Volunteer Attorney: Fran Schmitz

How did you first get involved with the Marquette Volunteer Legal Clinic?

After returning from a five year assignment at the US Department of Justice in Washington DC a few years ago, I decided I wanted to get more involved in pro bono work, hoping to do more of it when I eventually transitioned to a less demanding job in retirement. I had done clinical work while at MULS (legal clinic for the elderly) and found it rewarding.

Why did you choose to continue to work with the MVLC?

As a retired veteran of active Army and Army Reserve duty, I thought it would be especially rewarding to work with veterans.

Has your work at the MVLC been of any assistance to you professionally?

I think so. I recently entered private practice and it has given me a good perspective on the legal needs many have, something I did not fully appreciate during my career as a federal prosecutor. It also helped alert me to the challenges faced by a solo practitioner.

What advice would you give to students in law school?

While law school debt is something many of you will have to face for many years (as I did), when you graduate you need to think about more than landing a high-paying job. If at all possible you should try to do something you feel good about doing when you get up in the morning.

Why is it important for lawyers to do pro bono work?

While many are called “professionals;” nowadays, we are members of a “true” profession, which should compel us to give others the benefit of our time and talent if we are able to.

How, if at all, has your experience with the MVLC enriched your notions of justice?

The clinic, and the students and volunteer lawyers embody the notion of justice for all by ensuring veterans without the means to hire legal counsel can get advice regarding their particular legal issues.