases. There are two stages where we are in need of volunteers: (1) Client Meetings, where volunteer attorneys, law students, and paralegals assist clients in filling out the documents needed to initiate their cases, and (2) Permanent Orders Hearings, where volunteer attorneys meet with clients to prepare the final documents needed to submit to the court, and then represent the client solely for the duration of the hearing that same day.

Volunteer with MVL's **FAMILY LAW COURT PROGRAM**



METRO
VOLUNTEER
LAWYERS

a Denver Bar Association program

*in collaboration with the Adams/Broomfield, Arapahoe,
Douglas/Elbert, and First Judicial District Bar Associations*

denbar.org/mvl | 303-830-8210

Volunteer today.

It Was the Best of Times, It Is the Worst of Times

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.” – Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities

As we wake every morning to more breaking news and statistics, we are reminded that this COVID-19 pandemic is changing the world forever. In light of this daunting news we struggle to keep our families, friends, the elderly, and especially our vulnerable loved ones safe. We need to remind ourselves that this is only temporary and that it too will pass. The real question is: How do we respond? How will our generation be remembered in the history books and how will our community face a pandemic that it has never in its history needed to face? At times we all champion one cause or another, often leading to division and reduced resources. Today, we share a sense of commonality. We are all facing the same dangers, fears, frustration, anxieties and feelings of being overwhelmed and all-consumed. The difference is that some of us will be impacted in ways that the rest of us cannot truly comprehend. This is not about who needs what from whom. This is about each one of us choosing to help rather than remaining immobilized. Humanity shines brightest when the best of it steps forward.

This week, as Governor Polis announced the launching of the new Colorado website, HelpColoradoNow.org, he stated, “A crisis can bring out the best in us.” The website is a central hub for volunteers and donations as the state responds to COVID-19. As you are all aware, this is certainly not the only website to allow for our generosity. Be sure to seek out others such as vitalan.org if you are able to safely donate blood, or your local food bank, temple, or church. Think of ways to promote local businesses by purchasing gift cards safely from your

own home computer.

Keep in mind the proviso that, “any good deed that brings you into proximity with other humans, demands that you take all appropriate precautions to protect both yourself and the health of those around you, especially the most vulnerable to the new coronavirus” (Kevin Simpson, *The Colorado Sun*).

As lawyers and legal professionals we should reflect on how fortunate we are. Most of us are not concerned with immediately losing our jobs or homes or health insurance. We are innovative, educated, and intelligent. We are finding tools to safely work remotely and modifying our business models to adjust as new challenges confront us. It is natural for us to be compassionate and seek out ways to help our community, however, we may wonder what that help should look like. We may have the resources to help financially and if we do, we should. Consider donating to your local nonprofit, or the Colorado Legal Foundation, Colorado Legal Services), or Metro Volunteer Lawyers.

But we want to do more and we can. According to Bill Hutchinson of ABC News, “An audit by the Poor People’s Campaign, in partnership with the Institute for Policy Studies, shows that even before the coronavirus crisis there were 140 million poor to low-wealth Americans who could not afford a \$400 economic emergency. A 2018 U.S. Census Bureau report showed that 38.1 million Americans were living in poverty — about \$16,900 in annual income or less for a two-person household.” Metro Volunteer Lawyers has always had a mission to bridge the gap in access to justice. Our goal is to

give a voice to those who are powerless and empower those who are invisible. Sadly, all indicators suggest that the community we continue to serve will need our assistance now more than ever. The coronavirus and the economic implications attached may disproportionately hurt the poor. Social distancing does not have to get in the way of volunteering, giving, or lending a helping hand. MVL continues to work remotely to assist the indigent population but we are only as resilient and impactful as our volunteers. We are grateful to so many of you who have given us your time and expertise and we need you now more than ever. We have over 50 clients and families in various areas of law that need your direct representation. We ask only that you would take cases pro bono and treat them as you would your own clients. We have ourselves been innovative in our remote work and are now scheduling all of our mediations, family law post decree and family law unbundled consultations by phone. We continue to provide full staff support and malpractice insurance for all of our volunteers. We, as legal professionals, have a unique skill. Please sign up to help at denbar.org/mvl. Many of the larger Denver law firms have been monitoring needs and opportunities with legal service providers and nonprofits across the country and are collaborating with colleagues at the Association of Pro Bono Counsel. For a full list of volunteer opportunities visit cobar.org/for-members/pro-bono-opportunities.

If you are looking to help in the broader legal context, be sure to visit and sign up at the newly launched Succession to Service website, successiontoservice.org. The goal

of the Succession to Service Program is to establish a structured, statewide program for Colorado's experienced lawyers and judges to partner with nonprofit organizations, courts, and other public interest entities to influence the continuing need for equal access to justice. Colorado lawyers and judges are matched with nonprofit organizations, legal services programs, and the courts to provide essential legal assistance to underserved populations. "Using their specialized skills and experience to do engaging pro bono work," the STS website states, "participating lawyers remain active members of the legal community and help Colorado's courts and service providers expand and enhance the pro bono legal services they offer."

We would be remiss if we failed to discuss self-care. It is crucial that we not only look after others in our direct and larger community, but that we look after ourselves. "If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete," says author and Buddhist

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practitioner Jack Kornfield. So take the time to meditate, exercise, and laugh. Be mindful in your daily lives. Use tools and resources to help you through these difficult days, such as those provided by the Colorado Bar Association, the Colorado Lawyers Assistance Program, or Colorado Lawyers Helping Lawyers.

In these times it is easy to fall into feelings of being ineffective and powerless. Don't

allow others or yourself to sit aimlessly. What kind of person do you want to be? Ultimately, we all want to make an impact on the lives of others. This is true for all of us. We want to make a difference, to be somebody, and to know that our lives mean something. Here is your chance. Seize it! 🍷

bar
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