

Victoria Neave

Since earning her J.D. from Texas Southern University Thurgood Marshall School of Law in 2009, Victoria Neave has established a meaningful record of assisting those in need of pro bono services and organizing legal events, such as *Conozca Sus Derechos* for the Dallas Hispanic Bar Association. Now a shareholder in Neave & Scott in Dallas, she continues to serve as a voice for community members with every pro bono case she handles.

When did you begin pro bono work and what made you want to continue?

I began doing pro bono work as soon as I passed the bar exam. I have had an interest in public and community service since I was young, so it was a natural step for me. Like many other attorneys, I went to school to learn how to use the law to fight for those who have been wronged in some way.

Have you observed any changes in the way society perceives pro bono work?

Some may say that our economy dictates the need for pro bono representation. I have always seen it as an obligation regardless of whether we live in a healthy economic climate. There will always be individuals who desperately need good legal representation.

Do you have any pro bono mentors you work to emulate?

During my time at the Dallas Volunteer Attorney Program as the Weil, Gotshal & Manges Lend-a-Lawyer, I had the privilege of learning from Ken Fuller, a man with a huge heart and love for pro bono work. Ken recently passed away. He owned a thriving family law practice and spent time every single week at DVAP working on pro bono cases and mentoring volunteer attorneys. My other pro bono mentors are Kathy Saldana and Kristen Salas at DVAP. They are incredibly knowledgeable attorneys who help me any time I have a question on pro bono matters. The third group of attorneys that I admire is from the Dallas Hispanic Bar Pro Bono Committee. Every one of these folks has a heart for helping those less fortunate.

Is it difficult to find time to do pro bono work?

Managing time is something that is difficult for all of us, I think. If one can find time to engage in recreational activities, then one can find time to take a pro bono case. We make time for the things we truly care about.

Do you think a solo/small firm attorney has to take a different approach to pro bono work than an attorney at a larger firm?

Yes. I have been in both situations. First, attorneys at larger firms may need to obtain approval from a pro bono committee or partner prior to accepting a pro bono matter. A small firm attorney has more freedom to select the type of case and when to take it. Second, a large firm attorney may be able to work on larger, more complex pro bono matters on a firm-wide team, while a solo or small firm attorney may not have the time or capacity to dedicate to such matters.

Tell us about a memorable case.

One of my favorites was a contested divorce in which I represented an elderly man who could not read or write. We had lots of interesting twists and turns, including an incident in which my client was ambushed with pepper spray. If my client had not come to DVAP or obtained legal representation, he may not have learned about the leverage he had and obtained his fair share of the community estate. **TBJ**

