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 YES 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 legal work. She began volunteering with the night clinic when she was a summer law clerk, and she is the first person in their lives to attend several times a year. I volunteer in part because I have had the opportunity to help others, even in small ways. It also makes me feel good!”

Lauren has represented numerous clients and dedicated many pro bono hours to helping low-income Orefgonians 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 she was subsequently stuck with the debt. 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 setting them and listening to their stories, and you may be the first person in their lives to do that...”

Lauren was formerly an intern with 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 in 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 the legal aid night clinic.

Lauren says, “I would certainly encourage all attorneys 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@laso.org.