

PCBA Member Peter Collins, Jr. Honored for Pro Bono Service

By Michele Mirto



PCBA Member Peter Collins, Jr.

Every month, Southern Arizona Legal Aid's Volunteer Lawyers Program (VLP) recognizes an attorney for his or her efforts and contributions to the program. The VLP's monthly award is a distinct honor: of the 1220 attorneys who volunteer their time with the VLP, only 12 receive the VLP's Outstanding Pro Bono Attorney award each year.

Peter Collins, Jr. of Gust Rosenfeld, was selected to receive the Outstanding Pro Bono Attorney of the Month Award for December 2013. Mr. Collins has been a VLP member for 10 years.

During that time he has drafted wills for clients and assisted with small probate matters. Mr. Collins has never declined to accept a case when called upon by VLP staff.

Q & A with Peter Collins, Jr.

Where are you from? Brooklyn, New York

Where did you go to college? Georgetown University, Washington, DC

Where did you go to law school? The Ohio State University

How long have you lived in Tucson? 27 years

What is the history of your practice of law? First a prosecutor in Columbus, then criminal defense & Plaintiff personal injury law for 6 years

What are your current practice areas? Civil commercial litigation, with an emphasis on insurance matters

What drives you to volunteer with VLP? There is so much need, and so little help for the folks who simply cannot afford the legal profession, as it has developed.

Anyone you would like to acknowledge for contributing to your legal career / pro bono service? Larry Herman, a great professor at OSU, who taught me (as a young prosecutor) to consider the pain inflicted on both sides of the criminal law practice

A great anecdote from your VLP experiences? A very sad, but funny story. A gentleman came in, seeking assistance with a denied VA pension. We discussed his history and experience, and he clearly had advanced PTSD. However, when I inquired regarding the source of his PTSD, he started talking about General Sherman advancing toward Atlanta. Then he told me, in great detail, about the Battle of the Bulge and how it affected him, and then Cu Chi and other places he had been in Vietnam. (I was near Cu Chi when he claimed to have been there, and I had first-hand knowledge that he was not.)

One reason you would encourage attorneys to volunteer with VLP? There are thousands of returning vets and similarly-situated people in our small community who have been priced out of the legal "market". As such, they despair of getting help. VLP and its volunteers throw a life-line to those most needy of our fellow citizens. We have real tools to help these people find a way and give them some hope.

Favorite Tucson restaurant? Little Poca Cosa, Alameda and Stone

Things you do when not working or volunteering your legal services? Tennis, grandkids (4), and travel

If this award was accompanied by prize money, how would you spend it? Community Food Bank. Every day.

Best thing about being an attorney in Tucson? We are a small legal community, and most lawyers speak to each other, and cooperate, far better than most other markets of which I have experience. It is a genuine "legal community".

Worst thing about being an attorney in Tucson? Grant Road
If you ever retire from private practice, it will be to start a new career as a: roofer with Habitat for Humanity

What is something you would like people to know about you? Pretty good grandfather

What is something that not many people know about you? I graduated from college with Bill Clinton. I got drafted, and he did not!

Are you a dog or a cat person? Yellow Labradors

What do you do to unwind after work? Get home and turn off the machines

Favorite song? My Father's Eyes, Eric Clapton

Person you most admire? Miles Durfey, retired Lieutenant General, Ohio Air National Guard

Food you can't live without? Pasta

Any bad habits? Pasta

Best vacation destination? New York City

For information on how to get involved in the VLP, visit www.VLPArizona.org or call Michele Mirto at 623-9465, ext. 4171.