

## Lauren Russell Mike Haglund Volunteer Lawyers Project Award Recipient

by Erin White  
Legal Aid Services of Oregon

Lauren Russell is the 2019 recipient of the Michael E. Haglund Pro Bono Award. The award is presented to a young lawyer who, in the tradition of Michael Haglund, founder of the Volunteer Lawyers Project, has displayed a special commitment to pro bono service through LASO, OLC, or MBA YLS projects. Lauren, an associate with Dunn Carney, is being recognized for her commitment to pro bono service and work with the Legal Aid Night Clinic.

Josh Stadtler, a partner with Dunn Carney and co-chair of the firm's Pro Bono Committee says, "Lauren has demonstrated a particularly strong interest, dedication, and devotion to pro bono service since she started at Dunn Carney. Over time she has taken on a leadership role with the Night Clinic, not only in meeting with and representing clients but also by encouraging other attorneys to participate and serving as a mentor in that regard, and also with the firm's

Pro Bono Committee, which she now co-chairs."

Attorneys from Stoel Rives and Dunn Carney exclusively staff the Legal Aid Night Clinic in partnership with the Portland Regional Office of Legal Aid Services of Oregon (LASO). Once a month, Dunn Carney attorneys meet with clients pre-screened by LASO. The cases cover many areas of law including consumer, small claims, landlord/tenant, and estate planning. The volunteer attorneys typically provide continuing legal representation to clients with whom they meet.

Lauren began volunteering with the night clinic when she was a summer law clerk, and tries to attend several times a year. "I volunteer in part because I have been extremely fortunate in my life and believe I should use my privilege to help others, even in small ways. It also just makes me feel good!" she says. Lauren has represented numerous clients and dedicated many pro bono hours to helping low-income

Oregonians with their legal issues. A recent experience with the night clinic was also one of the most rewarding for Lauren. She assisted a woman who co-signed for a car loan with her daughter, and was subsequently stuck with the vehicle. Lauren negotiated a voluntary surrender of the car and a zero balance loan. She recognized that her ability to navigate the system was something her client did not have, and her client was very happy with the result.

"What I enjoy most about the Night Clinic is the client interaction, which associates in larger firms do not always experience in their first few years of practice. I find counseling the clients is a good way to hone my emotional intelligence and problem solving skills. With some clients, there is no good legal remedy for their situation, but at the very least you are sitting with them and listening to their stories, and you may be the first person in their lives to do that. The Night Clinic also gave me the opportunity early on to take ownership of my own cases, including drafting demand letters, reviewing or drafting complaints, and providing litigation strategy advice," Lauren shares. Jill Mallery, Staff Attorney and Pro Bono Coordinator with

LASO says, "Through her pro bono work with the Night Clinic, Lauren has shown her strong commitment to increasing access to justice by providing legal assistance to those who would otherwise go without legal help."

Lauren grew up in Billings, Montana. She attended the University of Montana where she obtained her undergraduate degree in journalism and subsequently worked as a daily newspaper reporter and freelance writer. She then earned her JD from University of Oregon School of Law. While attending, she clerked for the Oregon Department of Justice's Appellate Division and externed for the Hon. Ann Aiken, then-Chief District Judge of the US District Court for the District of Oregon. As an associate with Dunn Carney, Lauren practices primarily with the firm's Litigation Team and focuses on employment-related matters and commercial litigation. In addition to her work with the night clinic and co-chairing Dunn Carney's Pro Bono Committee, Lauren's other volunteer work includes co-running her firm's United Way charitable giving campaign every year and volunteering as a mock judge for 1L appellate oral arguments at her alma mater.

Lauren says, "I would certainly encourage all attorneys



Lauren Russell

to volunteer their time to pro bono efforts that fit their interests and abilities. For new lawyers, it is a great way to build your skills and gain confidence as an attorney. For everyone, it is a way to connect with members of your community with whom you may not ordinarily interact and a reminder that even a small amount of time donated can achieve meaningful results. I am still learning to balance the demands of being an associate with my professional responsibility and personal desire to do pro bono legal work, but I am lucky that my firm is very supportive of pro bono service."

To learn more about pro bono opportunities with LASO, contact Jill Mallery or Erin White at 503.224.4086 or ProBono@lasoregon.org.

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