

# Volunteer Appreciation



**Deni Cashin**  
Daunais McKay Harms + Jones

Deni, a certified collaborative lawyer, enjoys both the negotiation and litigation aspects of her practice at Daunais McKay Harms + Jones. Since her 2009 Court of Queen's Bench appointment, she also works as a Dispute Resolution Officer. Deni previously acted for children in foster care through Legal Representation for Children and Youth (LRCY) and now acts as children's counsel on private matters. Extensive volunteer commitments also fill Deni's time. She sits on the CBA Family Law Section executive, is on Calgary's Board for Alberta Collaborative Professionals (ACP), and provides legal advice at the Calgary Legal Guidance clinic. Deni also generously donates her time and talent to LESA, most recently chairing our Domestic Contracts program and teaching in the face-to-face Interviewing and Advising CPLED module.

## **What drew you to the legal profession and the family law practice in particular?**

When I was young, I had a desire to help people, and family law addressed that desire. I like to help clients resolve their issues in the least stressful, least expensive, and most efficient way possible. My mother was a Master of Social Work, and she worked for Children's Aid in Toronto for many years. I think this had some influence on my career leanings.

## **What motivates you to volunteer?**

I particularly enjoy volunteering for LESA for many reasons. Everyone at LESA is excellent – you keep us on track and set us up for success. You provide practitioners with opportunities to research and present on issues of law that arise in their practice area. It's also forced learning in a sense: if you're going to present on an issue, you better know what the issue is about. I enjoy working with other people on the panels; it's amazing how much you learn from your colleagues as part of that process. I also enjoy presenting the material. An audience of your peers helps ensure you are doing your best work. We are lucky in our profession to do what we enjoy. Volunteering is a way to give back to the legal community and to families, and I think that's important.

## **What advice would you pass on to a newly called lawyer?**

This is an old adage but be prepared. It doesn't matter whether you're going to a client meeting, a mediation, an arbitration, or court. If you do the hard work, and you're prepared, and you've fully prepared your client then you're off to a good start. [The same goes for volunteering.] Certainly for LESA, the hours of preparation are considerable but necessary for a good result.

## **How do you like spending your time when you're not busy working or volunteering?**

I most enjoy spending time with our family. We have a youthful 7 year old lab, and we enjoy running with her regularly. I enjoy theatre, yoga, music, and reading. I love to swim and this year bought a wetsuit. We went swimming in October in the ocean, and I'm challenging myself to go back in for a swim in December.

*"If you do the hard work and you're prepared ... then you're off to a good start."*

The generous contributions of time, talent, and energy from all of our volunteers make every Legal Education Society of Alberta program and resource a great success. We greatly appreciate the work of our volunteers and their service to the profession.



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In addition to keeping current with developments in the field, the benefits of serving as a LESA volunteer include recognition by the profession, social networking opportunities, and the chance to expand your skill set while focusing on your expertise.

**Contact us to learn more about volunteer opportunities.**

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*If you volunteered for us between July and December 2015, please ensure your name is on the list. If your name has been missed, please contact us.*