

It is my highest privilege and honour to receive the Alan D. Hunter Volunteer of the Year Award from Calgary Legal Guidance for 2021. I will strive to express my gratitude for this recognition by such an esteemed organization.

When I started volunteering at the Edmonton Community Legal Center in November 2015, I had been called to the Bar for a little over three years. It took some time for me to develop the confidence needed to volunteer. What if I gave bad advice in the short appointment window? Wouldn't the questions be run of the mill questions for me, but life or death for the client? How presumptuous of me, a new lawyer from a blue collar family, to think that I could offer anything to people in such dire straits?

I was urged to just show up, listen, analyze like a lawyer, and counsel that analysis. I was surprised to learn that this was exactly what our clients looked for: not a nine-page, thoroughly-researched memorandum detailing every legal facet of their issues, but instead someone who could listen, counsel, and advocate for them.

I came to understand what Lord Denning meant when he wrote, "It is not every man who has the ability to defend himself on his own. ... If justice is to be done, he ought to have the help of someone to speak for him; and who better than a lawyer who has been trained for the task?" I became the "friend" as we refer to one another, but to someone who truly needed a friend.

John W. Davis once addressed the Bar of the City of New York and said,

True, we [lawyers] build no bridges. We raise no towers. We construct no engines. We paint no pictures—unless as amateurs for our own principal amusement. There is little of all that we do which the eye of man can see. But we smooth out difficulties; we relieve stress; we correct mistakes; we take up other men's burdens and by our efforts we make possible the peaceful life of men in a peaceful state.

When I moved home, Calgary Legal Guidance allowed me to continue to provide *pro bono* service. It allows me to "make possible the peaceful life of men in a peaceful state." I have been unbelievably blessed to have the education, training, and experience that I've had in my nine years of practice, and I welcome the opportunity to pass those blessings on to those in need.

Calgary Legal Guidance is a crucial part of what it means to be a lawyer. Our profession brings peace, stability, and advocacy ("friendship") to our clients. These efforts go beyond simple remuneration and should be available to anyone, regardless of economic, social, or personal circumstances. Calgary Legal Guidance helps people overcome those burdens and enables us volunteers to do just that: bring friendship to those in need.

Although this award represents thanks to me, I am proud to be able to turn that around and thank Calgary Legal Guidance for all that it does and all of those connected to this organization who make it possible. I am grateful to be an ambassador for Calgary Legal Guidance and look forward to many more years of service.