Jeremiah J. Underhill, Richfield

Jeremiah J. Underhill is a consultant for LexisNexis and a solo practitioner, based in Richfield, Juniata County.

Describe your pro bono work.
I focus my pro bono work on disability compensation claims for disabled veterans who have claims that have been denied in whole or in part by the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA). Some of these veterans “go it on their own,” so to speak, while a larger number are represented by a Veterans Service Officer (VSO) working for an organization such as the American Legion, VFW or the DVA. A VSO is simply an individual with training on the practice and procedure of the DVA appeals process. Very few veterans have an attorney representing them on their claim before the DVA.

Why do you participate in pro bono?
I feel that it is the least I can do to help a person who has made a commitment to defend our nation, preserve our freedom, and possibly sacrifice their life for the good of our country.

How did you become involved?
I was the staff attorney in charge of supervising the Widener Veterans Law Clinic (VLC) in Harrisburg from its inception in July 2007 to when it closed in July 2010 due to lack of funding. While handling cases left over from the clinic I have been working with the Dauphin County Bar Association since 2011 to create a program to fill the void left by the closure of the VLC.

Have your pro bono cases dealt with legal issues different from your regular practice areas? If so, how did you adapt?
Veterans’ law is mostly administrative law and has several layers of appellate review for an attorney to navigate. The most difficult and frustrating aspect is dealing with the fact that the DVA has virtually no deadlines to adhere to. Veterans will wait years for a hearing and often the case is remanded for more review, meaning more waiting.

What have been the personal rewards?
Simply receiving a “thank you” call from a vet who got the benefits he or she deserved means the world to me. I’ve always told students at the clinic, “If you can’t get motivated to work on this type of a case, you probably shouldn’t be an attorney.”

PBA Annual Meeting
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3 p.m. – 4 p.m.
Minority Bar Committee Meeting

3 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Bar Foundation directors and members

3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
WIP “Technology and the Work-Life Balance” CLE 313
This session explores ways of dealing with work-life balance issues, the logistical and economic challenges in the workplace and how new means of communication can assist and advance women in the profession. Ethical issues women in the profession face regarding privacy and confidentiality will be addressed, as well as those in connection with the use of social media for advertising and as a research tool. These are important topics for solo and small-firm practitioners or those based outside urban areas, those who work from home or part time — however and whenever they are engaged in the profession.
(1 hour ethics CLE credit)

3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
“What We Can Learn about Professionalism from Lincoln” CLE 319
Abraham Lincoln is well-known throughout history for the exemplary qualities of legal and personal professionalism that he demonstrated in every aspect of his life. The examples he set in his daily living more than 150 years ago remain stalwart models for all professionals to follow today. This panel will lead an engaging discussion that provides a current context to the model of professionalism that Lincoln provides — a model that you can incorporate into your practice and into your life.
(1 hour ethics CLE credit)

4 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Young Lawyers Division Business Meeting

4:30 p.m. – 6 p.m.
Minority Bar/WIP/Solo & Small Firm/Civil & Equal Rights/Gay and Lesbian Rights/Pennsylvania Bar Foundation Reception

6:30 p.m. – 7:15 p.m.
Annual Dinner Reception

7:30 p.m. – 10:30 p.m.
Annual Dinner/Dance
Join us for this memorable evening to welcome PBA’s incoming President Forest N. Myers and honor outgoing President Thomas G. Wilkinson Jr. Dress for the annual dinner is black-tie optional.

Friday, May 10
8:30 a.m. – 9 a.m.
New Delegates Orientation Breakfast

9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
House of Delegates Meeting