

Interview of Atty. Ed Sarskas for Sept/Oct Atty. Spotlight

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Describe your education leading up to law school.

I did my undergraduate studies at UW Milwaukee and earned a Bachelor of Arts in economics.

Why did you decide to go to law school and become an attorney?

I took five years between my undergraduate studies and law school, and considered pursuing a PhD in economics however, I ultimately decided that I wanted more human interaction and the opportunity to try to help people, which is why I chose to attend law school.

What are your main legal practice areas?

I am a general commercial litigator focused on IP and other complex litigation areas including intellectual property, software/technology, contracts and related business disputes, fraud, and securities. I do not have a favorite area of law, as I enjoy variety. I like the challenge of learning the new subject matter in each case.

Why do you volunteer at the MVLC?

I believe that lawyers have a responsibility to use their education, talents and training to improve the community. Our courts are public institutions and everyone should have access to them. Lawyers have a monopoly on the right to appear and represent parties in our courts, and in my view, that privilege comes with an obligation of responsibility to the system and all those who depend on the system. I believe that it is my responsibility to do at least my fair share.

Has your experience volunteering at the MVLC enriched your practice as an attorney? If so, how?

It has, I have now crossed the 19-year mark of my career as a lawyer this past September, and with the passage of time, I find myself enjoying the interaction with law students and hearing about their plans and interests in not only law school, but their future plans as lawyers.

I mostly enjoy the opportunity to make a positive difference in someone's life who is facing a challenge. At the MVLC, there is something that is weighing on a person's mind that causes them to come to the clinic to seek guidance and advice, and almost always if you just take the time to listen and offer assuring words, you can help them. Even if you cannot offer life changing legal advice, you can always offer encouragement and clients are grateful for that. If you can accomplish that, it makes that 15 minutes worth it.

I also believe that the MVLC eases the burden on court staff which is an important consideration because again, as a lawyer, we have a monopoly to appear in front of judges, so we have the responsibility to ease a burden when there are pro se litigants who just need a little guidance. Even though I don't necessarily see the direct impact, the judges reassure us that the clinics and the volunteers make a positive difference in our courts.

Do you have any tips for how to juggle pro bono work with a busy work schedule?

I don't believe that there are any secrets or tips other than don't volunteer expecting that it is always going to be roses and sunshine. There are going to be times where you wish you didn't volunteer and are stretched too thin but you just have to power through it. There will be times when there is stress, but that is the world we chose to work in so take it with a grain of salt and don't let that prevent you

from volunteering. In the grand scheme of things, we are making a positive impact by volunteering and that is what we all have to remember.

What do you like to do in your spare time? Do you have any hobbies or interests?

The main focus of my time away from work is foster care, community service and church involvement. My wife and I are licensed foster parents, and time outside of work over the last few years has primarily been focused on foster care, which has been a tremendous blessing to our family.

I also enjoy other community service activities. I have been a board member for the Hunger Task Force for over a decade and my wife and I try to stay involved in our church. I enjoy participating in activities that positively impact our community.

Is there anything else we should know about you?

I am inspired by others I meet while volunteering. All volunteers should understand that when they go to volunteer, they have an opportunity to make a positive impact on everyone they encounter including other volunteers, whether it be in conversations during the car ride over or in passing while waiting for clients. We have an opportunity to encourage each other and should never shy away from taking full advantage of that opportunity. I appreciate that aspect of volunteering. Together we can make a difference and inspire one another in the process.