In this issue we feature Columbia attorney, Paul de Holczer. Paul was admitted to the South Carolina bar in 1994 and received his J.D. from the University of South Carolina School of Law. After law school, Paul clerked for the Honorable Frank P. McGowan, Jr., South Carolina Circuit Court, and Assistant Chief Counsel, South Carolina Department of Transportation. He has lectured on eminent domain and condemnation law for the South Carolina Bar, University of South Carolina School of Law, the International Right of Way Association (Carolinas Chapter), and for several professional education firms. Paul authored the South Carolina chapter for *The Law and Procedure of Eminent Domain in the 50 States* published online by the American Bar Association.

**Finding Direction in Law School**

As a law student, it’s difficult to form a robust understanding of what it means to have a satisfying legal career. First of all, many students go to law school with at best a vague idea of what it means to be a lawyer. Many don’t know what they want to do with their life, and law school is a default decision of sorts. Some of these students are surprised to find that law school may not facilitate the moments of meditation needed to ponder one’s direction in life. Amidst the hustle and bustle of law school, it’s hard to aspire for much more than understanding tomorrow’s reading assignment. Sometimes it feels like the daily goal is to do what you can to soften the impact of the Socratic method. For many students, this is less than satisfying.

After talking with Paul, I believe he would say that pro bono work and volunteering helps law students begin to understand more about themselves and their world, enabling them to lead a satisfying legal career and life. I asked Paul if volunteering contributed to his sense of career satisfaction. Paul said it absolutely did, and he had some sobering words on the realities of coming to law school merely to get a good paying job:

“The truth is that law is hard work and hard work is not always rewarded in practice. You may lose a case through no fault of your own, despite doing an excellent job. Clients may not appreciate what you have accomplished even when you prevail. Other lawyers may never understand what hard work you put in to get a good result, or what sacrifices you may have made to do a good job. On any given day, a client may do something or fail to do something which will undo all the good work you did the day before.”
How One Lawyer Has Made a Difference

Throughout his legal career, Paul has volunteered his time and expertise to help others. Paul has taken on several pro bono cases through CASA – an organization that helps children in need. He has also taken on private clients who could not pay, and represented them without compensation. This fact left a great impression on me. Lawyers are generally busy people, and taking on a client without compensation doesn’t make much economic sense. The truth is: economic sense isn’t always good sense. The gratitude those clients must have felt towards Paul inspires me to be that kind of lawyer – one who values helping others above making a buck.

Paul also volunteers in the community outside of what many might consider the “legal sphere”. His involvement with the Thornwell Home for Children dates back many years. He has been the Chair of the Board of Visitors for Thornwell Home for Children (2005-2007) and a Trustee of the Board of Trustees for Thornwell Home for Children (2008–2013). Thornwell is a joyful Christian community that offers hope and wholeness to children and families. Paul was recently named to the Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities, Inc. PAIMI Advisory Board.

A Variety of Ways to Give

Discovering the many ways in which Paul gives of his time to help others reminded me of the pro bono office bulletin board on the second floor of the law school. As a first year student, I couldn’t believe how many organizations were looking for law student volunteers. But the question isn’t “How many?” It’s “Why?”

Why should law students volunteer? When I asked Paul, he said:
“The short answer is that it “feeds one’s soul.”
The longer answer is that it nourishes one’s idea of self and it responds to the expectations one has of one’s capacity for goodness.”

Being a law student is about more than working hard to attain that six-figure salary. It’s about becoming the type of person now that we would like to be once we are lawyers. If our hope is to become the type of lawyer that volunteers and works to make the world a better place, chances are that we are more likely to reach that goal if we are law students who do that now.

This interview was conducted by Jonathan Perklins - Co-Vice President of the Pro Bono Board

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For the Good of The Order: Profiles in Pro Bono is a publication of the Board of the USC School of Law Pro Bono Program. The purpose is to highlight the activities of inspirational attorneys performing outstanding pro bono service.

Know someone who fits the bill? Email us at Robinspd@law.sc.edu