Attorneys are uniquely qualified to help “the little guy” and small businesses navigate a bewildering legal process. While pro bono may seem daunting, there are many available resources. You can partner with another attorney or discuss strategy with a mentor. The sponsoring legal aid organization will ensure that your questions are answered and that you have what you need to be successful. Providing access to justice is a team effort.

Claire K. Battle
Senior Counsel
ArcelorMittal USA
As Presiding Judge of the Cook County Domestic Relations Division, I firmly believe that the pro bono legal work undertaken by family law practitioners is a necessary and vital component to promoting access to justice. We practice in an area of law where emotions run high, and where a lack of quality legal representation can have devastating impacts on litigants and their families. I applaud and commend the extraordinary efforts of the attorneys in our Division currently providing legal support to families who otherwise would have nowhere to turn. I also strongly encourage young attorneys to join the pro bono movement to provide legal services to the most vulnerable and marginalized members of our society.

Hon. Grace Dickler
Presiding Judge
Domestic Relations Circuit Court of Cook County
No professional accolade ever meant more to me than having a teenage boy awkwardly hug me in a Daley Center hallway, to thank me for having made sure his voice was heard in the courtroom that day. I’d been a transactional lawyer for more than twenty years when I learned that volunteering as an advocate for children was personally and professionally enriching in ways I never expected. And that’s why I’m still at it.

F. Ellen Duff
Retired Partner
Winston & Strawn LLP
Pro bono legal work has made me a better lawyer and a better person. Many pro bono clients are in a poor position to defend themselves against people and institutions not interested in vindicating individual or public rights. The pro bono lawyer at least offers these clients a fighting chance to assert their rights. All who want to fight for their rights deserve a fighting chance.

Gabriel A. Fuentes  
Partner  
Jenner & Block LLP
I was appointed by a federal judge to assist a young woman in a criminal case. The client could have been viewed as obstructive, belligerent, and uncooperative. Drawing on my judicial experience in juvenile court, I eventually was able to draw out relevant and valuable information that had otherwise not been known to the federal prosecutor or the judge. Working together, we arrived at the just, and therefore correct, result in her matter. In the end, my client was so pleased that she brought to court flowers, smiles and hugs for a result that she also believed was fair. It was gratifying knowing that I had helped her in that way.

Patricia Brown Holmes  
Partner, Schiff Hardin  
President, The Chicago Bar Association
To me, pro bono isn’t an “extra” part of my career. It is a necessary and fundamental part of my career. I became a lawyer to help people, to improve my community, and to be a benefit to those who do not have a voice. In doing pro bono, I can be a positive influence to so many people… and that is amazing. And it all starts with me doing what I was trained to do.

R. Cantrell Jones
Senior Managing Associate
Dentons US LLP
Too often we get so caught up in the stresses of daily life that we march ahead with our heads down and forget to look at the world around us. Pro Bono Week (and pro bono work in general) reminds us that we must consider—and try our best to address—the broader challenges facing humanity: poverty, discrimination, persecution, oppression, to name a few. Why? Because we’re all in this together.

Allegra R. Nethery
Pro Bono and Philanthropy Partner,
Seyfarth Shaw LLP
President, The Chicago Bar Foundation
As a solo practitioner, I am keenly aware of how I spend my time. While pro bono matters do not provide a paycheck, they profit me in other ways. As a new attorney, I gained an introduction to new practice areas. Nowadays, I advocate for clients who have no one else to turn to. I see my loved ones in those faces. When I fight for them, it makes me a more creative attorney and a better person.

Steve Ramilyak
Principal
Law Offices of Steve Ramilyak, PC
It is tremendous to realize that you can dramatically improve people’s lives with a modest investment of time – to prevent a family from losing its home, to obtain child support so a single mother can feed her kids, to place children with a loving guardian to care for them and keep them safe, or to open the prison door of the wrongfully convicted. Of all the great experiences I have had as a lawyer, many of the ones I treasure most are those that fundamentally changed someone’s life for the better.

Heidi Hennig Rowe
Partner
Schiff Hardin LLP