



THE PRIVILEGE OF PHILANTHROPY

BY: W. BENJAMIN KING

As with most things in my life, I learned early on from my father about the importance of helping others in need. As I have grown older, I am frequently confronted with the reality that in today's world it is all too easy to forget to help others along the way. After all, in the life of a litigator with billable hours to meet, court deadlines that are sacrosanct, and family obligations, do any of us really have time to volunteer our time? Of course we do — and we *should*.

I have been volunteering with Metro Volunteer Lawyers (MVL) for a few years and I recently joined the board of directors to assist with recruiting efforts. I was hesitant the first time I volunteered through MVL, but I have fallen in love with the program ever since. Being able to help some of the most vulnerable people in the community reignited a deep burning desire for me that had long ago gone dormant and been nearly extinguished. After taking my first pro bono case with MVL, I remembered all the lofty ideals I had before entering law school and felt like I was doing something truly benevolent for the first time in a long time. After joining MVL's board, I have met some of the best and brightest attorneys Colorado has to offer who are all working together to take access to justice for the underprivileged from an aspiration to a reality.

Being tasked with recruitment duties affirmed my belief in MVL's purpose and mission as well. Predictably, I call attorneys who previously volunteered with MVL, and after a few minutes of exchanging pleasantries I must inevitably ask for the lawyer's most valuable commodity — his or her time. Fortunately, and seemingly without fail, just about every attorney gives me a resounding "yes" when I ask them to resume volunteering with MVL. Attorneys who have worked

with MVL previously love the idea of coming back to the program to volunteer. If you have not had the honor of volunteering with MVL before, I can personally attest that the intrinsic reward is second to none, the experience is invaluable, and the judicial officers — just like elephants — never seem to forget the face of a lawyer performing pro bono publico.

Knowing that the idea of taking a case for free is admittedly daunting, MVL has mentors who are eager and available to help. The synergy and support from MVL mentors and board members is unparalleled, in my experience. With a network of skilled attorneys to support pro bono cases, typical obstacles to pro bono work, such as inexperience and unrestrained time commitment, go by the wayside. More than that, MVL offers malpractice insurance, mediation services, networking opportunities with counsel from various practice areas across the state, and support staff to help answer general questions and assist with facilitating the intake of prospective clients, which permits you to focus solely on the facts of the case.

And the hug or handshake at the conclusion of a case from an MVL client is worth it all in the end. Pro bono work allows you to change other's lives for the better, but it changes yours too, which at the end of the day is the privilege of performing philanthropy. Contact MVL Director Toni-Anne Dasent at tdasent@denbar.org to begin your journey with MVL today!



Ben King is a family law practitioner in Douglas County with the law firm McConaughy & Sarkissian, P.C. and is currently the Douglas-Elbert Bar Association Representative to the MVL Board of Governors