

Valquiria Castiglione Ribeiro

For many low income women, children, and families in Bristol County, having a lawyer to advise them is a luxury they could never hope to afford. But in Valquiria Castiglione Ribeiro they have a skilled advocate who has championed their cause and devoted countless hours of time to serve their needs. Through her own pro bono work, and through her engagement of other lawyers, she has nurtured a culture of pro bono commitment throughout southeastern Massachusetts. In doing so, she has shown herself to be the epitome of what the Adams Awards represent.

Although she is only nine years out of law school, Ms. Ribeiro has already amassed a breathtaking resume of pro bono experience. She demonstrated her public interest commitment early in her career, actively participating in her law school's immigration clinic. Then, upon starting her own private practice in Fall River where she specializes in family law and immigration law, she always found the time to assist

those in need. Since 2010, she has represented victims of domestic violence in difficult family law and immigration law cases through the South Coastal County Legal Services' Private Attorney Involvement Project, which aims to promote equal justice for low income people in southeastern Massachusetts by providing them with free legal assistance. Working with South Coastal County Legal Services, Ms. Ribeiro has also assisted and advised self-represented litigants at monthly pro se family law workshops in Fall River, she has mentored other pro bono attorney volunteers, and she has served as a trainer in free continuing legal education family law seminars.

In addition, Ms. Ribeiro volunteers her time to the Probate and Family Court's "Lawyer of the Day" program, assisting indigent self-represented litigants coming to the court to seek emergency relief. She also volunteers her time to the Bristol County Conciliation Project, where she provides free dispute resolution advice and has successfully helped parties to settle

their cases and avoid trial. Speaking about her work as a conciliator, Judge Robert Scandurra of the Barnstable County Probate and Family Court reports that "without lawyers such as Attorney Ribeiro who donate many, many hours of their time on a pro bono basis, the family court system could buckle under the weight of all the cases it must hear."

As if these contributions were not enough, over the last few years, Ms. Ribeiro has spearheaded the development of the "Attorneys Representing Children" program in Bristol County. Attorneys Representing Children, or ARC, is a program through which volunteer attorneys are appointed to represent children in high conflict cases litigated by their parents, including contested custody and visitation matters. By providing legal representation, ARC gives children a voice in litigation that will greatly affect their lives and provides information to the court that makes it more likely that the interests of the children will be benefited by the court's decisions. Because public

funding for ARC programs is scarce, these children rely entirely on attorneys like Ms. Ribeiro who are willing to volunteer their services. She not only started the project in the county, but recruited attorneys, developed lists of volunteers, and helped conduct training programs. The court has deemed this project an "indispensable part of its handling of contested cases where children are caught between their parents."

It is obvious that Ms. Ribeiro is not only a tireless champion for her own pro bono clients; she also helps to make the entire Probate and Family Court system work more smoothly and more effectively. We thank Ms. Ribeiro for her leadership role in promoting access to justice in Bristol County, and we congratulate her on this well-deserved honor.