Mission-Driven Mondays: Pro Bono Partnership turns legal expertise into community impact

By **Sally Glick** (Parsippany) - September 21, 2026

For the public good

"Pro bono publico" translates from Latin to mean "for the public good."

In 1997, through a strong group effort, Pro Bono Partnership was launched by founders Richard Hobish and Robert Healing, along with other corporate leaders in White Plains, New York.

At the time, they probably could not have anticipated the reputation for doing public good that the organization would earn across the tri-state area in the decades ahead.

The founders and their supporters were committed to delivering critical business and legal resources to organizations serving underrepresented individuals and underserved communities. Over the years, that vision has remained the guiding principle for the organization's many initiatives.

In 2000, Pro Bono Partnership expanded its footprint into New Jersey, advancing a twofold mission: strengthening communities by strengthening the nonprofit organizations that serve them while also providing an outlet for attorneys to volunteer their time and expertise to help nonprofits navigate a wide range of legal challenges.

Pro Bono Partnership offers essential support to nonprofits

Despite their tax-exempt status, nonprofit organizations face many of the same legal concerns as small for-profit businesses.

p positions may be unaware of potential problems until they arise.

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Pro Bono Partnership each year, requiring the expertise of corporate attorneys as well as those trained as litigators.

Whether volunteering from a New Jersey law firm or a lawyer in the legal department of a New Jersey corporation, successfully helping local nonprofits to avoid unnecessary risks and addressing complications that arise as they work to achieve their missions is the most important objective for the Pro Bono Partnership and the attorneys who offer their services.

The legal advice touches many areas, enabling nonprofits to better understand potential pitfalls connected with signing contracts, completing real estate transactions and navigating intellectual property laws.

Other common challenges include maintaining current licenses, following proper hiring procedures, and ensuring bylaws, employee handbooks and other critical documents are accurate and up to date.

Statistics demonstrate the power of partnering

The 2025 numbers tell the story and showcase PBP's powerful impact on New Jersey's nonprofits.

Since its doors first opened in New Jersey, more than 600 volunteer attorneys have worked with over 400 entities, addressing close to 900 legal matters annually — saving the nonprofit community approximately $11 million while also enabling the attorneys a chance to draw on their own passion for doing good in the community.

Going beyond the expected to do more

Along with legal services, Pro Bono Partnership has taken its dedication to the nonprofit community even further.

The organization offers more than 40 training workshops annually, both virtually and in person, to educate nonprofit leaders and board members on essential topics.

Subjects range from how to start a nonprofit to trademark protection and intellectual property concerns, along with guidance designed to help nonprofit leaders navigate legal and management issues and build a solid organizational infrastructure.

No matter what is on the horizon, PBP seeks to help the nonprofit community by looking ahead.

The team at Pro Bono Partnership is preparing for changes that could affect nonprofit organizations, particularly as leaders confront an uncertain fundraising environment and increasing pressure on financial resources.

While those prospects can be discouraging, PBP continues to press forward, serving nonprofits and helping them survive and thrive.

A success story that shines a spotlight on Pro Bono Partnership

Speaking with Nancy Eberhardt, who joined PBP in 2003, became New Jersey program director in 2006 and has served as executive director since 2017, it is clear that the organization has had a significant impact across New Jersey.

Seeing the actual benefits of the guidance provided by volunteer attorneys brings that impact into focus.

Many compelling stories have accumulated over the years, each demonstrating ways Pro Bono Partnership has played a critical role in the community.

One began when two young, recent business school graduates came to PBP seeking help in starting a new nonprofit organization.

As they explained to Nancy, their mission would be to assist entrepreneurs seeking to establish businesses in low-income communities.

By working with future owners of local Main Street businesses — including nail salons, bakeries, carpentry companies, gift shops, boutiques and other independent establishments — they hoped to improve the chances that profitable and successful businesses could grow.

Their concept was to educate and mentor budding business owners, helping them with incorporation while also reviewing contracts and leases, developing employee handbooks, establishing processes for hiring and terminating staff, and addressing other requirements associated with operating a business in New Jersey.

In other words, their objective was to help startups avoid potential business and legal landmines.

With guidance from attorneys working through Pro Bono Partnership, that nonprofit organization went on to celebrate its 25th anniversary and continues to serve its community today.

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How can you help?

Jonathan Mothner, board chair of Pro Bono Partnership and executive vice president and chief risk and legal officer at Synchrony, has seen firsthand how legal expertise can translate into community impact.

"I've seen firsthand how Pro Bono Partnership transforms legal expertise into community impact," he said. "Through the Partnership, Synchrony's legal team has helped nonprofits address critical legal needs, allowing them to focus on serving more people."

Mothner notes that every attorney has specialized skills that can make a lasting difference to nonprofit organizations.

"Pro Bono Partnership makes it possible to put those skills to work where they're needed most," he said. "I believe in the Partnership's mission because I've seen the benefits ripple throughout our neighborhoods."

For those who want to support Pro Bono Partnership, there are several ways to become involved:

- Spread the word – be sure that all the NJ nonprofits are aware of Pro Bono Partnership services.
- If you are an attorney, consider volunteering your expertise to support a nonprofit that reflects your values.
- Encourage good public policy when supporting political platforms.
- Learn about and support other organizations embedded in New Jersey's nonprofit community, including the New Jersey Center for Nonprofits and NonprofitConnect.

To learn more or volunteer with Pro Bono Partnership, visit probonopartner.org.

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