



PRO BONO *Spotlight*

A series of articles highlighting the pro bono work being done by FBA Chapter members.

BRIGGS AND MORGAN

By **Lauren A. D'Cruz**

Briggs and Morgan has a long-standing history of providing pro bono legal services to the community, which demonstrates its commitment to improving access to justice. Briggs' pro bono work is driven by its close relationships with Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services ("SMRLS"), Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid ("MMLA"), the Advocates for Human Rights, the Children's Law Center, the Volunteer Lawyers Network ("VLN"), LegalCORPS, and the Immigrant Law Center. Briggs focuses its pro bono efforts in three categories designed to impact as many Minnesotans as possible: direct legal services to those who cannot afford them, service to the judicial system, and representation of civic-oriented nonprofits.

Briggs attorneys receive referrals from SMRLS for order for protection cases, housing cases, and probate and guardianship cases, as well as a variety of other matters. Through SMRLS, Briggs partners with 3M attorneys handling SSI disability appeal hearings and with Mayo Clinic attorneys on naturalization matters. Briggs received a 2014 Beacon of Justice Award from the National Legal Aid and Defender Association based on a nomination from SMRLS. Briggs attorneys handle a number of asylum actions and appeals referred through Advocates for Human Rights. Briggs shareholders Dan Supalla and Julie Firestone were honored as 2014 Minnesota Lawyers of the Year for their representation of two Cameroonian women who suffered persecution based upon their sexual orientation. Briggs attorneys work closely with VLN, including staffing shifts at the Hennepin County Legal Access Point Clinic and working on the housing court panel and the probate panel. Briggs also acts as the anchor law firm at LegalCORPS's monthly clinic in which its business law attorneys provide advice to startup businesses that cannot afford legal help.

Beyond its active involvement in the FBA's *Pro Se* Project, Briggs assists the judiciary in a number of areas. Briggs represents all participants in the Ramsey County Mental Health Court, a very successful diversionary court in the Second Judicial District. Briggs is one of several law firms staffing the Hennepin County Pro Bono Mediation Project, in which *in*

forma pauperis cases and conciliation court cases are mediated on a pro bono basis. Briggs partners Jonathon Schmidt and Tara Reese Duginske created and currently manage the Hennepin County Public Defender Appellate Program in which attorneys take appeals of cases tried by the public defender's office, alleviating some of the burdens on that office.

Briggs also provides significant pro bono legal assistance to nonprofits such as MJF, LegalCORPS, SMRLS, and Call for Justice, as well as community-based organizations, such as Neighborhood House, Partnership for Domestic Abuse Services, and Center for Victims of Torture. Lastly, Briggs acts as outside pro bono counsel for Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity, handling both general legal work and a number of significant housing development projects. Real estate shareholder Dan Cole was honored with the MJF Distinguished Service award last year for his work with Habitat for Humanity and SMRLS.

Briggs looks forward to continuing its pro bono efforts in 2015 and beyond.

Lauren A. D'Cruz is an attorney at Lind Jensen Sullivan & Peterson specializing in civil litigation, including employment disputes, retail practice, and professional liability and insurance cases.

