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Derek Ashton: “All You Need to Do is Say Yes!” Pro Bono Spotlight

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By Jill Mallery, Legal Aid Services of Oregon

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Attorney Derek Ashton has been saying “yes” and in doing so has been making a big impact volunteering with Legal Aid Services of Oregon (LASO). Derek volunteers with multiple projects at LASO, including the Virtual Expungement Clinic and the Domestic Violence Project. Derek has been providing life changing assistance to his clients through his volunteer work. The Virtual Expungement Clinic helps people rebuild their lives by setting aside criminal records that may be affecting their access to education, employment and housing prospects. The Domestic Violence Project provides critical legal assistance to survivors of abuse and stalking in contested restraining order hearings.

Derek is a civil defense attorney with the law firm Sussman Shank LLP. His practice involves complex civil litigation with a focus on trial work and includes the representation of companies and individuals in cases involving death, personal injury, product liability, liquor liability, false imprisonment, insurance fraud, professional negligence, and white-collar criminal matters.

Derek has been in civil practice for the past 20 years. He served as a Deputy District Attorney in Multnomah County for 15 years before entering private practice. Derek is a long term resident of Oregon, living in the state for more than 50 years. He has been married to his wife Ann for 36 years. Derek received his undergraduate degree in Business Finance and law degree from the University of Oregon.

Derek has truly made a difference in the lives of his clients. He is dedicated, hardworking, and provides the highest quality representation to his clients. Derek has never turned down a pro bono referral and often accepts cases on short timelines with court dates during the holidays. His contributions to pro bono are outstanding. Through Derek's pro bono representation, he has helped survivors of abuse maintain their safety by advocating their protective order be kept in place in a contested hearing. Thanks to Derek's participation in the Virtual Expungement Clinic, clients have been able to find employment and housing by sealing decade old criminal records.

Derek's interest in volunteer work started many years ago and he has always found it to be rewarding. He volunteered many hours as a coach for youth sports earlier in his career and found donating his time was more than worthwhile. "I've gotten the same type of fulfillment from donating my time to LASO's clients who, along with friends and other supporters, have been appreciative of my involvement." Derek shared his motivation behind his pro bono work and it's quite simple. "Helping others in need. Achieving a result that provides a measure of safety for someone who is overwhelmed with a serious life problem. Simply helping someone move on from a bad situation." This is the work LASO prioritizes. We are so appreciative of the legal community and those who volunteer for partnering with us on this important work.

Derek is a strong supporter of pro bono and encourages attorneys who are considering pro bono to get involved. "LASO makes volunteering easy. The LASO staff does a great job putting together all the necessary preliminary information. "For newly licensed attorneys interested in pro bono work, but who may need encouragement, Derek highlights the benefits for attorneys new to the practice of law, "it's a great opportunity to get into court and handle a 'short matter' case from start to finish. You will have the opportunity to work directly with a client by providing advice, counsel, and courtroom representation. In court, you will get to meet a judge and present a case (opening statement, cross-examination, direct examination, offer exhibits, and make a closing argument). There is no better way to learn than by doing." If you are interested in volunteer opportunities with LASO, please email us at probono@lasoregon.org.

The benefits of pro bono work are far-reaching. As Derek points out, a benefit of pro bono is assisting the justice system by streamlining matters. The impact of pro bono work goes beyond the individual case. Pro bono improves the quality of the client's life and family and their



perception of the legal system. It also enables the courts to run more smoothly and efficiently. Thank you to Derek for his strong contributions to LASO's pro bono projects and making a difference in the lives of his clients by increasing access to the justice system.

[DJA Article – Oct 22, MBA Newsletter.pdf](#)

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