



Adams and Reese Ranked Among Nation's Top Pro Bono Firms

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LawFuel.com - Firm Logged Close to 7,000 Hours of Pro Bono Work in 2008

Over the last two years, Adams and Reese LLP has increased its pro bono hour output by almost 500 percent, and the firm's concentrated efforts in community service are recently garnering national attention.



Awards/Rankings



North America



Source: LawFuel.com

The 2009 American Lawyer Pro Bono Report ranked Adams and Reese No. 118 among the nation's top 200 highest-grossing firms ranked by their pro bono score. Adams and Reese attorneys logged a total of 6,676 pro bono hours in 2008. The firm had a pro bono score of 33.4, with an average of 28.7 pro bono hours per attorney and 38.2 percent of its attorneys performing more than 20 hours of pro bono work.

American Lawyer calculates a firm's pro bono score by one-half coming from the average number of pro bono hours per lawyer and the other half representing the percentage of lawyers who perform more than 20 hours of pro bono work in a year.

Adams and Reese moved up 24 spots from the No. 142 ranking last year, and also improved 77 spots from the 2007 ranking in which the firm was slotted No. 195. In 2006, Adams and Reese attorneys totaled 1,167 hours of pro bono work, which means there was almost a 500-percent increase to the 2008 total.

"Thanks to our firm's increased focus on encouraging pro bono work and the tremendous response of our lawyers, we've come along way over the last two years. Our performance in the pro bono area now reflects much more accurately the fact that we are a firm blessed with lawyers who are willing, ready and eager to continuously perform pro bono service to help in their communities," said Brian Faughnan, Adams and Reese Partner and Chair of the firm's Pro Bono Committee. "We believe that the strides we've made over the last two years, and the number of people whose lives we've helped better over the last two years, stands as a strong testimonial to the notion that lawyers will step up to the plate and give of their time if their firm as a whole will make doing pro bono a priority and help its lawyers find opportunities to give back."

Adams and Reese attorneys tackled a diverse scope of pro bono litigation in 2008 including international child custody disputes, divorce and custody matters, Wills for Heroes programs, homeless legal clinic programs, nonprofit applications, setting up a fund service for war veterans and manning pro bono clinic telephone hotlines. The firm's attorneys continue to participate in various, volunteer lawyer projects across the firm's 10 offices in the United States.

The firm's pro bono representation in 2008 was highlighted by a U. S. Supreme Court death penalty appeal, *Kennedy v. Louisiana*. Martin Stern, head of the Firm's Appellate Team, served as co-counsel on the appeal, arguing it to the Louisiana Supreme Court. Ultimately, the case was heard by the U.S. Supreme Court where it established important new precedent, holding that the death penalty is unconstitutional for crimes against individuals that do not result in death of the victim.

Asked about his experience, Stern said, "Honestly, I had no idea how much work it would entail, but it was worth all the time and effort. Most important, of course, was working on an issue of such importance. But I have never worked with lawyers more dedicated or talented than those on our team, which ranged from lawyers for the Louisiana Capital Appeals Project to national experts on U.S. Supreme Court practice. As an appellate lawyer, that provided me experience that is hard to come by."

Adams and Reese's increase in pro bono hours is the result of an innovative partnership and mandatory pro bono requirement initiated in 2007 that helped the firm be at the forefront of providing pro bono service.

In January 2007, Stern led an effort to revive Louisiana Appleseed, a pro bono organization that is focused on effecting policy-oriented change on a systemic level. Adams and Reese initially entered into a partnership with client ConocoPhillips to incubate Louisiana Appleseed in the firm's New Orleans office, together underwriting a full-time pro bono position staffed by Adams and Reese partner Christy Kane. After serving in this capacity for two years, Kane decided, with the Firm's blessing, to accept the position of full-time Executive Director of Louisiana Appleseed.

The Center, of which Stern is a Board member, now has more than 75 attorneys working statewide on various pro bono projects and it has gained enough momentum to move out of the Adams and Reese office and into its own offices at the Louisiana Bar Foundation.

"In the last two years, Louisiana Appleseed has put volunteers to work and we are making a difference in the community," Kane said. "Adams and Reese and its attorneys have been extremely beneficial to Louisiana Appleseed becoming a pro leader and getting results for low-income community members who are in need of assistance."

Adams and Reese Partner Malcolm A. Meyer led one of Louisiana Appleseed's projects. He spent almost 1,000 pro bono hours over the last three years working on the heir property issue. In 2005, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita revealed that many low-income people throughout Louisiana could not initially qualify for federal disaster relief funds because they lived in homes for which they did not have clear title. These homes are often referred to as heir property.

Recognizing the problems associated with heir property, Meyer and Louisiana Appleseed created an innovative