

Jennifer Doan

With roots in pro bono that date back to the days when she attended the University of Texas School of Law and spent time with the Dallas Association of Young Lawyers at the start of her legal career, Jennifer Doan has assisted clients at no cost for more than 20 years. Now a partner in Haltom & Doan in Texarkana, she passes on her passion for helping others to the attorneys in her firm.



How do you balance pro bono efforts with your other day-to-day tasks?

Taking any case is a choice—including pro bono. Once the choice is made, there is no difference between our pro bono cases and any other paid case for the firm—so the day-to-day tasks all meld together. However, some of our pro bono clients are so very, very happy that we've helped them. Paying clients have a choice of trial lawyers to choose from; pro bono clients are just grateful to get any lawyer to take their case. I had one client that made me a cake every month and delivered it to the firm.

Tell us about a memorable case.

This past year, we were asked to help the Texas Civil Rights Project in representing Skye Wyatt and bringing her claims for right of privacy against the Kilgore Independent School District. Skye's right of privacy was breached when her softball coaches locked her in the locker room until she admitted that she was attracted to girls and then threatened to kick her off the team unless they told her mother. After five years, including a trip to the 5th Circuit and numerous changes to the Texas Administrative Code, the case was finally resolved with a favorable settlement for Skye. Her story was covered by numerous media outlets, including Yahoo News, as the lead story. We had no idea this case would receive that much press when we took it, but I am glad she was vindicated in the end.

What pro bono needs are unique to the Texarkana area?

Civil rights and women's and child advocacy issues really cry out for assistance in our community and across Texas. There is no doubt that pro bono opportunities always have exceeded the number of lawyers who have given the time.

How has your pro bono work affected your life?

All good trial lawyers are going to make a living, but you have to decide if you want to also make a difference. Over the past 25 years, I have seen everything from changes in the lives of families, to children having a chance for a significantly better life, to companies and school boards changing their policies—all for the better. **TBJ**

PHOTOGRAPH BY KRIS HUNDT