

VOL. 1 ISSUE 5 • NOVEMBER 2023

PRO BONO INSIGHTS

A Monthly Georgia Legal Services Program Newsletter

Message from the Director

Rather than resort to the typical holiday clichés regarding giving that abound at this time of the year, I'll share my thoughts on giving as a business proposition for solo and small firm lawyers: consider adding pro bono public service to your office budget every year.

Unlike lawyers from large firms, who have pro bono budgets and allowances in the billable hour context, solo and small firm lawyers see an immediate income reduction when accepting pro bono cases. A great rule of thumb for lawyers is to budget for a pro bono case every quarter (or more frequently!) and communicate the "every quarter" pro bono case interest to your local pro bono program- in this case your local GLSP office. You can put up a sign in your office telling potential clients that you do your pro bono through GLSP. This helps you better manage the frequency and types of pro bono cases you accept. Remember, most of our cases take fewer than 5-10 hours to complete.

In addition to taking on regular pro bono cases, consider giving to GLSP. Georgia Bar Rule 6.1, which asks lawyers to aspire to provide at least 50 hours of pro bono annually, also encourages us to financially support legal aid programs that serve the poor. Consider budgeting every year a contribution to GLSP of the equivalent of 2 or more billable hours. If you are already a donor to GLSP, we thank you. And if you would like to make a donation as part of your year-end giving plans, you can do so at bit.ly/Justice_2023.

Let's continue our thanksgiving into December and the New Year!



Mike Monahan
Director of the Pro Bono Unit

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CLE and Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers are encouraged to access and explore our substantive training materials through our Pro Bono Learning Management System (Learning.GLSP.org). Additionally, GLSP and our partners host a variety of free or at-cost CLE sessions throughout the year.

To learn more about our training program, volunteer to host/present a training, or recommend new topics, please contact Mike Monahan (mmonahan@glsp.org).

CLE Training Events

Stay tuned for more CLE opportunities in the next edition of Pro Bono Insights.

DIRECT REPRESENTATION

GLSP's Pro Bono Unit offers a wide array of in-person and remote direct service opportunities throughout the state of Georgia. These opportunities are a great way for attorneys licensed in Georgia to assist clients one-on-one with legal matters ranging from appearing in court, drafting documents, or obtaining access to new resources. Opportunities exist statewide in the following substantive areas:

- Wills and Powers of Attorney
- Restriction of Criminal Records
- Bankruptcy
- Protective Orders for Victims of Violence
- Name Changes
- Probate of Estates
- and more

Paladin, our new volunteer platform, lists some of our existing opportunities. You can access it by going to https://bit.ly/GLSP_Paladin.

To learn more about region-specific opportunities, contact one of our Pro Bono Coordinators or Staff Attorneys (see page 11 of this newsletter) or contact Mike Monahan (mmonahan@glsp.org).

UPCOMING PRO BONO CLINICS

Clinics may be advice-only or brief services. Some clinics will be cover a variety of civil legal issues and provide clients time to meet with a private attorney for advice on their issue. Other clinics will focus on a specific legal issue, such as wills or record restriction, and will require the attorney to draft documents prior to meeting the client at the clinic. You can participate on-site or virtually.

Check out our upcoming legal clinics around the state and find one that meets your volunteer interests. Remember, for many clinics you can join us in-person or participate remotely.



Moultrie, GA Record Restriction Clinic

Looking for volunteers to assist clients in restricting their criminal records, helping them to increase their employment and housing opportunities. Contact Sarah Anderson (sjanderson@glsp.org) to sign up or for more information.



Gainesville, GA Probate Clinic

Looking for 1 volunteer to provide up to 4 clients with counsel and advice on probate/estate matters. Contact Maria Fuentes (mfuentes@glsp.org) to sign up or for more information.



Waycross, GA Wills and Estates Clinic

Looking for volunteers to draft and execute wills for 1-2 clients each. Contact Marika LaRoy (mlaroy@glsp.org) to sign up or for more information.

COMING SOON...

February 16, 2024
Whitfield County
Record Restriction Clinic

March, 2024
Augusta, GA
Veterans Clinic

March, 2024
Henry County
Record Restriction Clinic

Not able to volunteer right now, or want to increase your impact? A gift to GLSP helps support our staff and provide access to justice and opportunities out of poverty throughout the state!

bit.ly/Justice_2023

NOVEMBER'S PRO BONO STARS

Join with us to applaud this month's Pro Bono Stars



STAR VOLUNTEER LAWYER **JOEY TURNER**



"I USED TO HAVE A FULL PRACTICE. THROUGH GEORGIA LEGAL SERVICES, I NOW HAVE A FULFILLED PRACTICE."

In the world of pro bono, we often talk about lawyers giving of their time and the benefit that clients receive. The best pro bono volunteers realize that their clients are also giving back to them. And this month's star volunteer, Joey Turner, is one of the best.

According to Sarah J. Anderson, the Supervising Pro Bono Attorney for the Savannah Office, "Joey is one of my go-to volunteers. Whether it's representing a client at a domestic violence hearing or assisting a senior with a Last Will & Testament, Joey and his amazing office staff are always willing to lend a hand." Joey's dedication to stepping in when needed most extends well beyond his volunteer service.

The mission of Joey's firm (The Turner Firm, LLC) is "to educate, to empower, and to achieve the most favorable outcome, so that you can gain back your life." He began his practice to help clients in criminal matters. His clients are frequently experiencing some of the worst periods of their lives, and Joey's "rooting-for-the-underdog" mentality allows him to thrive where less-experienced attorneys would settle. This has helped him develop a professional reputation for "winning cases that seem hopeless."

Joey's strong drive to help others makes his choice to volunteer with GLSP a natural fit. According to him, "I initially volunteered through Georgia Legal Services Program because I wanted to give back to the community that has given me so much. However, I quickly found that my pro bono clients actually gave far more to me than I could give to them. I have met so many wonderful clients, and I enjoy both representing them and learning from them. This is especially true of the clients that I draft wills for; they are quick to share stories about how Savannah used to be and the fond memories that they have of our community. The stories and laughs that we share truly make my day."

We at GLSP are grateful for Joey Turner's commitment to serving our clients, and hope that all our volunteers have "the Joey Turner experience!"

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STAR LAW STUDENT ANNA SCHWAEMMLE



This month's Star Law Student is Anna Schwaemmle, a 2L at Atlanta's John Marshall Law School (AJMLS), who has been working as an intern in GLSP's Piedmont Regional Office since May 2023. In that time, Anna has established herself as an expert investigator, with a talent for researching unusual legal issues and managing different kinds of cases and clients with ease.

Anna was inspired to go to law school after finishing an undergraduate degree at the University of Georgia, where she worked at the Motivation and Behavior Lab as a research assistant. She has even been published in Psychology Today with an article titled "How Trust in Government Influences Pandemic Behavior."

Originally planning to become a research psychologist, Anna soon discovered she could use those same skills in an advocacy-based career where she could help other people. The law is a perfect fit for her, as she uses her scientific research and people-reading skills to her client's advantage.

In law school, Anna serves as Vice President of the goal of the Multicultural Legal Alliance, which celebrates the multicultural student body by focusing on inclusivity, outreach, and education.

Anna has recently taken on a leadership role as a "senior" intern, assisting in the process of training other interns and externs and encouraging other AJMLS students to work with GLSP. Anna has also been working with the Pro Bono Unit on estate planning cases and participated in our Annual Pro Bono Conference as a panelist on "Student Practice Act and the Law Student Experience."

"DURING 1L YEAR, MY PROFESSORS TOLD ME THAT INTERNS ARE AN INCONVENIENCE TO THE ATTORNEYS WHO HIRE THEM, BUT I NEVER FELT THAT WAY AT GLSP. EVERYONE WHO I WORKED WITH WAS REALLY KNOWLEDGEABLE, PATIENT, AND KIND TO ME WHILE I WAS LEARNING. THEY ALSO WENT OUT OF THEIR WAY TO LET ME OBSERVE OR WORK ON INTERESTING CASES AND GAIN THE MOST EXPERIENCE POSSIBLE."

NOVEMBER'S PRO BONO STARS

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STAR VOLUNTEER PARTNER

RESTORATION ROME



In the pro bono world, the phrase “community partner” comes up often. What is a community partner? A community partner is a conduit for access to justice. These individuals and organizations foster relationships between legal advocates, those in need of legal assistance, and the courts. They are the heartbeat of the communities

we serve. A community partner engages with those who are often overlooked, identifies unmet needs, and initiates proactive measures to facilitate change. These champions of justice recognize that “the good of the people is the highest law” (Cicero).

Restoration Rome is an initiative derived out of the need to address child advocacy and family restoration. Their mission is “to bring public, private, and faith-based partners together to strengthen and restore children and families in Christ’s name.” It is comprised of over 20 organizations, each of which provides direct services to at-risk residents by offering education and accessible resources, and by addressing systemic issues. Restoration Rome is consistently spearheading partnerships for the betterment of underserved communities.

Last year, Cristin Warden, Financial Coach with Financial Harmony (located at Restoration Rome), recognized that clients receiving assistance through their programs would greatly benefit from the services GLSP’s Pro Bono Unit provides. She contacted GLSP about opportunities to provide families with low incomes with Wills, Financial Powers of Attorney, and Advance Directives for Health Care. Through our partnership, GLSP and Restoration Rome have conducted two Wills clinics, hosted community education presentations on the importance of estate planning, and assisted clients with additional civil legal matters.

“IT GIVES SUCH PEACE OF MIND KNOWING OUR CLIENTS WHO OTHERWISE COULD NOT AFFORD IT HAVE LEGAL REPRESENTATION AND GUIDANCE.”

Form-Amplified Function

by Heidi Behnke, Statewide Project Manager



The world of civil legal aid has long-known at least one fact: clients don't always know when they have a legal problem. Though we do our best to educate communities and agency partners, early intervention sometimes seems like a losing battle. Then there are the times when it comes easily—times when one small spark shines just brightly enough for us to recognize a whole host of solvable problems. If client problems are the sparks, GLSP's Pro Bono Unit recently developed and tested a new type of sparkler that paved the way for truly holistic client services.

Registrants for GLSP's Warner Robins Veteran's Clinic had to answer more questions than our typical clients. Eight more, to be precise. We referred to this form as the "Preliminary Questionnaire" and each question used plain, relatable language to connect a wide array of partner services with potential client needs. Some questions were obvious, such as asking if an applicant had a will. Others were indicators, letting our staff know a legal issue may lurk under the surface. For example, a response from an applicant indicating that they "face challenges trying to ensure [their] home is in good repair and safe..." prompted our interviewers to ask questions about landlord tenant issues.

Insights from the preliminary questionnaire did more than identify potential legal needs; they also helped unite partners behind the event. Clients told us they needed access to mental health counseling. We enlisted two counselors and a mental health provider to attend and be available to speak with clients as needed. We made similar connections available in the areas of public and veterans benefits, housing assistance, consumer matters, etc. Where there was no partner agency available to attend, we developed a resource list. This client-led approach to partnership meant that the people most able to assist were in the room.

This experience was well-received by clients. One, Mr. Smith (name changed), was homeless when he initially completed his preliminary questionnaire and screening. Between the time of initial interview with him and the clinic date, our partners helped him move into an apartment and began to help him find furniture. GLSP staff and volunteers further assisted him at the event. He kept telling us that he "just keeps getting good news" between his appointments. He left with consultations on his veterans benefits, public benefits, estate planning preparedness, and visible relief when he learned the small amount of debt "keeping him up at night" would not impact his protected income.

Volunteers also benefit when GLSP pursues holistic, collaborative opportunities to meet client needs. They expand their skillset, especially in client interviewing and communication. They're able to make impactful changes in the lives of their clients by providing early advice rather than responding after a legal issue actively threatens the client's livelihood. They have valuable opportunities to partner with other GLSP staff and volunteers in a wrap-around review of the clients needs. It is no wonder one volunteer left saying this event was "one of the most rewarding things I've been involved in with GLSP".

The preliminary questionnaire isn't foolproof, but it greatly enhances our ability to serve clients. It is just one way that GLSP continues to innovate and improve our ability to provide access to justice and opportunities out of poverty.

The Pro Bono Unit is planning another holistic services clinic in Augusta, GA in mid-March of 2024. For more information or to sign up as a volunteer, please contact Heidi Behnke, hbehnke@glsp.org



by Michael Ferguson
GLSP Law Student Intern
3L, University of Virginia School of Law

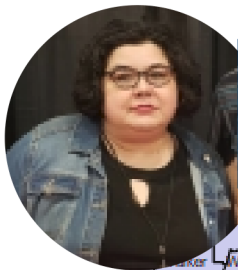
Impactful Change One Person at a Time

Last winter, I spoke in front of the Virginia Senate Subcommittee on Health and the Virginia House Courts of Justice committee. As a part of the State and Local Government Clinic, my clinic partner and I had spent the better part of a year researching, writing, and negotiating over a pair of bills intended to chip away at the mental health crisis Virginia has been facing over the last five years. This culminated in each of us presenting one of the bills to the legislature and, ultimately, in both of the bills passing by overwhelming margins. This was the kind of work I went to law school for. Though these bills were modest in their ambition, they attempted to address the problem systemically, from the top down. For someone like me - someone who has watched the West Wing a minimum of three times through, someone whose idea of progress has come from momentous events like the Obergefell decision and the Civil Rights Act - this approach has always possessed a heavy appeal. It looks important. It feels important. It is important.

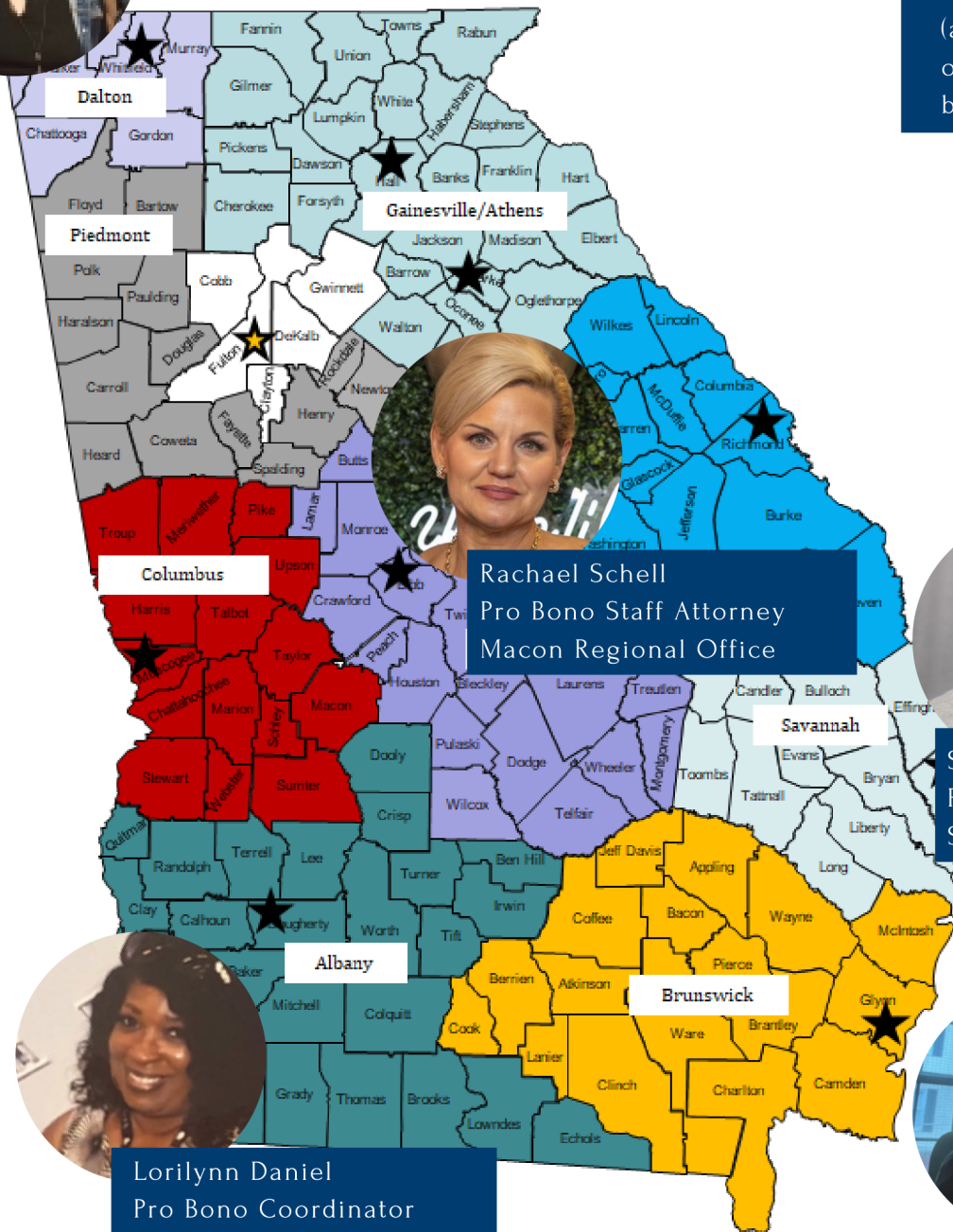
But there's another side to that coin. Over that year of work, we had certainly spoken to patients rights advocates, doctors, and many other stakeholders involved the mental health crisis who would be impacted by our legislation. But there was no individual, specific person whose problems we had solved. At the end of our work, after our celebrations, we handed the baton off to others to turn theoretical benefits into real benefits.

Fast-forward half a year later, to my new externship with Georgia Legal Services Program. I have been working at the Program for just over a month now, and I have been on the other end of that relay race. In this short time, I have already been able to help multiple people obtain Wills, I helped a mother and son protect their inheritance from a bad actor, and I represented a mother and daughter seeking a Temporary Protective Order. In doing so, I have gained a newfound appreciation for the work of helping people one individual at a time. I have been able to witness both the joys and struggles of people working through their own issues - from a family ready to go to jail if needed to protect their daughter (a step that was, thankfully, not needed) to a veteran thankful to have been able to think through and designate her property so that each of her grandchildren will know she thought of them specifically. And this has taught me a simple lesson: even for those who dream of making big changes in the world, like me, there may be no better place to start than making a big change in the life of one individual.

MEET THE TEAM- REGIONAL OFFICES



Angelina Vaquera-Linke
Pro Bono Coordinator
Dalton Regional Office



Rachael Schell
Pro Bono Staff Attorney
Macon Regional Office



Sarah J. Anderson
Pro Bono Supervising Attorney
Savannah Regional Office



Lorilynn Daniel
Pro Bono Coordinator
Albany Regional Office



Marika LaRoy
Pro Bono Coordinator
Brunswick Regional Office

WE'RE HIRING!

GLSP's Pro Bono Unit is seeking new lawyers and legal professionals to join our team in our Augusta, Columbus, and Piedmont Offices.

To learn more, contact Alexandra Eichenbaum (aeichenbaum@glsp.org) or view our job postings at bit.ly/GLSP_Jobs

MEET THE TEAM- CENTRAL SUPPORT



Mike Monahan
Director of the Pro Bono Unit



Alexandra V. Eichenbaum
Deputy Director of the Pro Bono Unit



Ashley Clark
Pro Bono Supervising Attorney



Nobie Mitchell
Pro Bono Coordinator

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Deborah Chapman
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Tommy Richards
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