FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER:
PROFILES IN PRO BONO
A Publication of the University of South Carolina School of Law Pro Bono Program

For our latest issue, Columbia attorney Margaret “Marti” Miles Bluestein gave us some insight into her legal career and pro bono work. Ms. Bluestein is a partner at Bluestein, Nichols, Thompson & Delgado, LLC, and practices exclusively in the area of workers’ compensation. Ms. Bluestein represents children on a pro bono basis as a guardian ad litem in cases involving the Department of Social Services and serves on the board of directors of the South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center.

What kind of pro bono work have you been involved in?
My pro bono work has included handling Social Security disability cases and DSS (Department of Social Services) cases. I have also worked on raising funds in the past for the South Carolina Bar Association’s pro bono programs. I chaired the Pro Bono Auction Committee for several years.

What do you think has been your most important victory or accomplishment in a pro bono case? The most important victories to me are in the DSS cases. Serving as a guardian ad litem to children who are getting placed in an environment in which they can thrive is incredibly rewarding.

Do you think that pro bono work has contributed to your sense of career satisfaction?
My pro bono work does contribute to my career satisfaction. I have been very fortunate to spend 15 years doing a job that I love. The clients in my workers' compensation practice are very appreciative of the work that I do for them, but there is nothing like helping a client that needs Social Security benefits or a child that needs a voice in our legal system.

What do you view as the most vital issues in need of attorneys’ volunteer services?
Young lawyers who volunteer their time will have a big impact no matter what types of pro bono cases they choose to handle. I think the best advice I could give to a young lawyer is to volunteer your time in an area in which you feel comfortable. Some people feel comfortable in a courtroom setting and are fine with appearing in DSS cases. Some people feel sick at the thought of appearing in a courtroom. Those people might want to draft a will for someone or something else.

Quick Facts on Marti:

- J.D., U.S.C School of Law
- Cofounded the Bluestein & Nichols law firm in 2000
- Loves to travel and read in her spare time
along those lines. Organizations like the S.C. Bar Young Lawyers’ Division and Appleseed Legal Justice Center do a great job of providing training that assists young lawyers in handling pro bono cases. Attending the training sessions assists the young lawyers in getting the best possible results for their clients.

You are on the board of directors of the South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center. What role does this organization play in obtaining justice for the indigent? South Carolina Appleseed advocates for low income South Carolinians. Appleseed focuses in the areas of health care, education, housing, immigration issues, elder law, consumer protection, and community economic development. Instead of handling individual cases, Appleseed seeks to effect systemic change through the legislature, courts, the community and the media.

You are the proud mother of three children. What are the main similarities between young children and attorneys arguing during litigation? It is amazing to me that I have three children, all under the age of 10, who are destined to be lawyers. Since the time they could speak, they have been debating with me, each other, and anyone else who will listen. My children always keep their eyes on the end goal. Every conversation they have is centered on achieving that end pursuit of these rights that drives South Carolina Appleseed forward.

You are the proud mother of three children. What are the main similarities between young children and attorneys arguing during litigation? It is amazing to me that I have three children, all under the age of 10, who are destined to be lawyers. Since the time they could speak, they have been debating with me, each other, and anyone else who will listen. My children always keep their eyes on the end goal. Every conversation they have is centered on achieving that end pursuit of these rights that drives South Carolina Appleseed forward.

On vacation with her daughters

Appleseed provides training, education, and co-counseling to increase the number of South Carolinians advocating for South Carolina's indigent community. A civil society promises safe housing, reliable transportation, food, education, and the assurance that our legal system is looking out for those most in need. It is the goal. My children know the weaknesses of the person they are debating, usually a sibling, and have decided how to capitalize on this during their debate. A good attorney knows the strengths and weaknesses of his or her case. During litigation, a good attorney lets you know the strength of his or her case while minimizing the weaknesses. I should confess that my soon-to-be 10 year old has successfully convinced me to let her have five friends to her birthday sleepover instead of three like I originally planned. The ‘Bluestein’ in Bluestein, Nichols, Thompson & Delgado, LLC will not be referring to Marti Bluestein in 15 years if my daughter Kinsey has anything to do with it.