

SPOTLIGHT

Pro Bono Focus

Meeting the Need

Wife and husband Liz Stryker and Wes Prince have committed to pro bono.



Liz Stryker is an attorney with Bailey & Glasser in Morgantown, West Virginia.



Wes Prince is an attorney with Shaffer Madia Law in Morgantown, West Virginia.

Tell us a little about you and your legal practice.

A LIZ: I'm a proud graduate of the WVU College of Law and a former law clerk for the Honorable Irene M. Keeley. I practice in several areas, but I spend the majority of my time on complex products liability cases. I have a particular passion for the intersection between science, technology and the law. I also love tackling tough discovery and evidentiary issues.

WES: Personal injury, wrongful death, employment and criminal defense.

Why did you start doing pro bono, and why do you continue to do so?

A LIZ: I started doing pro bono service in law school when I joined the General Legal Clinic. I gained hands-on experience in the clinic and learned how to represent clients and make their best case. I still volunteer for pro bono opportunities like Tuesday Legal Connect because I like to think that my service is a way of paying West Virginians back for the support and education I received at the WVU College of Law.

WES: I began performing pro bono legal assistance in law school as a means to learn the nuts and bolts of how to be an attorney before graduating. Luckily, I was blessed with amazing mentors Molly Russell and Suzanne Weise, a brilliant clinic partner Stephanie Brock and the rest of the Child and Family Legal Clinic which taught me to be aggressive, compassionate and understanding.

I continue performing pro bono legal assistance because I recognize

that there is an enormous need and, as attorneys, we are called to uphold the tenets of our legal profession. The most basic tenet is that equal justice under the law should be the same, in substance and availability, without regard to economic status.

Describe your most interesting or rewarding pro bono experience.

A LIZ: I recently had my most interesting and rewarding pro bono experience at the WVU College of Law! This spring, several colleagues and I assisted first-year law students in researching and responding to legal questions posed by potential pro bono clients using the West Virginia Free Legal Answers online portal. It was very rewarding to help the students get a feel for issue spotting and creating research prompts.

WES: Oh boy, I'm going to stay away from the "most interesting." Instead, I thoroughly enjoy assisting with the WVU College of Law's Lugar in-house competitions. Assisting with these competitions allows me to meet and mentor students throughout their law school careers, provide them with some knowledge about trials and watch them grow into practicing attorneys by using the skills developed in law school.

What impact has pro bono work had on your career?

A LIZ: Pro bono work helped start my legal career. I learned invaluable lessons in the Legal Clinic, and this experience helped me gain the confidence I needed to start practicing. After working in the clinic, I started my first job with experience in

client interviewing, drafting motions and making arguments in court. I firmly believe I wouldn't be where I am today without the pro bono work I did in the clinic.

WES: An enormous impact. I would not be where I am today without having performed pro bono legal assistance and gaining invaluable experience in law school. I am thankful that I work at a law firm that continues to allow me to perform pro bono legal assistance. There are few things more rewarding than walking someone through what is oftentimes the most difficult time in their life.

What would you tell other attorneys to encourage them to do pro bono?

A LIZ: There is nothing better than feeling like you've helped someone. I always leave the office with a smile on my face after remote Tuesday Legal Connect sessions because the callers are so grateful to talk to someone willing to listen. It's a very refreshing experience to help someone feel heard and like their call matters.

WES: Performing pro bono legal assistance will make you a better attorney. It allows you to give back to a segment of society that is often forgotten, mold the next generation of lawyers and perform invaluable work which will broaden your horizons. Everyone should assist their fellow man when they are in need. Simply put, if we can — we should. Put more philosophically: *"Whatever good I may do, let me do it now. Let me not defer it or neglect it, for I may never pass this way again."* — Stephen Grellet. **WVU**