

MCB Volunteer Spotlight

Andrea M. Gervais

Ms. Andrea “Andi” Gervais has served as the vice chair of the Nonprofits and Client Pro Bono Committee for the past two years. In addition to her leadership role with this committee, she has taken on several pro bono cases for nonprofits who are seeking 501(c)(3) status. The executive director of one nonprofit she recently assisted, The Middle East Council of the Carolinas, said, “Andi helped to provide that important next step in our growth as a viable addition to Charlotte and the international community. We cannot say enough about her efforts.”

Ms. Gervais will be moving to Salem, Oregon this summer and studying for the Oregon bar this fall. She plans to continue her involvement in pro bono and community service in her new home state once she arrives. The Mecklenburg County Bar would like to thank her for all her efforts with our Bar and community and wish her well in her new endeavors.

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

AMG: Alston & Bird LLP / 3.5 years

MCB: Area of Practice / Expertise?

AMG: Commercial Finance and Debt Products

MCB: Law School / Law School Graduation Year?

AMG: Vanderbilt Law School / 2009

MCB: Please describe your nonprofit pro bono experience.

AMG: I have worked with nonprofits on preparing their applications for 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, with domestic violence victims in obtaining a protective order and Title I school teachers and staff in preparing wills and other end-of-life documents. Each has brought its own set of challenges and rewards.

MCB: What is a typical case like?

AMG: The nonprofit 501(c)(3) applications are an ongoing process of telephone calls, e-mails and in-person meetings with the client to understand their organization and goals and then synthesize those meetings into a comprehensive and coherent application for the IRS’s consideration. They are rewarding because the local nonprofits I have had the pleasure of working with are engaging in exciting and novel projects to help the Mecklenburg community and being able to help them operate more cost effectively means that they have more funds to put towards their projects.

MCB: How many of these type of pro bono cases do you typically handle at one time?

AMG: Usually just one at a time to juggle with my billable work.

MCB: What is your hope for the future with regard to these cases?

AMG: My only hope is to help make people’s lives a bit easier by providing the legal assistance they need right now. I hope that the nonprofits are able to use their tax-free status to further promote their goals and assist people in our community in their own way.

MCB: How can the Mecklenburg County legal community help with similar cases?

AMG: For nonprofit assistance, the Mecklenburg County Bar's Nonprofits and Client Pro Bono Committee is always looking for more volunteers. All you have to do is reach out to the Bar and let them know you would like to volunteer.

MCB: What advice would you give others?

AMG: I would recommend that everyone do at least one pro bono project a year (preferably more than that). It strengthens your skills as an attorney, and helping in the community in which you live and practice will reward you in return more than you think.