

Young Lawyers Section

Tyler Volm Pro Bono Spotlight

by Abra Cooper
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Tyler Volm began his work with Lewis & Clark Law School's Small Business Legal Clinic (SBLC) as part of a clinic course during his third year at the law school. Four years later and now an attorney with Elliott, Ostrander & Preston in Portland, Volm continues to serve pro bono clients through the clinic. "While in law school, I really enjoyed my experience at the SBLC. After I graduated, staying involved with the SBLC as an attorney volunteer was an easy choice because I knew people at the SBLC and already knew what kinds of opportunities it provided for attorneys." As a practicing attorney, Volm estimates he has performed approximately 50 hours of pro bono service through the SBLC, working with six different clients.

The SBLC has provided business transactional legal advice to new and emerging businesses since 2006. A majority of the businesses served by the SBLC are owned by women, minorities and recent immigrants. The SBLC handles client intake, and then matches the clients with student and attorney volunteers. According to Volm, "the SBLC is very well-run. The staff works hard to make it what it is." All of the clients are seeking assistance with matters that are transactional in nature. While Volm's practice does include general litigation, more of his work is transactional. "SBLC clients are often seeking assistance with things like reviewing leases, drafting operating agreements and entity formation. Some of it is basic stuff for attorneys, but for SBLC clients it is complex, and many would not be able to afford to hire attorneys for assistance," says Volm. The time commitment varies with each client. "Some clients only require a single meeting at the SBLC, with some document drafting and email exchanges to follow. With others, I'll have follow-up communication and meetings at my office."

For Volm, all of his clients have been memorable because of how grateful each has been for his assistance. Like a low-income Latino couple he recently



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helped get their business off the ground, SBLC clients "want to do right, they want to run legitimate businesses. When they don't get legal help at the outset, things often go wrong later and cost the business money, its license, or its reputation. Without the SBLC, some of them would not be able to afford to do so."

The SBLC and his clients have been just as grateful for Volm's participation. "Tyler has been an amazing champion for the SBLC and our clients. He goes above and beyond the call of duty when meeting with our microenterprise clients," says Rebecca Martinez Griffin, Operations Manager for the SBLC. "If I am ever in a bind and need an attorney to help one of our clients, Tyler is always a phone call away." Volm's clients share Martinez Griffin's sentiments. "[Volm] helped us select a business entity, draft an intellectual property contract, and negotiate our lease. We wouldn't have been able to afford these essential services, and we are so grateful!" says Annie Maribona, co-owner of Fat Fancy, LLC.

Volm plans to continue volunteering with the SBLC. He is especially appreciative of his firm's support of his work with the SBLC. "Having my firm's support really makes providing pro bono services that much easier." He encourages other young attorneys to follow suit. "Volunteering at the SBLC is a great opportunity for young attorneys to be involved in the whole process, from intake to the closing letter and to get client contact."

For more information about the SBLC, email sblc@lclark.edu or visit the clinic's Web site, go.lclark.edu/sblc.