



## It's What We Give: Life Skills for Adults with Disabilities

By Mallory Moreno

Over 15 years ago, I met a young boy named Rex who had severe autism and cerebral palsy. Rex quickly became like a little brother to me and many of my closest friends. Fast-forward 10 years: as Rex neared high school graduation, it became apparent that future programming opportunities to meet his needs locally were essentially nonexistent. That realization was when the idea of Working Adults Learning Lifelong Skills (WALLS) was born.

WALLS is a not-for-profit life skills center for adults with disabilities. The center is based out of my hometown of Zionsville, Indiana. I helped found WALLS, and now I serve as vice chair of the board of directors.

Much of our practice as attorneys easily becomes consumed with billable hours, returning phone calls, sending emails, and the general day-to-day of office life. However, when I ask colleagues about the work that they are most passionate about, their answers are often rooted in pro bono work. Their reasoning is that pro bono work and volunteer pursuits help remind them of why they wanted to become a lawyer in the first place – to help people.

I have been practicing as an elder and

disability law attorney for the past eight years. I was drawn to this field because of my deep desire to volunteer my time and give back to members of our community who are most vulnerable and in need of support. From my early teenage years through the end of law school, I often volunteered at nursing homes and with Special Olympics. In college I joined Alpha Phi Omega, a national service fraternity, because I loved volunteering.

At WALLS, I coordinate annual fundraisers, meet associates and their families, and facilitate our center's growth into a special and inviting place for young adults like Rex to find their sense of self-worth and belonging. Through volunteering, I balance a passion for helping people with disabilities on one hand with a love for my job as an elder and disability law attorney on the other. Our WALLS associates engage in activities through a team structure, valuing each individual's specific skill level to allow everyone to continue developing their social, leadership, and life skills beyond the end of their formal education. There is nothing better than realizing that WALLS associates wake up excited to come in each day, knowing that they have value and purpose.

Winston Churchill said, "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." Being an attorney is about so much more than what we get. It is about what we are able to give. Through volunteering with WALLS and the young adults that we help, I know I am making a difference by giving back to the community. Through my profession as an attorney life and my pro bono work with WALLS, I follow my passion of serving people with special needs in and out of the office. If you are also interested in helping people with disabilities and giving back in this way, feel free to check us out at: [walls-inc.org](http://walls-inc.org). ■



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