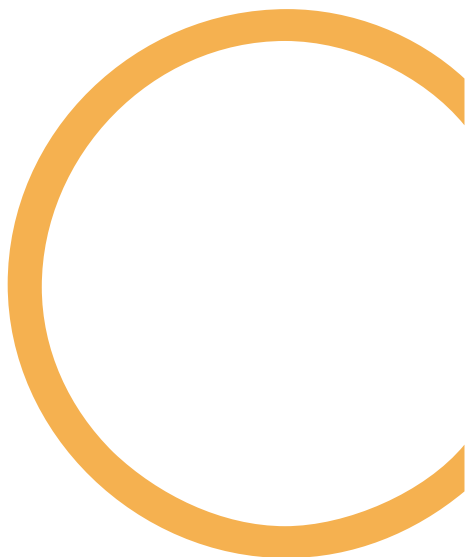


# PRO BONO FOR THE SOUL



**Malcolm A. Heinicke**



Chances are you do not want your bar association to ask only what you can do for us, but you also want to know what your bar association can do for you. We get it, and we think the answer to both questions can be the same.

Barristers Club President Drew Amoroso and I know that this is a challenging profession, and we are focusing our efforts this year on promoting the physical and emotional health of our membership. Volunteering even just a little bit of your time will bring you emotional satisfaction and balance. Call it pro bono for the soul.

Now, you are a lawyer. As such, chances also are that you are busy—really busy—with a full schedule. We understand that you may not have time to build a new program, figure out what your various options are, or even explore where to begin in the first place. The Bar Association of San Francisco (BASF) and our friends and colleagues at the Justice & Diversity Center (JDC) have already done all of this for you.

With just a few hours (yes, just a few hours), you can make a significant difference in the life of a fellow San Franciscan. And, I bet the experience will reward you as well.

Here are just three examples:

## Housing Negotiation Project



You can help keep someone housed and off the streets by spending just one afternoon with a tenant facing eviction. At JDC's settlement conference clinic, volunteers negotiate with the landlords' attorney and try to work out an agreement in the best interests of the individual.

We know that tenants facing eviction fare far better in the process when represented by counsel, and yet there simply are not enough lawyers to meet the need here. You need not

be an eviction law expert or even know anything about the subject. JDC will provide close supervision and guidance. What these clients need most is a voice, someone who can understand and then advocate for them.

You can do this, and it will make a difference. In San Francisco, this is the front line in the battle against homelessness. And, here's all it will take: two hours of training and four hours of volunteering. (You may also want to schedule some extra time to receive thanks from a very grateful client whose home you save.) That's it. Just show up and we will show you how.

### Upcoming Housing Negotiation Project trainings:

- Tuesday, July 17 at 5–7 p.m.
- Tuesday, September 11 at 5–7 p.m.
- Tuesday, November 13 at 5–7 p.m.

To sign up or learn more, [email probono@sfbbar.org](mailto:emailprobono@sfbbar.org).

## Consumer Debt Defense and Education Clinics



Aggressive and unfair debt collection practices can have a devastating impact on some of the most vulnerable people in our city. Again, under expert supervision, lawyers in this program counsel clients one-on-one about the cases filed against them, often by third-party debt buyers who ignore procedural protections for consumers. You will advise these people on their rights and options and then draft basic, preliminary documents for them to file pro per.

Just this basic effort makes a huge impact for people who would otherwise wade through litigation alone and intimidated. Once again, no expertise is needed, and your mere presence as a lawyer will make a huge difference. The stark reality is that many of our most vulnerable neighbors face civil proceedings with no counsel, and when they have counsel, they simply fare better.

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

What will it take? Three hours at JDC's clinics after three hours of initial training.

## Upcoming Consumer Law trainings:

- Wednesday, June 27 at 4–5 p.m.
- Wednesday, July 25 at 4–5 p.m.
- Wednesday, August 22 at 4–5 p.m.

To sign up or learn more, [email probono@sfbar.org](mailto:email.probono@sfbar.org).

## Limited-Scope Family Law Motions



With just one child custody motion and hearing, you can stabilize lives. For example, one client came to JDC after her husband abruptly left her and their child. She was devastated, struggling to get by on one

income, and hold it all together for her child. She was facing all sorts of challenges, including legal ones. With the father gone, she could not submit paperwork and authorizations that required both parents. JDC's volunteers filed a motion asking the court to grant our client sole custody of her child. She said that when that one motion was granted and she knew her child would have a more stable situation, she felt she could get her life back on track. A fellow San Franciscan was in need, and a JDC volunteer gave her and her child the advocacy and the basic human support she needed to move forward.

How long did this lawyer have to give to change the lives of this mother and her child? 20-30 hours over 3-4 months.

## Upcoming Family Law trainings:

- Wednesday, June 13 at 4–5 p.m.
- Wednesday, July 18 at 4–5 p.m.
- Wednesday, August 22 at 4–5 p.m.

To sign up or learn more, [email probono@sfbar.org](mailto:email.probono@sfbar.org).

## You Can Do This

And, since you are a lawyer, we will cover some of the technicalities here just so there are no questions (or excuses): JDC has malpractice insurance for its volunteers. JDC also provides training and constant support for its volunteers. And, you can rest assured that you will not be the first person to volunteer for these programs, and they have been running successfully for years.

Over the course of this year, JDC Director and Managing Attorney of the Pro Bono Legal Services Program Gloria Chun and I will be visiting law departments, law firms and other groups of lawyers to repeat this message and explain all of the opportunities we can provide.

Your mere presence as a lawyer will make a huge difference. The stark reality is that many of our most vulnerable neighbors face civil proceedings with no counsel, and when they have counsel, they simply fare better.



*On Tour: Pro Bono Road Show stop at the Minority Bar Coalition's Presidents Reception in April. From left, BASF board member Charles Jung, JDC's Gloria Chun, David Tsai, BASF board member Lisa Mak, and Phyra McCandless*

Through this “pro bono road show,” we will explain all of the ways you can help. But, you need not wait for us.

The upshot is this: your community needs you, and we have ready-made opportunities for you to help your fellow San Franciscans and yourself in the process. Just show up, learn a little, and do what you do every day: advocate for a deserving client.

You can see many of the opportunities available at [www.sfbar.org/probono-menu](http://www.sfbar.org/probono-menu). See what interests you the most, reach out to our staff and schedule a time to volunteer.

Yes, by doing this, you will be helping JDC and its clients, but you will also be helping yourself by doing something rewarding and promoting your own emotional health.

*Malcolm A. Heinicke is the 2018 president of the Bar Association of San Francisco. A partner at Munger, Tolles & Olson, his practice focuses on employment and complex commercial litigation, particularly in class and collective actions and employee mobility matters.*