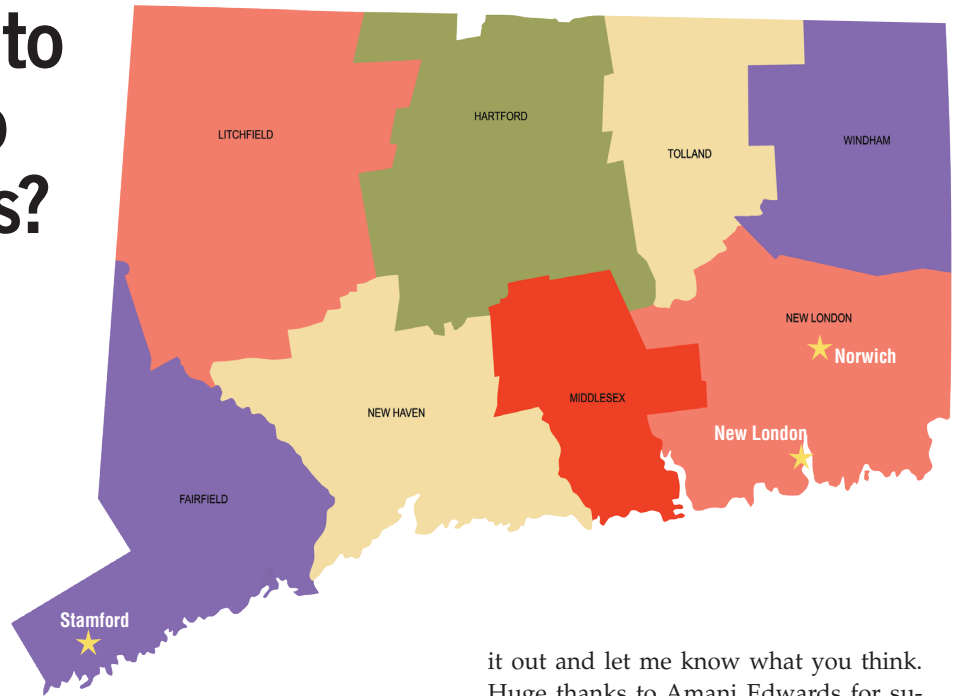


Who Has Time to Volunteer to Do Pro Bono Hours?

By DANIEL J. HORGAN



I bet all our CBA members have asked themselves this question at one point in their careers. I certainly have. Considering the pressing demands of our practice/careers coupled with family and community obligations, not to mention quality well-being time to recharge our batteries—how can we help the less fortunate with their legal issues and meet our ethical duties as lawyers, especially coming out of a global pandemic with so much catching up to do? Look no further than the CBA’s **CT Free Legal Answers** and **Lawyers in Libraries** pro bono programs. Both of these programs require limited time and effort while the benefits to those in need and the personal feeling of satisfaction is far reaching and fulfilling. I have found these two programs to be nicely tailored to fit with my busy litigation practice, CBA responsibilities, and my never a dull moment personal life. Here has been my experience with these two programs.

CT FREE LEGAL ANSWERS

In conjunction with the ABA, CT Free Legal Answers is a virtual legal advice clinic. Qualifying users post their civil legal question to their state’s website, or to the federal site for immigration and federal veterans’ questions. Users will then be emailed when their question receives a response.

I received an email one extremely busy day several months ago from Amani Edwards, the CBA’s administrator of the program, inviting me to participate. During my lunch break, I grabbed a sand-

wich and logged on to the website—ct.freelegalanswers.org. I clicked the tutorial on YouTube and learned how easy it was to participate. I read the topics of several questions and skipped over areas of the law I was clueless on (about 75 percent of the questions, LOL). I was able to sufficiently answer questions on statute of limitations and a small claims credit card dispute. That consumed about 20 minutes of my time working from the comfy confines of my office and then I went back to my regular work activities. I logged on the website a week later and had this response from the credit card client:

Comment from a Client

“Just wanted to let you know I explained my case to the judge and the lawyer. They accepted my argument and agreed to withdraw the suit after receipt of payment within 30 days. I appreciate your help in the matter. Thank you.”

I was stoked with that response. On top of the limited time I spent and the personal satisfaction in truly resolving a stressful legal situation for the participant in need, the website logs your hours to be used for CLE credit. Join me in volunteering and together we can increase participation in this important program. Just try

it out and let me know what you think. Huge thanks to Amani Edwards for supervising this program.

LAWYERS IN LIBRARIES

This great idea was the brainchild of Presidential Fellow and Young Lawyers Section member Kyle LaBuff. Implemented in December of 2020 in Stamford and New London public libraries, this program allows CBA members to provide pro bono services to members within the community. In New London, CBA members Roger Scully, Kyle Zrenda, and Joseph Strafaci joined myself in December and met several community members who had signed up for 20-30 minute meetings through library director, Thomas Kramer. Waivers were signed by the patrons/clients and topics regarding the legal issues were divided among us to determine who had the most knowledge for each topic. We met from 4:00–6:00 p.m. in secure conference rooms. The pro bono services are limited to the 20–30 minute conference. Instead of having just the one event in December, the feedback from the library director was so positive and the need for continued legal services evi-

Continued on page 40 →



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President's Message

Continued from page 5

try, drawing together as “We the People” to advance the highest ideals of equality, freedom, justice, and the rule of law, this moment, with all of its difficulties, gives us the opportunity to do so again.

I am incredibly honored to serve as the 98th president of the Connecticut Bar Association. I am intensely aware of the challenges facing us, arising in the world around us, threatening the most vulnerable among us and the pillars of society that we are sworn to uphold. But I believe in this profession and our bar association, in our collective potential to care for each other, and to advance and uphold the ideals and principles that we have aspired to in this country since its founding. In this, our path and purpose as a bar association is clear. In this, we must set our common resolve. In this, we must stand and work: Together. ■

NOTES

1. My family's initial fears and concerns were tied to the uncertainty of the unknown, and the worries that all parents have when considering a child's future. They have long since come to celebrate and take pride in my chosen profession and in particular in my work as a legal aid lawyer. Shortly after my admission as a lawyer, I was able to visit my grandmother in India for the last time, who beamed with pride at my early accomplish-

ments and chosen career, and set me off with the love, blessings, and encouragement that only a grandmother can provide. I write this footnote in particular because my mother will likely read this someday, and will want to ensure a complete and correct record. I hope this footnote will suffice, although she may insist on her own column in the *CT Lawyer*. Like many lawyers, I am often reminded that some of the earliest indications of my future career were exhibited in childhood and teenage arguments, from which there were rarely judgments in my favor, and no appeals.

2. Connecticut Rules of Professional Conduct, Preamble (2021).
3. Our organization's stated purposes are broad, and are addressed to the needs of our members, the profession, and to society as a whole. See, *The Constitution of the Connecticut Bar Association, Inc.*, Article II, Purpose. https://www.ctbar.org/docs/default-source/resources/cba-constitution-by-laws-and-procedures_7-31-18.pdf.
4. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. 2, Ch. 8 (1840).
5. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. 2, Ch. 8 (1840).
6. Records of the State Bar Association of Connecticut, 1875-1910 p. 1-4; “A History of the First One Hundred Years of the Connecticut Bar Association 1875-1975,” *49 Connecticut Bar Journal* 2, p. 203-226 (June 1975).
7. The CBA's 1875 constitution provided as follows:

The Association is established to uphold and improve the standard of professional qualifications; to maintain the honor and dignity of the profession of law; to aid all proper measures for the improvement of the jurisprudence of the state, the organization of Courts and mode of practice, and to promote social

intercourse among its members.

Records of the State Bar Association of Connecticut, 1875-1910, p. 5. The core of our constitutional mission remains much the same today. See note 3, above.

8. “A History of the First One Hundred Years of the Connecticut Bar Association 1875-1975,” *49 Connecticut Bar Journal* 2, p. 203-226 (June 1975); See also, Lawrence M. Friedman, *A History of American Law (4th Edition)* Oxford University Press (2019), p. 635, (“With few exceptions, state and city bar associations were not open to everybody; they did not invite the bar as a whole, but sent out feelers to a select group, the ‘decent part’ of the bar.”)
9. *Id.* at 202-204, Friedman, p. 695.
10. See Friedman, p. 635, “Between 1870 and 1878, eight city and eight state bar associations were founded in twelve different states.”
11. Robert D. Putnam, *The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again*, Simon & Schuster (2020), p. 112.
12. *Id.* at p. 8
...the United States in the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s was startlingly similar to today. Inequality, political polarization, social dislocation, and cultural narcissism prevailed—all accompanied, as they are now, by unprecedented technological advances, prosperity, and material well-being... Looking back to a time Mark Twain disparagingly called the Gilded Age turns out to feel eerily like looking in the mirror.
13. *The Civil Rights Cases*, 109 U.S. 3 (1883)
14. *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896)
15. See generally, Robert D. Putnam, *The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again*, Simon & Schuster (2020).
16. *Id.* at p. 341

Pro Bono

Continued from page 31

dent, that the New London crew made it a monthly event! Every month has been successful and satisfying for our CBA participants with at least two meetings turning into paying clients. Library Director Thomas said, “The Public Library of New London is so grateful to be partnering with the CBA to offer the community the monthly Pro Bono Lawyers in Libraries Program. Simply referring our patrons to a book or legal website for their problems just isn't enough.”

I am pleased to announce that Norwich Public Library joined the program in September and Kyle Labuff is connecting

with Danbury and Litchfield to get those cities on board—let's keep the momentum going by adding additional libraries and fill up the map! Contact myself at djh@horganlawoffice.com or Kyle at kjlabuff@gmail.com if you wish to participate in your town and/or bring another public library on board. Remember senior partners/colleagues, pro bono programs like these help younger lawyers gain experience and build their skillsets—something that the old short calendar call use to do. For senior lawyers like myself, it is a way to connect with younger lawyers as we often have a beverage of our choice following the sessions. As Kyle knows, this program is a perfect opportunity for

young lawyers to get involved with pro bono work. To learn more about this program, turn to page 16 for an interview with Kyle LaBuff.

The CBA continues to lead the way with so many opportunities to provide much needed Pro Bono services—YES, we all have some time to squeeze in pro bono services. Oh, by the way, I am the new chair of the Pro Bono Committee and honored to follow in Cecil Thomas' footsteps. I look forward to working with all the committee members to help pro bono participation expand. Cheers to a successful and rewarding Pro Bono 2021-22 Year! ■