

PRO BONO HERO MICHAEL ELIA CHERISHES THE RESPONSIBILITY

Michael Elia considers donating time to charitable causes to be one of the most important aspects of a lawyer's professional obligations. This philosophy explains why he has been accepting pro bono appointments for the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program (CASA) since 1994. Mike frequently represents volunteer Guardian ad Litem (GALs) in child protection cases, providing legal advocacy for abused and neglected children, pursuant to state statute.

In 1997 he began serving as General Counsel to the Fourth Judicial District CASA Program and has continued as program counsel ever since. He considers it a privilege and a great responsibility to represent a program dedicated to the well-being of children.

Mike's early childhood memories are of his mom and dad volunteering at DeSales High School in Walla Walla, Washington, where he grew up. He recalled that his parents always went out of their way to help others. He said that to this day, their legacy sets a very high bar. He was also influenced by many of Walla Walla's community leaders, who were also lawyers that were generous with their time and talent, especially causes for youths. Their example is part of what drew him to become a lawyer.



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Mike is a partner at the law firm of Moore & Elia, LLP, where their practice is mostly civil defense, litigation, including aviation, product liability, governmental entity, insurance disputes and insurance cases. When asked how he fits in his volunteering, Mike said he receives a tremendous amount of support from his wife Maureen and their three sons: Noah, Daniel, and Joseph. Along with his paralegal Wendy Chindlund, who keeps him on task, and a culture in his firm that supports the court and provides legal services to organizations like CASA, he takes great pride in the fact that every member of his law firm has volunteered to represent GALs in CASA cases.

In 2011, Mike joined the Federal Court Mediation Panel and initially volunteered to participate as a mediator in Resolution Roundup (the Federal Court ADR Settlement Week hosted by the Ninth Circuit ADR Committee). He volunteered to travel away from Boise if mediators were needed in other parts of the state.

Later, he was asked to consider accepting an appointment as pro bono counsel for a Plaintiff in a North Idaho

diversity action. The lawsuit involved a gentleman with multiple health issues who had been injured and was suing the performer of a show at the North Idaho Fair. The Plaintiff's previous lawyer had withdrawn from the case, and the Plaintiff was attempting to represent himself pro se.

The gentleman was genuinely thankful that the Court had appointed an attorney to help guide him through the federal court process; and with the assistance of the Court and opposing counsel, the matter was successfully mediated. Mediation allowed the Court to remove one more case off its docket, and spared significant litigation expense to the defendant. Mike hopes that resolution of the lawsuit will allow his client to now fully focus on treatment for some of his underlying health conditions.

Mike enjoyed working on the federal court pro bono case, but he said his heart is and will always remain with CASA. If you would like information regarding CASA or serving as a Guardian ad Litem attorney, please contact Nanci Thaumert, Statewide GAL Coordinator at (208) 947-7458



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