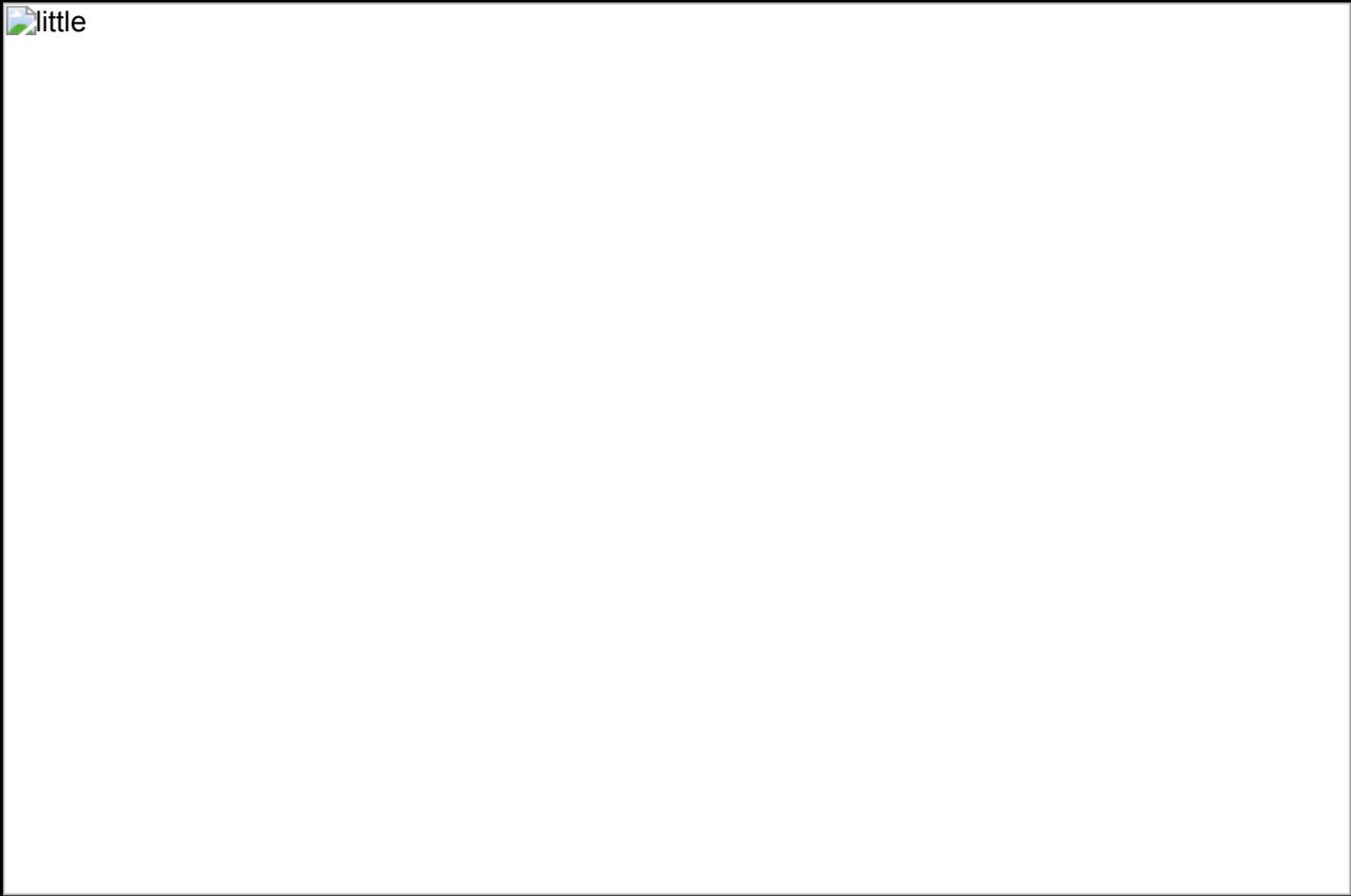


Jennifer Little Earns Florida Pro Bono Award for Tireless Advocacy of At-Risk Children

January 21, 2025

The Florida Bar has recognized Haynes Boone Senior Manager of Attorney Development [Jennifer Little](#) for dedicating 200 hours of volunteer service on behalf of low-income and disadvantaged clients with the Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office. Drawing on her legal background, Little has tirelessly advocated for Florida's most vulnerable children. Read her inspiring Q&A below and learn more about the honors from The Florida Bar [here](#).



little

How did you get involved with the Statewide Guardian and Litem Office?

I've always been involved with pro bono activities throughout my career, even after I moved to attorney professional development.

In my previous jobs abroad, my pro bono efforts had more of an international or human rights focus. I dedicated time to Advocates for International Development (A4ID), Crisis UK, Liberty and Fair Trials International. Once I was back stateside, I looked for an opportunity to give back in a jurisdiction where I maintain my license to practice and found my answer in Florida's Guardian ad Litem program. In many other states, this is known as CASA, or Court Appointed Special Advocates – like it is in Texas. Interestingly, I first heard about CASA through a public speaking program at Haynes Boone. Our attorney development team had organized a public speaking initiative, which we're relaunching this year for our

associates. One of the program's projects involved attorneys giving a speech to convince someone to get involved in a cause they cared about. [Catherine Cope](#) gave a presentation about the CASA program in Texas, which inspired me and another colleague, who were no longer practicing, to get involved. We can still use our skills and education to make a real difference in the lives of children and families in crisis.

Working with children, especially those with special needs, requires a lot of patience and dedication. What has been the most rewarding part of advocating for the sibling group you've been working with?

I can't share too much about the specific circumstances of these children, but my background in coaching and legal training allows me to take a holistic approach to supporting the foster families I've been fortunate enough to work with. I focus on helping not just the children but also their caregivers and extended family members who may not be able to take custody, but with whom the children may benefit from maintaining positive relationships in the future.

This continuity is essential for their long-term growth and success, especially as the case moves toward a resolution and they find permanence in a more stable environment.

What makes a team-based, holistic approach to advocacy so effective for the children and families you serve?

When caregivers and family members feel supported, that positivity trickles down to the children, allowing them to benefit from the best version of those individuals. The cases can be emotionally fraught and it's essential to ensure that everyone involved in the case understands how important their role is and feels appreciated for navigating such a challenging situation.

It's also crucial that they know they have a team of people working alongside them, all focused on reaching a resolution that's in the children's best interest – the GAL volunteer motto is "I am for the child" – when there are a lot of competing interests in play.

You've dedicated over 200 volunteer hours to this cause. How do you balance your pro bono work with the demands of your professional and personal life?

The case began in 2021, and I am now in my fourth year working on it. I'm fortunate to have had the complete support of my boss, [Eric Deutsch](#). Eric previously oversaw our Pro Bono program before the Firm brought in the wonderful [Rachel Elkin](#) to a dedicated Pro Bono Counsel role. He has always been understanding and encouraging, allowing me to flex my work schedule to attend court hearings which take place during normal business hours. I'm very grateful for Eric's support and for the firm's overall commitment to this type of work.

What advice would you give to other lawyers or professionals considering pro bono work, especially in child advocacy?

One of the most rewarding things I've been able to do is connect others to this program – given the overwhelming caseloads for the various state agencies involved, there is such a large need for this type of work. If you think you might be able to help in any capacity and are curious about exploring a new area – even one you might not have any prior experience with, as was the case for me – don't hesitate to ask how you can get involved. There will always be a way for your skills to make a meaningful impact in the lives of others, which for me has been personally very fulfilling.