



STRENGTH IN NUMBERS >

Together We Can Do More



2020

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

Together
We Can
Do More



MVA Public Service Committee

Moore & Van Allen

TOGETHER WE CAN DO MORE:

Co-Chairs' Message

It is with great pleasure that we present Moore & Van Allen's 2020 Public Service Report which honors the selfless and sustained work of our attorneys and staff, and celebrates the wide-ranging impact of our pro bono work and acts of public service throughout the Charlotte community and beyond.

This year's annual service report features Moore & Van Allen professionals passionately committing to participating in pro bono work and community activities, be it through the bar, the firm and our community partners, or their own initiative. Our work is particularly important now. Multiple projects focus on or assist in addressing racial inequality and the suffering it causes. We are proud of our efforts and plan to do more to meet the legal and community needs of the underrepresented during this difficult time.

Our efforts range from projects that benefit the elderly, veterans, immigrants, and near homeless to international refugees, human trafficking survivors, domestic violence victims, and vulnerable children. Through each of these efforts we continue to value our many community partners who prove there is strength in numbers and that together we can do more.

Together, we can dream more, serve more, believe more, share more, inspire more, and provide more. Moore & Van Allen's rich history of life-changing community impact would not be possible without the firm's incredible alliances with nonprofit partners, civic organizations, and clients across the region.

At Moore & Van Allen we understand and embrace our responsibility to impact the surrounding community for good. We also recognize that, especially in light of current circumstances, the need for our pro bono services will only continue to grow. As a firm, we remain committed to meeting the needs of the most vulnerable in our community throughout these trying times and beyond. Consistent with that commitment, **Tom Mitchell**, chair of MVA's Management Committee, issued an important message reaffirming the firm's core principles and detailing our action plans to address racial inequality, highlighting Moore & Van Allen's stance against racism and uniting with those seeking a more just and equitable world.

We thank all who have served for making a difference in the lives of so many people. We hope our 2020 Public Service Report ignites hope, pride, and motivation, and serves as a reminder that together we can truly do more.

With gratitude,

Ed O'Keefe

Member, Financial Regulatory Advice
and Response
Co-Chair, Public Service Committee

Kimberly Zirkle

Member, Financial Services
Co-Chair, Public Service Committee



> CONTENTS

- > 3 Empowering Human Trafficking Survivors
- > 4 Opening Possibilities Through Reading
- > 5 Supporting Academic Achievement
- > 6 Collaborating for Change
- > 7 Creating Stability for Families
- > 8 Supporting Children in Transitional Care
- > 9 Protecting Refugee Rights
- > 10 Fighting to Help Food Insecure Communities
- > 11 Supporting Families Impacted by Domestic Violence
- > 12 Helping the Elderly Navigate Difficult Decisions
- > 13 Preserving the Best Interests of Children
- > 14 Securing Guardianship Rights
- > 15 Empowering Pro Se Litigants
- > 16 By the Numbers
The Impact In the Community

EMPOWERING HUMAN TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS



Recognized as a national leader in offering comprehensive legal services to human trafficking victims, Moore & Van Allen continues to meet the high demand to support victims of this horrific crime. The firm developed the MVA Human Trafficking Pro Bono Project in 2013. Today, under the direction of MVA Senior Counsel **Sarah Byrne**, Real Estate Member **Chris Thompson** and Global Services Paralegal **Sally Hentz**, the project has a volunteer base of over 190 attorneys and staff and has assisted victims in over 250 matters.

Areas of service for the project include victim-witness advocacy, expunction analysis, and other civil law matters including immigration, custody, public benefits, and name change petitions. In addition to providing direct legal representation, project leaders educate governmental, academic, and community organizations about the work and ways to engage. Furthermore, MVA Litigation Member **Frank Schall** serves on the Charlotte Metropolitan Human Trafficking Task Force, a multidisciplinary collaboration led by the U.S. Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina.

Examples of client service include working with prosecutors and law enforcement to ensure that victim witness rights are protected at all stages of the criminal process; expunging criminal records that pose obstacles to employment, housing, and education; and asserting parental rights.

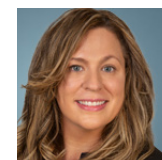
On September 4, 2019, the Charlotte Triage Pro Bono Partnership formally announced an expansion to its pro bono focus areas to include human trafficking (see page 6). **Sarah Byrne** and Sakeena Thompson of Wells Fargo & Co. serve as the effort's first co-champions. Currently, the MVA Human Trafficking Pro Bono Project collaborates with the Triage program to raise awareness and leverage the growing roster of pro bono attorneys and non-legal volunteers who are dedicated to supporting trafficking survivors.

MVA will continue to lead the charge in providing pro bono legal support for survivors of human trafficking and hopes to see more volunteers get involved in this most rewarding pro bono opportunity.



“Being involved in the firm’s Human Trafficking Pro Bono Project is extremely rewarding. It provides a variety of opportunities to use our legal skills in a pro bono setting – from assisting organizations that work with human trafficking victims with their business needs to working directly with those impacted by human trafficking. It is so important for firms like MVA to be a force for good in the community, and the Human Trafficking Project is a wonderful example of that.”

- Suzanne Gainey
Associate, Intellectual Property



“Most of the clients that the Human Trafficking Pro Bono Project serves are emerging from the most difficult and hopeless of circumstances. If I can help them in any small way, then it’s honestly the least I can do to help them on their journey back to self and freedom.”

- Amanda Franklin
Member, Immigration

OPENING POSSIBILITIES THROUGH READING



Devonshire Elementary School has been a long-standing partner of Moore & Van Allen. When first launched, the partnership focused solely on the Devonshire Reading Project, but has since expanded to include the Devonshire Backpack and Box Tops programs.

Traditionally, MVA volunteers would visit Devonshire on a weekly basis to read to the third grade class. In 2019-20, our volunteers were excited to begin reading to the fourth grade class, providing an opportunity for previous readers and scholars to reunite. The reading program – which is led by MVA Corporate Member **Lesley Lewis** - is a great way to peak the students' interest in reading, and the readers enjoy spending quality time with the petite scholars. Scholars are also treated to a celebratory pizza party at the start of the year to build excitement around the program and introduce the MVA volunteer readers.

"It makes me extremely proud to be a part of an organization that is not only a leader in Charlotte's business community, but is also recognized as a frontrunner amongst its peers in efforts to give back to and uplift those who are most vulnerable and underserved in our community," said MVA Financial Services Associate **Andriana Jackson** who served as a first-time Devonshire reader this year.

Additionally, over the last year MVA continued to supply healthy and nutritious food options to Devonshire families by way of its Backpack Program. The program, which works in conjunction with the Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina, provides children in-need with child-friendly food when other resources, such as school lunches and after-school meals or snacks, are not available at home. MVA employees also collect Box Tops in support of Devonshire to help supplement funds for school needs.

MVA is crazy about Devonshire Elementary School, and why wouldn't we be? The outstanding teachers, staff members, and students continue to welcome MVA with open arms and good books.



DEVONSHIRE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Thank you to the 2019-2020 Devonshire Readers:

Maggie Akers	Jessica Johnson
Jennifer Braccia	Katie Lott
Courtney Cavanaugh	Sierra Lyda
Miriam Dixon	Brianna McRae
Martha Efird	Patti Oswald
Rob Fisher	Charise Patterson
Deb Hanna	Jared Poplin
George Hanna	Kaitlin Powers
Michael Hebert	Kelly Rockecharlie
Steve Hope	Justina Smith
Fred Irving	Christine York
Andriana Jackson	



"My favorite part about being a Devonshire reader was the huge grins and occasional bear hugs I would be greeted with each time I walked into the classroom. It was so rewarding to know that such a small commitment from me could have such a big impact on a child's day."

- **Andriana Jackson**
Associate, Financial Services

SUPPORTING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Moore & Van Allen is pleased to partner with Heart Math Tutoring - a math intervention program that recruits, trains, and supports volunteers as tutors in high-poverty elementary schools in Charlotte. Heart Tutoring's mission is to ensure that all elementary students develop the strong foundation in math and enthusiasm for academics needed for long-term success, by helping schools use volunteers as tutors.

Heart Math volunteers provide instruction at each student's level in 30-minute tutoring sessions twice per week during the school day. In addition to providing academic support, tutors act as mentors, providing much-needed encouragement that can have a positive impact on students' confidence and enthusiasm towards academics.

Throughout the 2019-2020 school year, several MVA employees served as Heart Math tutors within Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools across the city. The volunteer opportunity is designed to support students' academic needs in a fun and engaging environment. Tutors work with the students to play various mathematic games that draw on the skills needed for further advancement.

Heart Math's structure is ideal for corporate volunteers seeking a way to connect with students in the community. Each tutor may choose a partner school and volunteer time that is convenient to their schedule. Additionally, tutors work with one another to fill scheduling gaps when conflicts arise.

Established in 2012, the Heart Math tutoring continues to demonstrate positive gains in its supported student population. In 2018-2019, 98% of the 995 students who completed the Heart Math program met program goals on both pre and post assessments. Additionally, 92% of responding teachers said their students demonstrated improved confidence and/or enthusiasm in math due to the tutoring sessions.

Thank you to the 2019-2020 MVA Heart Math Tutors!

Kathy Bonapart	Carey LeRoux
Bill Butler	Michelle LoSardo
Emily Cheatham	Sarah Negus
Alan Lanier	

*MVA Litigation Associate and Heart Math Tutor
Bill Butler assists his student mentee during
their one-on-one tutoring sessions.*

Photo provided by Heart Math Tutoring.



"One of the things that I enjoyed most about serving as a Heart Math tutor was seeing the girls' faces light up when they came into the room anticipating spending that time together and knowing that when they left the room, they would have improved their math skills to some degree."

- Kathy Bonapart

Applications Analyst, Information Technology



COLLABORATING FOR CHANGE

MVA Joins Local Legal Organizations to Expand Pro Bono Services

Moore & Van Allen is thrilled to continue its participation in the Charlotte Pro Bono Triage - a consortium of corporations and law firms dedicated to meeting the unmet legal needs of the low income in Charlotte by training legal department and law firm lawyers in specific pro bono services including evictions, health care access, and criminal record expunctions.

The goal of Charlotte Pro Bono Triage is to help Legal Aid shift some of the practice areas impacting low income people over to a “second ring” of Legal Aid volunteers, namely within the private bar. Accordingly, under the Charlotte Pro Bono Triage plan that kicked off in September 2018, champions in law firms and corporate legal departments began training pro bono lawyers to serve unrepresented clients in these identified service areas with the prospect of future expansion.

Now in its second year, the Charlotte Pro Bono Triage is focusing on providing increased services by training more lawyers and legal professionals, refreshing the experience for initial volunteers, and expanding to include a new service area – representing victims of human trafficking.

MVA Senior Counsel **Sarah Byrne** serves as the co-champion of the new human trafficking focus along with Sakeena Thompson of Wells Fargo & Co. MVA Litigation Member **Nader Raja** continues to serve as the co-champion of the Triage Eviction Project.

MVA is proud to participate in the Charlotte Pro Bono Triage which brings together clients, lawyers, the community, and city leaders to promote the ideal of excellence in pro bono legal representation.



“By expanding the professional diversity of our volunteer base to include volunteers from Triage partner companies, we better serve our clients. Volunteers from different disciplines, areas of expertise and experience enhance the creativity that goes into problem solving for our pro bono clients.”

- Sarah Byrne

MVA Senior Counsel
MVA Human Trafficking Pro Bono Project Co-Chair
Charlotte Triage Human Trafficking Pro Bono
Co-Champion



Dr. Laura Harbeson (center) of Creative Counseling & Learning Solutions with Pro Bono Triage Human Trafficking Project Co-Champions Sarah Byrne (left) of MVA and Sakeenah Thompson (right) of Wells Fargo & Co. Dr. Harbeson served as the keynote speaker of the Project’s featured CLE training titled Understanding Complex Trauma on January 31, 2020.

CREATING STABILITY FOR FAMILIES IN CRISIS

For almost a decade, Moore & Van Allen has dedicated resources to prevent homelessness in Mecklenburg County through a pro bono partnership with Legal Aid of North Carolina (LANC). These critical services provide pro bono representation for in-need, working families facing eviction or inhabitable living conditions.

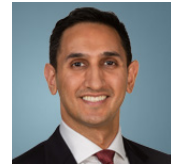
Led by MVA Litigation Member **Nader Raja**, the MVA Housing Rights Project helps minimize the disruption to family life caused by an emergency relocation. Through use of a roster of pro bono attorneys and staff, the project provides clients with a sense of control over major life decisions and defends clients' basic rights to decent housing.

According to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Housing & Homelessness Dashboard as of February 2020 approximately 30% of the homeless population in Charlotte was attributed to families. Once homeless, the barriers preventing families' access to safe and stable housing can feel insurmountable. And, the average wait time to secure permanent housing is 417 days in Mecklenburg County. That is why MVA shares the city of Charlotte's goal to prevent and end family, youth, and child homelessness through programs like the Project.

"Tenants who come through the Housing Rights Project typically are in a position with little bargaining power. They often face dire consequences from a wrongful conviction or even from the unlawful withholding of their security deposit," said MVA Litigation Associate **Fielding Huseeth**.

MVA's emphasis on pro bono service is a long-held value of the firm. As a partner of Legal Aid of North Carolina, we continue to prioritize the relationship and preserve LANC's mission of ensuring a full measure of justice for those in need. In addition to leading MVA's own effort, Raja also co-chairs the Charlotte Pro Bono Triage eviction representation project (*see page 6*). Similar to MVA's efforts, the project works to increase legal representation for those at risk of losing their homes.

MVA continues to support the good work of LANC and its staff which works tirelessly to ensure access to adequate legal representation for the most vulnerable of clients.



"Affordable housing is one issue, but safe and affordable housing is an entirely different issue. As lawyers, we all have a special obligation to do pro bono work. It's the right thing to do, builds community ties, and helps restore people's faith in the justice system at a time when trust is low."

- **Nader Raja**
Member, Litigation



"This pro bono work is so important to me because these tenants need an advocate who can help them understand and enforce their rights. As an attorney with MVA's resources behind me, I have found that I can make a real difference in tenants' lives by helping to get them meaningful results."

- **Fielding Huseeth**
Associate, Litigation



**LEGAL AID OF
NORTH CAROLINA**



SUPPORTING CHILDREN IN TRANSITIONAL CARE



Moore & Van Allen's Charlotte office lent support to Thompson Family - a leading provider of clinical and prevention services for children and families across the Carolinas - by fulfilling the holiday wish-lists of more than 75 children. Together, MVA employees raised an unprecedented \$16,000 and offered in-kind donations to ensure each child received a holiday worthy of joy.

Additionally, because of the generosity of Team MVA, the firm was able to purchase a new smartboard for the St. Peter's Lane facility that will be used in Thompson's on-campus classroom. Many of the residential care children continue to heal from emotional and physical trauma that prevents them from attending off-campus schools. As a result, Thompson provides on-campus educational services in support of the children's healing processes. This new smartboard will enhance both the teachers' and students' in-classroom experience and provide access to new technology-based learning modules.

Surplus funding was used to purchase general gift cards that Thompson will utilize to secure basic needs for children new to their facilities in the coming months. Additionally, MVA provided a small amount of experience-based gift cards so on-campus residents can have off-campus enjoyment throughout the year.

The MVA Thompson Campaign was led by MVA Litigation Member **Frank Schall** and supported by an outstanding team of floor captains: **Amanda Franklin, Peter Stewart, Courtenay Clark, Holly Bannerman, Shaun Wallace, Kimberly Zirkle, Stacey Vandiford, Amelia Montgomery,** and **Cole Richins**. Special thanks to **Michelle LoSardo, Helen Nickle, Julie Allen, Tandy Mathis, Bruce Spence,** and **Rich Dillen** who helped sort, pack and deliver toys and supplies to Thompson's Wendover facility!



THOMPSON

Strengthening Children, Families & Communities

PROTECTING REFUGEE RIGHTS



Moore & Van Allen continues to partner with the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) in protecting the rights of displaced refugees and forcibly displaced persons. Under the direction of MVA Financial Services Associate **Anastasia Fanning**, MVA supplies volunteer pro bono attorneys in coordination with IRAP, providing comprehensive legal representation to refugees throughout the registration, protection, and resettlement processes.

IRAP has created a “virtual public interest law firm” that defies geographical boundaries and provides high quality representation to refugees. The program has trained an army of volunteers – 1,200 students from 30 law schools in the United States and Canada, and pro bono attorneys from over 120 international law firms and multinational corporations – to assist thousands of refugees and displaced people on urgent registration, protection, and resettlement cases. This model is scalable and allows IRAP to take on an increasing number of urgent refugee cases, as well as respond to immediate crises.

“This work is extremely important,” said Fanning. “I sometimes feel defeated because these people have valid claims that have been overlooked for years. They’re stuck, lost, and there’s generally not a clear-cut answer, but when we can help individuals and their families navigate the system to reach safety, it’s rewarding beyond words.”

MVA values its partnership with the IRAP team and shares in its dedication to preserving humanitarian aid for refugees and displaced persons.

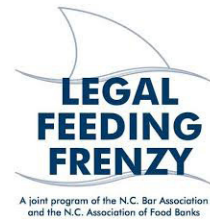


“Pro bono work is important to me because I think it’s important to provide a public service to those who might otherwise be unable to afford these legal services. I feel very privileged to do the work that I do and feel it’s necessary to represent the underrepresented so that justice exists for everyone, not just those who can afford it.”

- Emily Chatham
Associate, Financial Services

FIGHTING TO HELP

FOOD INSECURE COMMUNITIES



Over the past seven years Moore & Van Allen has risen to the challenge of competing in the annual Legal Feeding Frenzy hosted by the North Carolina Bar Association (NCBA). A partnership between the NCBA's Young Lawyers Division and Feeding the Carolinas, the Frenzy boasts a one-month competition among legal organizations across the state with one goal – to fight hunger.

Led by MVA Litigation Associate **Kaitlin Price**, Team MVA recommitted to the Frenzy throughout the month of March 2020. Unbeknownst to Frenzy coordinators and legal institutions across the state, the Frenzy would take place at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbating an already critical need to support food insecure communities across the state.

Team MVA responded to the call to help, collectively raising over \$35,000 specifically earmarked to assist the Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina. In turn, Second Harvest will convert these funds into over 245,000 pounds of food, and also use the contributions to keep refrigerated trucks on the road to distribute fresh produce, dairy, and meats to partner agencies. In short, funds help supply critical and healthy foods reaching more people in need.

Overall the Legal Feeding Frenzy participants collectively raised over \$150,000 in support of Feeding the Carolinas and local food banks across the state. MVA was honored to be recognized as the Frenzy Champion of the large law firm category, but more importantly, to lend critical support to in-need families during a time of international crisis.

MVA Litigation Member and North Carolina Bar Association Young Lawyers Division Chair Cabell Clay (right) helps to sort food donations at the 2020 N.C. Legal Feeding Frenzy kickoff event.

Photo provided by the North Carolina Bar Association.



“Second Harvest Food Bank has always been a vital part of the Charlotte community. But this year, given the unprecedented challenges we are all facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was especially important that we all do our part to help those in need. It was amazing to see everyone in the MVA community rise to the occasion and give generously to help those in our community. I enjoyed the opportunity to make connections with individuals across the firm through my role as MVA Team Captain. It was a privilege to lead our generous team and help facilitate much needed donations.”

- Kaitlin Price
Associate, Litigation

SUPPORTING FAMILIES

IMPACTED BY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The MVA Public Service Committee's Domestic Violence Pro Bono Project continues to provide pro bono services to families affected by domestic violence. The project, which works in collaboration with Safe Alliance's Legal Representation Program (LRP), empowers victims of domestic violence who could not otherwise afford an attorney to advocate for their rights. The LRP represents roughly 400 clients a year with 40% of those clients being served by pro bono attorneys.

In early 2019, MVA Litigation Associate **Rachael Coe** took the reins as the project leader. Coe is a dedicated leader within the project who has demonstrated a passion for supporting and empowering survivors of domestic violence and their families.

"We are proud of our over arching support of Safe Alliance. Our attorneys represent domestic violence survivors in court to obtain protective orders, attorneys and staff volunteer at the Safe Alliance shelter, and our entire firm participates in Safe Alliance fundraisers all in support of the organization's mission," said Coe.

LRP provides MVA with a minimum of two cases per month. Coe manages the case placement process by soliciting volunteers from a core group of attorneys and paralegals who volunteer their time to the project. To learn the ropes and build confidence, new volunteers are matched with a mentor who guides them through the domestic violence case management process. LRP staff members also provide additional support and training for volunteer attorneys in the courtroom.

The project continues to partner with the Wells Fargo & Co. legal department in an effort to maximize support for victims. The valued partnership allows both MVA and in-house lawyers to work together in the best interest of Safe Alliance clients.

"Our pro bono attorneys provide the voice that our clients need during one of the most difficult times in their lives," said Safe Alliance Director of Legal Advocacy Ryan Stage. "Our volunteers help strengthen our community by providing critical safety measures for our clients who are both worthy and grateful to receive pro bono legal counsel during their greatest time of need."

According to Safe Alliance, one in three women will be impacted by sexual assault or domestic violence during their lifetime; three women are killed each day in the USA by an intimate partner; and every two minutes someone in the USA is sexually assaulted. One of the key components in reducing domestic violence is ensuring that victims have access to civil legal services like the Safe Alliance Legal Representation Project and its network of pro bono attorneys.



"As licensed attorneys, we have a responsibility to use our legal training for the public good. The Moore & Van Allen Domestic Violence Pro Bono Project provides our attorneys with meaningful opportunities to make significant impacts on our community."

- Rachael Coe
Associate, Litigation

HELPING THE ELDERLY

NAVIGATE DIFFICULT DECISIONS

Providing pro bono legal services is more than donated time - it is an opportunity to serve as a personal advisor. Through Moore & Van Allen's Pro Bono Wills Project, our attorneys continue to forge meaningful relationships with clients looking for comfort with respect to their personal affairs.

Founded in 2010, the MVA Wills Project is a partnership with Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy (CCLA) that assists elderly residents of Mecklenburg County with estate planning services. The program, which is led by MVA Financial Services Member **Lauren Biek**, empowers residents of Mecklenburg County who are over 60 years in age to make their own plans and decisions governing end of life issues through the completion of a will and health care power of attorney.

Legal problems facing the elderly population are often more critical than those problems facing any other segment of our population. The elderly in poverty are less likely to seek the assistance of an attorney. Often, it is either because they do not have cash resources to pay for services or they do not realize that they have a "legal problem." The Wills Project provides clients with access to the system of justice by offering advocacy, advice and quality representation in securing their estate.

MVA has endeavored to accept a minimum of three new pro bono cases per month and continues to value the relationships established through our partnership with CCLA.



"The Wills Project provides direct assistance to members of our community who most need it and may otherwise be unable to access legal counsel regarding their wills and future healthcare decisions. This opportunity to connect with clients on a personal level while also providing them with some peace of mind is extremely rewarding, for both attorney and client."

- Chris Fowler
Associate, Financial Services



PRESERVING THE BEST INTERESTS OF CHILDREN

Moore & Van Allen pro bono attorneys, in partnership with the Custody Advocacy Program (CAP) hosted by the Council for Children's Rights (CFCR), continue to advocate for children embroiled in difficult guardianship disputes. This innovative Guardian Ad Litem program aims to resolve conflicts in highly contested custody cases outside of the court, minimizing the victimization of children involved in custody disputes.

Volunteer attorneys work within a structured team that is responsible for interviewing clients and collateral witnesses, conducting home visits, gathers school, medical and mental health records, as well as other required documents, conducts settlement conferences, attends party depositions, drafts motions and other court related documents, and, if necessary, prepares for and attends trial. This team serves the interests of the children involved and fully investigates each case referred through the court system. On average, 90% of all CAP cases settle without going to court. In the event that the custody dispute cannot be resolved outside of the court, the CAP team makes a recommendation to the court on the child(ren)'s behalf.

Because of the high volume of cases and the complexity of custody and visitation issues, effective CAP case management demands heavy involvement from pro bono attorneys and community volunteers. CAP's highly committed volunteer attorneys and advocates donate skill and legal expertise to effectively represent the best interests of children.

In addition to providing legal representation, MVA attorneys and staff continue to support CFR through a variety of volunteer and leadership efforts within the organization. In early 2020, MVA Public Affairs Graphic Designer **Ashley Foster** assisted the Council in designing and laying out their 2020 Mecklenburg County State of Our Children Report. This annual report has been produced by the Council for more than 30 years and has become a go-to resource for data on children and families in our community.

MVA is proud to partner with the Council for Children's Rights in supporting children and families in our community.



Led by Public Affairs Graphic Designer Ashley Foster, MVA assisted the Council for Children's Rights in designing and formatting the CFR 2020 Mecklenburg County State of Our Children Report.

SECURING GUARDIANSHIP RIGHTS



At Moore & Van Allen, we recognize that no matter the legal battle, navigating the court system as a pro se litigant is simply overwhelming. From custody to small claims and everything in between the judicial system is a daunting establishment to navigate. That is why MVA invests in programs like the MVA Pro Bono Guardianship Program that assist clients in navigating the court system.

Established by MVA Financial Services Paralegal **Tracie Solarte**, the MVA Pro Bono Guardianship Program helps families secure uncontested guardianship arrangements for children unable to make sound decisions for themselves upon turning 18 years of age. Often families with special needs children are unaware that guardianship must be sought. And more concerning, families do not know where they can turn to for help. MVA aims to provide assistance for families through an overwhelming process.

“Once a child with special needs turns 18, the parents lose their rights to make medical and life decisions for their child, and formal guardianship must be sought in order to protect the child,” said Solarte. “The MVA Pro Bono Guardianship Program helps the families prepare the documents to petition the court to show the child needs a guardian, file the documents, and be their guide throughout the entire process if they have any questions.”

Potential clients are referred to the Firm by way of Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools. Cases must be uncontested – meaning no other parties may be seeking custody of the child – and the applying guardian must first demonstrate to the Firm that he/she is fit to make sound decisions pertaining to the needs and desires of the child. Solarte then works with the family throughout the guardianship application and hearing processes. Though legal representation isn’t required, having an advocate to work with the family during a confusing and stressful guardianship process is appreciated.



“For a family unfamiliar with the legal system, navigating a guardianship case from start to finish could be a bit like being a passenger in a car without a driver. Pro bono assistance allows the family to ride in the car with the comfort of reaching the destination safely. The destination may or may not result in the appointment of a guardian, but the road that must be travelled to the destination has many rules, road hazards, and potentially wrong turns. Pro bono assistance educates families on duties, responsibilities, and burdens associated with guardianships while relieving them of the worry of running afoul of legal process.”

- **Martha Efir**
Staff Attorney, Litigation

EMPOWERING PRO SE LITIGANTS

For citizens navigating the legal system, the simplest procedures can be incredibly intimidating and overwhelming. That's why Moore & Van Allen remains committed to lending support to clients of the 26th Judicial District SelfServe Center in Mecklenburg County through its Judicial Pro Se Project led by MVA Financial Services Member **Kimberly Zirkle**.

Together with the Center, MVA volunteers lend support and advice to clients who will represent themselves in divorce and custody proceedings. These efforts help to empower pro se litigants and encourage them to understand the judicial process.

MVA volunteers visit the Center every month to meet with pro se litigants clients, assess their legal needs, answer the questions that these clients have concerning their case, and give them strategies and a plan for how they will proceed. Clients typically discuss matters related to child visitation and/or custody, domestic violence, divorce, or small claims. Together, the MVA attorney and client craft a list of necessary steps and gather resources for the client to use so that they can effectively and efficiently navigate the court system on their own behalf.

"The SelfServe Center provides litigants with the tools to effectively represent themselves in court. Many who cannot afford to hire an attorney are expected to maneuver the court system with no guidance. By partnering with local law firms, we are able to ease the anxieties of pro se litigants," said SelfServe Center Coordinator Susan Houseknecht. "Attorneys who offer pro bono services through our Divorce and Custody clinic programs provide litigants a sense of empowerment over their legal issues and deeper understanding of our judicial system. Thus, these partnerships communicate to our community that all should have equal access to justice."

MVA is thrilled to have the opportunity to work with such deserving clients and values its partnership with the 26th Judicial District SelfServe Center.



"Attorneys who offer pro bono services through our Divorce and Custody clinic programs provide litigants a sense of empowerment over their legal issues and a deeper understanding of our judicial system. Thus, these partnerships communicate to our community that all should have equal access to justice."

- Susan Houseknecht
SelfServe Center Coordinator



By the Numbers

THE IMPACT



5,582

Total pro bono hours donated by MVA attorneys in 2019.

4,950

Total public service hours donated by MVA attorneys and staff in 2019.



\$247,091

Team MVA works together to support organizations that are near and dear to our employees' hearts. In 2019, firm employees made individual financial contributions through firm-led giving campaigns totaling \$247,091. These funds benefited organizations such as the Arts & Science Council, the Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy, Legal Aid of North Carolina, Safe Alliance, Second Harvest Food Bank of the Metrolinas, Thompson Child & Family, and the United Way, among others.



SERVICE ALL STARS

50+ Hours of Pro Bono Service:

- Bobby Bowers
- Bill Butler
- Sarah Byrne
- Cabell Clay
- Rachael Coe
- Lesley Firestone
- Brandon Gaskins
- Mattie Gibbons
- Fielding Huseh
- Matt Kain
- Kristen Kenley
- Katherine Lamberth
- Raquel Macgregor
- Gabe Mathless
- Jim McLoughlin
- Randy Phillips
- Nader Raja
- Frank Schall
- Russ Sizemore
- Scott Tyler
- Sara Page Waugh
- Kimberly Zirkle



Pro Bono Areas of Focus

- Domestic Violence
- Guardianship
- Housing Rights
- Human Trafficking
- Immigration & Refugee Assistance
- Nonprofit Corporate Support
- Prisoners' Rights
- Pro Se Support
- Veteran Advocacy
- Wills and Estates

IN THE COMMUNITY

In addition to providing volunteer services through our pro bono and public service initiatives, Moore & Van Allen is proud to provide charitable support to organizations dedicated to improving our community. Last year, MVA invested over one million dollars to a number of our long-standing partners who share the firm's vision of serving the greater good.

Below are a handful of organizations that received MVA support in 2019:

Allegro Foundation

American Cancer Society

American Heart Association

Arts & Science Council

Arts for Life

Arts Plus

Camp Luack

Care Ring

Catawba Lands Conservancy

Charlotte Art League

Child Care Resources

Children's Hospital Foundation

Community Link

Council for Children's Rights

Crisis Assistance Ministry

Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America

Dress for Success

Florence Crittendon Programs

Foundation for the Carolinas

Give Hope

In Reach, NC

Jamie Kimble Foundation for Courage

Jazz Arts Initiative

Junior Achievement of Central Carolinas

Justice Initiatives

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation

KIPP Charlotte

Levine Jewish Community Center

March of Dimes

Mecklenburg Bar Foundation

Mecklenburg County Bar

North Carolina Bar Foundation

Pro Bono Net

Safe Alliance

Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina

St. Jude's Research Hospital

Supportive Housing Communities

Teach for America

The Arts Empowerment Project

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

Thompson Child and Family Focus

Trees Charlotte

Urban Ministry Center

Urban Promise

YMCA of Charlotte