

MCB Volunteer Spotlight
July 2014 – Deepa T. Winebarger

Deepa T. Winebarger of Hedrick Gardner Kincheloe & Garofalo has served on the MCB Nonprofits and Client Pro Bono Committee, formally the Volunteer Lawyers Program, for the last four years. Initially assigned to screen applications for the Bar's Pro Bono for Nonprofits program, Ms. Winebarger fell naturally into vetting direct case placement and veteran clients when the Bar enhanced its pro bono program this past year. She is extremely thorough when talking with pro bono clients while also demonstrating compassion and concern for their situation. While reserved in person, Ms. Winebarger is never one to shy away from taking a case, even at the last minute.

If you are interested in getting involved with any of the MCB's pro bono initiatives, please contact Heather Blackley, Director of Lawyer Volunteer and Community Services at hblackley@meckbar.org or 704-375-8624 ext.115.

MCB: Area of Practice / Expertise?
DTW: Litigation/Insurance Defense

MCB: Law School / Law School Graduation Year?
DTW: UNC-Chapel Hill, 2005

MCB: Describe your pro bono experience and your time on the former Volunteer Lawyers Program (VLP) and the current Nonprofits and Client Pro Bono Committee.
DTW: The VLP and Nonprofits and Client Pro Bono Committee provided really good opportunities for interacting with other volunteer attorneys, as well as working on pro bono cases that are outside my area of practice.

MCB: What is a typical case like?
DTW: In the past couple years, I have mostly taken cases for nonprofit organizations and assisted them with drafting articles of incorporation, by-laws and mission statements. Frequently, these groups then need assistance with obtaining tax exempt status from the IRS.

MCB: How do you prepare for handling such cases?
DTW: I've found that meeting with the principals of the organization (and possibly even attending a couple of board meetings) is extremely helpful to get an idea of the organization's overall goals, activities and dynamic.

MCB: How can the Mecklenburg County legal community help with similar cases?
DTW: Organizations that need assistance regularly contact the Bar. Volunteer attorneys on the Nonprofits and Client Pro Bono Committee, with the assistance of the Bar staff, conduct an initial screening and then place the organization with a pro bono attorney. A new feature of the Committee in the past year has been to expand the pro bono services to individuals in the community who do not have other means

for obtaining a pro bono attorney. The Committee is always looking for volunteer attorneys in different areas of the law, especially family law and landlord/tenant disputes.

MCB: What is the best advice you've received during your legal career?

DTW: I suppose it's a cliché for a reason: "preparation, preparation, preparation" – there's no better feeling than being at a deposition or in court and being able to handle an expected question or development with confidence and authority.

MCB: What advice would you give others?

DTW: Join a Bar Committee – it's a great way to meet people outside your field of practice and work on some "different" files. It also helps you feel in touch with the Charlotte legal community, which, as a native Charlottean, I find very important.

MCB: What is the most challenging part of your career?

DTW: Balancing my caseload. Insurance defense work generally involves a high volume of cases and staying on top of litigation deadlines requires constant attention to detail.

MCB: What is your favorite part of your current job?

DTW: The work environment in general. I have a good deal of autonomy and really get to work on a case from start to finish, but when I need assistance, it's always available.