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Sheppard Mullin Kicks Off 2025 EAJ Campaign

BY MICHELLE ALDEN

Sheppard Mullin has generously contributed \$25,000 to the Equal Access to Justice Campaign as this year's kickoff donor. The donation continues the firm's long history of supporting the important work of the Dallas Volunteer Attorney Program (DVAP).

"The number of people living in poverty continues to grow in Dallas," said **William B. Mateja**, Dallas Bar Association President and Sheppard Mullin partner. "Over 800,000 people in Dallas County already qualify for DVAP services. Our help is needed more than ever."

So far this year, Sheppard Mullin's Dallas office lawyers and paralegals have already dedicated approximately 1,057 hours to more than 49 different pro bono matters and clinics in and around the city.

"Pro bono is an indelible expression of Sheppard Mullin's core values as a firm and as lawyers practicing within our local and extended communities," said Sheppard Mullin Dallas office Managing Partner **Lindsay Ferguson**. "All of us in the Dallas office are proud to give back to our community through DVAP. The firm's commitment to pro bono service is a cornerstone of our culture, fostering a positive work environment where attorneys feel valued and inspired. Whether we practice in Texas or in any of our other offices across the country, we're driven by our firmwide commitment to help the underserved achieve justice and equality."

Sheppard Mullin attorneys have the autonomy to choose pro bono projects that resonate with them. This approach empowers attorneys to pursue causes



Jennifer Klein Ayers



Lindsay Ferguson



William B. Mateja



Kelly Vazhappilly

they are passionate about and that make a meaningful impact. The Dallas office offers opportunities across all practice areas, focusing on immigration, adoption, veterans work, disability rights and providing assistance to entrepreneurs from underserved communities. Associates are encouraged to bring on new pro bono clients and referral organizations into the firm, taking on work that interests them.

"Engaging in pro bono work allows associates to take on substantive roles in cases early on in their careers. This provides them with hands-on experience in various practice areas and allows them to develop versatility in their legal expertise, further honing important legal skills and deepening their understanding of the law," said **Kelly Vazhappilly**, a leader on the Dallas office's pro bono committee.

Vazhappilly and Dallas partner **Amanda Cottrell** recently successfully concluded a pro bono matter which was referred to the firm by DVAP. The client, an elderly man, sought assistance through DVAP for alleged trespass and nuisance issues affecting his family's land near Palestine,

Texas. Firm lawyers first met the client while staffing a DVAP clinic and offered to take his case. Ultimately, his neighbor and undivided co-tenant filed a partition lawsuit. Sheppard Mullin conducted an extensive review of the chain of title and the interests of various family members to facilitate a fair partition. Following a contested bench trial with witness testimony and evidence, the judge ruled in favor of Sheppard Mullin's client, allocating him the desired portion of the land.

"Our pro bono initiatives not only enhance associate professional development but also encourage civic engagement and a commitment to bettering our community. Engaging in pro bono work broadens our understanding of the legal system and the challenges others encounter when they interact with it. This makes us better, more empathetic lawyers," said **Jennifer Klein Ayers**, another active member of the Dallas office's pro bono committee.

Sheppard Mullin proudly collaborates across practice groups and offices to ensure that all clients receive the representation they deserve. Dallas partner **Phil Kim**

recently took the lead on the representation of a minor child who was the sole surviving member of a family that was killed during the tragic mass shooting event that took place at a mall in Allen, Texas. The work to support the child and his remaining family covered issues relating to everything from family law to trusts and estates, media relations and government relations/administrative matters. To date, the firm has donated over 500 hours to the matter, involving 37 attorneys across 10 offices and seven practice groups.

By fostering an environment where pro bono work is encouraged and celebrated, Sheppard Mullin creates a workplace where attorneys are inspired to give back, grow professionally and feel proud of the difference they make. This unwavering dedication to pro bono service makes the firm one of the most admired places to work in Dallas and beyond.


The commitment of Dallas attorneys and the DBA to the Equal Access to Justice Campaign is impressive. Since 1997, the DBA and Legal Aid have joined forces to raise money for the program, with Dallas lawyers donating more than \$20 million.

DVAP is a joint pro bono program of the DBA and Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas. The program is the only one of its kind in Texas and brings together the volunteer resources of a major metropolitan bar association with the legal aid expertise of the largest and oldest civil legal aid program in North Texas. For more information or to donate, visit www.dallasvolunteerattorneyprogram.org. **HN**

Michelle Alden is the Director of the Dallas Volunteer Attorney Program. She can be reached at aldenm@lanwt.org.

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BASEBALL AND BARRISTERS SERIES

A Conversation with Tom Grieve and Jim Sundberg
Conducted by John Blake





Tom Grieve

Jim Sundberg

John Blake

**Join Us for the Dallas Bar Association's
Baseball and Barristers Series**

At our fall event, **Texas Rangers Hall of Famers Tom Grieve and Jim Sundberg** will be interviewed by **Executive Vice President of Public Affairs for the Texas Rangers, John Blake.**

Tom Grieve, "Mr. Ranger," played for the Washington Senators and Texas Rangers from 1970 through 1977 including the Rangers inaugural season in 1972 before joining the Texas front office in 1980. He started off as a color commentator for the TV broadcasts during that season and took over as GM in '84, a job he served in until 1995 when he went back to being a Rangers color commentator - a job he kept until he retired in 2022.

Wednesday, September 11, 2024

Arts District Mansion | 5:30 pm

- Free admission
- Cold beer and ballpark food will be served

Hosted by
Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton LLP

CLICK HERE TO RSVP

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