

ATJ PRO BONO CHAMPION



CHARLES R. KIMBROUGH

Bickerstaff, Heath, Delgado, Acosta, L.L.P., Austin



What type of pro bono work are you involved in?

I have been lucky enough to work with Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA). Starting in 2002, my firm was involved in helping the “Jarrell 13,” a case where 13 families in Williamson County had purchased separate lots of land but never received a title from the sellers. The sellers were taking advantage of the families — collecting taxes but not passing the money on to the government, providing contracts with no legal description, and refusing to convey a title on land that had appreciated greatly in the last few years.

Bickerstaff, Heath, Delgado, Acosta, L.L.P. represented seven families and TRLA represented six. With the invaluable help of the attorneys and staff at TRLA, Bickerstaff Heath, and the Williamson County Court system, we resolved the case. It took years, but together we were able give these families the assistance they needed.

What is the most rewarding part of your pro bono efforts?

Working with the families was extremely rewarding. Before helping the Jarrell 13, I thought I spoke Spanish pretty well, but I found that I wasn't able to effectively communicate with my Spanish-speaking clients. I'm thankful for **Nelson Mock** of TRLA and Bryan Vega and Nelly Soriano of Bickerstaff Heath — who are all fluent in Spanish — for help communicating with my clients and help brushing up on my own Spanish.

In fact, we received wonderful help from many different places: longtime paralegal Deborah Broadway and the entire team at Bickerstaff Heath, who donated hours of their time; the judges and staff members of Williamson County, who helped us during their “Settlement Week”; and two excellent attorneys, **Belinda Herrera** and **Arturo Aviles**, who served as mediators.

How important is the support of other attorneys and staff members?

It is truly a team effort. It is a team effort inside this law firm and a team effort statewide. We can't effectively help people without legal aid entities, the lawyers and staff members who sign on to help, or the efforts of the court system. 🍷

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