



Of Counsel

[Florida Law]

By Art Levy

[alevy@floridatrend.com]

'Handful of Aces'

A turn of events leads attorney Timothy Moran to his niche.

Timothy A. Moran graduated cum laude from the University of Florida's Levin College of Law, but that didn't help much when he went looking for a job. Thanks to a depressed job market, he found that law firms weren't hiring, so he moved back home to the small town of Oviedo north of Orlando.

One day, he saw an ad in a newspaper. Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida was looking for attorneys willing to work with low-income clients caught up in the state's foreclosure crisis. Moran saw this as a way to get some real-life experience, so he emailed Lena Smith, Community Legal Services' pro bono manager, and offered to help. She put him to work right away, first for 20 hours a week. Pretty soon, he was working on foreclosure cases 60 hours a week and was fast becoming an expert in foreclosure defense.

Moran ended up logging more than 600 hours of pro bono work for more than 150 low-income clients. Several of the cases stick out for Moran. He worked to save the home of one woman who was dying of cancer. He helped another, who had previously lost her property, to get her house back free and clear. He remembers the day he told her that the house was hers and she asked him, almost as if she couldn't quite believe him, if she *really* was allowed to plant tulips in her yard again.

"If that isn't what it's all about," Moran says, "I don't know what is."

Moran started his own practice two years ago. He still focuses on foreclosure and loan modification cases but also handles wills, estates, trusts, contracts and bankruptcy cases. The Oviedo firm has grown enough that he's looking to bring on another attorney.



Timothy A. Moran, 35

Specialty: Foreclosure defense

Awards: 2012 Young Lawyers Division Pro Bono Service Award from the Florida Bar
One of three finalists for the 2010 State of Florida Volunteer Service Award
Named 2012 Seminole County Champion of Justice at the Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida pro bono awards

Hobbies: 18th century history, particularly Napoleon Bonaparte and British naval history; swimming; going to Disney World

Musical tastes: Louis Armstrong to the Beatles to the Rolling Stones: "Lawyers can rock," he says.

Still, it's the pro bono work that energizes Moran the most. When people going through hard times come to him, he feels good to be able to tell them, "Look, there's a way out." To him, that's the best part about practicing law.

Moran grew up wanting to be a lawyer — his grandfather is a former New York Supreme Court justice — and he always considered the law as a noble profession. He describes his professional style as "fair-minded but zealous, and aggressive when necessary." Community Legal Services' Smith says Moran is "meticulous and thorough," attributes that come in handy when representing foreclosure clients. But she says his compassion stands out the most about him.

It's possible, Moran says, that some of his compassion comes from the fact that he was born with cerebral palsy and gets around in a wheelchair: "A lot of what has made me a good lawyer has come from the cerebral palsy: The patience, the ability to empathize,

the fact that maybe if I hadn't had cerebral palsy, I might not have been a lawyer. Who knows how life unfolds?"

Moran, 35, says his cerebral palsy has never kept him from anything. While he was working at Community Legal Services, interns from the FAMU law school helped him take notes during client interviews because he is physically unable to write. He also uses computer software to dictate and complete pleadings for clients.

"The cerebral palsy does not slow him down," Smith says. "He manages to get everywhere and do everything."

One day, Moran says he might want to become a judge, but he's content now to grow his practice. He doesn't rule out starting his own family some day. He says he's exceptionally happy.

"There hasn't been a thing that I have ever wanted to do that I haven't been lucky enough to do," he says. "I've been so blessed to have the life I had. I got dealt a handful of aces."