

Digging Pro Bono

By Jimmy K. Goodman

SOME PEOPLE ASK why I “dig” public service work. Professionally, we use pro bono as short for pro bono publico, which loosely translates to “for the public good.” So pro bono is then service “for good.” This story is about digging for good. It is shared with

the hope it will renew or inspire an urge to do more pro bono by all OBA lawyers, but especially the young ones who have sharper minds – and stronger backs.

Recently – well, in May 2017 – Margaret Travis referred to me a pro bono matter for an Oklahoma

veteran under the OBA’s veteran assistance project, Oklahoma Lawyers for America’s Heroes Program. We are assisting him in seeking redress from his neighbor due to a water flooding problem he is having – that he claims is due to the actions of his neighbor. It has been quite a long process in trying to work this out for him.

In the course of looking for an out-of-court resolution, the neighbor had an engineer draw up plans to correct the problem, but the contractor would not bid for the work without “eyeballing” a storm sewer junction box on our client’s property that had been covered up with soil. So three young associates at our firm, Ryan Wilson, Will Moon and Tim Sowecke, and I went out to do just that. We began the dig thinking we were dealing with about 12-15 inches of soil over a 6 feet x 6 feet area. So, we anticipated digging up 45 cubic feet of dirt – but it turned out to be more like 90 cubic feet. We felt the “burn,” (especially me), but when finished, we all felt the “good.”

I am sure this is representative of the variety of non lawyer services that all Oklahoma attorneys wind up providing during the course of their work for veterans – albeit a unique one. You’ll find more info about the program at www.okbarheroes.org, and please find your own way to go digging for good.



From left Crowe & Dunlevy attorneys Jimmy Goodman, Ryan Wilson, Tim Sowecke and William Moon pitched in to help a heroes client with more than free legal advice.

Mr. Goodman practices in Oklahoma City.