

In the last year, over 1,300 volunteers contributed over 66,000 hours of pro bono and volunteer service to Bet Tzedek.

As we celebrate National Pro Bono Week we are excited to share with you the stories of just a few of these remarkable individuals. They are our Pro Bono Heroes.

We could not do what we do without their commitment to ensuring equal justice for all.



PRO BONO HERO PROFILE

Michael Vann

FIRM/COMPANY

Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP

AREA OF PRACTICE/TITLE

Real Estate

LAW SCHOOL/GRADUATE DEGREE

University of Michigan Law School

Brief description of your current/latest pro bono case/or current/latest volunteer work with Bet Tzedek

I provided pro bono counsel with Bet Tzedek's Small Business Development Project, assisting two monolingual Spanish-speaking immigrant store-owners in negotiating a lease extension for their small grocery store and butchery. The initial lease had expired, and our clients were served with a 30-day notice to vacate with no option to renew and very little time to relocate. We successfully negotiated an extended lease agreement that also had fairer provisions for our clients who were being exploited by their landlord.

What have you learned/gained from this experience?

This was the most rewarding experience I have had in my over four years of legal practice. It was very clear to me that our clients were two good people holding up their end of the lease who were being taken advantage of by an irrational and volatile landlord. When we were able to renegotiate the terms of the lease, I realized all the good that lawyers can bring to the world. What started with two vulnerable small-business owners, unaware of their rights, ended with those same individuals walking away with a deal that would never have been possible without an organization like Bet Tzedek.

What do you want others to know about doing pro bono work with Bet Tzedek?

My experience exemplified why any lawyer should jump at the first opportunity to work with Bet Tzedek. I was given all of the support necessary (including translation assistance), so that I could focus on providing the best possible legal assistance. And I learned more about myself and gained valuable experience. Bet Tzedek is true to its commitment to provide stability and hope to those who need it most, and I was proud to be a part of it.

When you volunteer with Bet Tzedek, you can change your life, and change the lives of others. To learn more go to www.bettzedek.org/volunteer, call (323) 549-5895 or email volunteer@bettzedek.org

