Rosen Hagood Attorney Rene Dukes Wins Pro Bono Award

November 7, 2019

In October 2019, Rosen Hagood partner Rene Stuhr Dukes learned that she had been awarded the Pro Bono Attorney Award by Charleston Pro Bono Legal Services. While a happy surprise, the award was also more than well-deserved. It was recognition of one of the region's most dedicated, hardworking and committed pro bono practitioners, as well as the firm that supports her work.

For many years, Rene has exemplified her belief that an essential component of her legal career is service to the marginalized, the underserved and the needy. As an attorney who practices in the area of family law, this has meant fighting for undocumented immigrants, victims and at- risk children in proceedings involving child custody, parental rights and human trafficking. To put this in concrete terms, this has meant hundreds upon hundreds of hours of free legal services for her clients. In nine months, for example, Rene racked up over 390 hours of work in a custody case for an indigent father.

Another setting in which Rene has selflessly donated countless hours – 330-plus, to be specific – is one of the nation's most tragic and infamous. On June 17, 2015 a gunman murdered nine African American members of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, including the senior pastor, State Senator Clementa C. Pinckney, during a Bible study. Within hours, Rene was actively working on a highly contested custody case involving the minor children of one of the victims, representing the children's aunt against their biological father. Despite the dearth of case law favoring an award of custody to the surviving natural parent, Rene was able to obtain custody of the children for the maternal aunt, which was the wish of the children and their deceased mother.

Additional charitable causes to which Rene has donated her time include mentoring law students, inclusion on the philanthropic Board established in honor of AME victim, Rev. Depayne Middleton-Doctor, and numerous other projects, stretching back many years. Rene's projects tend to be some of the most emotionally wrenching and simultaneously rewarding work any attorney can undertake. She serves people without resources, without representation, often without hope, not because of the recognition it will bring and certainly not because of any awards, but because it's something she believes she is called to do.

Practicing law is a privilege, and according to Rene, it's also an opportunity to make the world a better place, at least a little.

At Rosen Hagood, we've supported Rene in all her pro bono work. We both congratulate her

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on this well-deserved award and hope to support Rene in many more years of similar service.

We're very proud of her and her accomplishments.

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