Attorney Spotlight: Jon P. Christiansen

Jon P. Christiansen is a retired partner at Foley & Lardner LLP, where he practiced Business Litigation & Dispute Resolution. He earned his J.D. from Vanderbilt University Law School, where he was editor-in-chief of the Vanderbilt Law Review and was elected to the Order of the Coif. Prior to joining Foley & Lardner, he served as a judicial clerk for Judge Griffin B. Bell of the U.S. Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit. Mr. Christiansen has also been involved with several charitable and conservation groups throughout his 35-year career.

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

I retired from Foley & Lardner LLP in early 2012 and decided that I needed to try to give back to the community.

What motivated you to continue volunteering with the MVLC?

I was not as active in pro bono work during my years of practice, as I should have been and this has been my chance to try to make up for that during my retirement.

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

My work has been both rewarding and eye opening and gives me a chance to stay involved in legal issues, while helping those who really need legal assistance. I just wish we had the capacity to continue to be involved with clients we see.

What advice would you give to students still in law school?

Most students have very little experience in the business world, but most aspects of private practice (criminal law and government work are notable exceptions) are all about some aspect of business. So, make sure you understand at least a little bit about accounting and business, before you launch your legal career.

Have you noticed any common mistakes made by law students or young attorneys?

When I started out and was working on an assignment, I felt that I had to have every piece of research in place before I started writing. But one of my mentors showed me that getting something down on paper and working from there proved to be much more efficient and often showed other ways of proceeding with the assignment.