

MCB Volunteer Spotlight  
Carol Jones Van Buren

Recruited by Pender McElroy in 2010, Carol Jones Van Buren agreed to assist the Mecklenburg Bar Foundation and the Mecklenburg County Bar in order to help coordinate the building of the new Bar & Foundation Center. She dedicated more than 100 volunteer hours to the project. Ms. Van Buren's work included preparing a Brownfields agreement cost estimate complete with anticipated negotiation and testing. The Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfields program works to assess, safely clean up and sustainably reuse properties which may have been contaminated, and as an efficient and effective communicator she helped to expedite this redevelopment process.

Ms. Van Buren worked with multiple organizations with an avid commitment and acted as a consultant throughout the planning, strategizing and building process. Her dedication on behalf of the Bar and Foundation has facilitated a smoother decision making process while building the Bar & Foundation Center.

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](mailto:hblackley@meckbar.org) or 704/375-8624 ext.115.

MCB: Current employer / number of years with current employer?

CJVB: Van Buren Law – 6 years; Over 22 years practicing environmental law

MCB: Area of Practice / Expertise?

CJVB: Environmental Law and Administrative Law

MCB: Law School / Law School Graduation Year

CJVB: B.S. in Physics from Wake Forest University, 1988; J.D. from Wake Forest University, 1991

MCB: What type of pro bono work you did on behalf of the MCB/MBF with regards to the new Bar and Foundation Center?

CJVB: Advised MCB/MBF regarding environmental issues associated with siting of the new Bar & Foundation Center, as well as negotiating and implementing a Brownfields Agreement for the final site selected.

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

CJVB: I started at Kennedy Covington Lobdell & Hickman right out of law school on the Tax Team. Whenever I turned in a project for Marcus Hickman, a partner on the Tax Team, he would always ask me (and any other associate working for him), "Is this your best work?" He set a high bar, and associates and his fellow partners rose to meet it. I think it's probably good for all lawyers to ask themselves the question, "Is this my best work?"

MCB: What advice would you give others?

CJVB: As lawyers, we're a conservative and risk adverse bunch. Starting my own firm in 2008 was one of the biggest risks that I have taken. And, it's the best thing I ever did for myself and my career. My advice to my fellow lawyers would be: "Don't fear uncertainty. Be willing to take the leap."

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

CJVB: As a small firm owner, the most challenging part of my job is the "day-to-day" running of the law firm. Being a business owner is much more challenging for me than being a lawyer.

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

CJVB: The favorite part of my current job is the continuing change. Environmental law is always changing as new laws, regulations, guidelines and standards are passed. My practice today is markedly different than it was 10 years ago. I enjoy the continual push of the profession to keep up and learn new things.