Making a Difference

The Pennsylvania Bar News column that highlights Pennsylvania attorneys who make a difference in their communities by providing extraordinary pro bono service and/or other legal services in the public interest.

Kathryn M. Kenyon, Pittsburgh

Kathryn M. Kenyon of Pietragallo Gordon Alfano Bosick & Raspanti is the firm’s pro bono coordinator and chair of the administrative board of the Pittsburgh Pro Bono Partnership, an association of 34 Allegheny County law firms and legal departments that work together to provide direct legal services to needy families. She is handling a pro bono mortgage foreclosure matter as well as several pro bono matters under the partnership’s Expungement Project. She is a board member of Neighborhood Legal Services Association (NLSA) and a volunteer attorney with the Custody Conciliation Project for the partnership, as well as a volunteer attorney and mentor with NLSA’s Protection from Abuse program.

Why do you participate in pro bono?

There is such a tremendous need for legal assistance and services for low-income individuals and families. Just think what a difference our profession could make if everyone took just one pro bono case or volunteered to sit one night at a pro bono legal clinic. At times it is difficult to juggle work, my family and their needs and activities, and pro bono work. But then I put things in perspective and realize how blessed and lucky I am, which motivates me to continue to stay active with pro bono work.

How did you first become involved?

I went to law school thinking I could change the world and make things a bit easier for families. I realized after graduating and working in private practice that I needed to make sure I did not forget that. Getting involved in pro bono work has helped me remember those ideals.

Have your pro bono cases dealt with legal issues different from your regular practice areas? If so, how did you adapt?

My regular practice area is litigation, working with health care providers and employers. Helping victims of domestic violence or families needing assistance with foreclosures or expungements is somewhat outside the box for me, but learning to listen and problem solve are skills that easily carry over. The partnership and NLSA provide excellent and informative training sessions and mentors, which makes it easy to keep volunteering.

What have been the personal rewards?

Knowing that I have helped or tried to help make someone else’s life a little bit easier provides tremendous personal and professional satisfaction. My pro bono cases have made me a better lawyer and enriched my life by making me a better person.