

Friday Feature

Submit news & views to
bcox@legalnews.com



Tina Fisher, a legal secretary in the Birmingham office of Clark Hill, volunteers at Turning Pointe Donkey Rescue in Dansville, near Lansing.

Photos courtesy of
Debbie Banfield

'Thrive125'

Law firm observes 125th year with host of volunteer efforts

BY SHEILA PURSGLOVE
Legal News

Tina Fisher, a legal secretary in the Birmingham office of Clark Hill PLC law firm, volunteers at Turning Pointe Donkey Rescue in Dansville, southeast of Lansing. Since 2007, she has spent countless hours feeding the donkeys carrots, helping them socialize, and mucking out the stables.

"Donkeys have their own personalities," Fisher says. "If you walk, they walk with you — they're just happy to be in your company, but actually I'm the lucky one to be in their company."

And Fisher is lucky to have the support of the Clark Hill law firm that is celebrating its 125th anniversary with the "Thrive125" initiative at all 12 of its offices, including Detroit, Birmingham, Lansing and Grand Rapids. The project encourages attorneys and staff to spend 125 minutes of company time volunteering in their communities. Activities have included blood drives, volunteering for Habit for Humanity, tutoring students, volunteering at the 33rd Annual Metro Detroit Youth Day, helping coach the Wyandotte Braves softball team, taking part

in the New Center Community Services 9th Annual 5-Km Walk/Run on the Detroit River-Walk, and much more.

Fisher's volunteer work became one of the projects.

"Thrive125 is wonderful, and has helped greatly with volunteering for animals," she says. "It's made others aware of the Rescue, and co-workers have gone out to meet the donkeys and share a couple of hours with them."

Turning Pointe Donkey Rescue is committed to giving the donkeys, and a calf rescued from the veal slaughterhouse, a second chance at a good life — a "Turning Pointe" in their lives, explains Fisher, who has worked at the law firm for more than 10 years and is assigned to multiple attorneys in litigation, education and municipal law practice groups.

"TPDR keeps finding great homes for these precious animals and rescuing more from abuse," she notes, adding that this no-kill rescue is totally committed to letting the animals have a happy, clean and friendly environment for the rest of their lives.

"In addition, there are two terrific young people who will be attending vet school and taking over TPDR. The love these two

have for these donkeys is sincerely genuine. I wish all people felt that way about animals," Fisher says. "People brutally harm, neglect and abuse them for no reason, so animal lovers like me have to do whatever is possible to help them."

"It's amazing how animals begin to know you after a few visits," she says. "They love the attention. One female 'Mammoth' donkey was so impatient she bit me — so good it took my breath away! Obviously, she wanted my attention and another carrot."

One little donkey that stole her heart is Miracle, who lived up to his name by surviving his sickly birth to an equally sick mother. Although neither donkey was expected to survive beyond 48 hours, both are doing well.

"Miracle is absolutely hysterical — he will untie your tennis shoe laces with his teeth and run away like a defiant five-year-old," Fisher says. "You stop to tie them and he will sneak back and untie them again. Too cute for words!"

Attorney Jordan Bolton from the Birmingham office — that held a friendly competition with the Chicago office — helped raise money for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF), by

committing to shaving his head if his Facebook network contributed \$2,000 to the cause.

"It only took a few days, before I was sitting on my back porch letting my 6- and 3-year-old daughters run clippers through my hair," he says. "It's amazing to watch my daughters' world view evolve, as they realize not everyone is an fortunate as they. Watching compassion blossom in a child triggers truly wonderful feelings."

Legal secretary Lori Muir from the Birmingham office spent a Saturday morning at Forgotten Harvest Farms near Fenton that since 2013 has grown and harvested two million pounds of produce.

"Although I was unsure if I could handle four hours farming in the hot sun, I found I really enjoyed it and felt good about myself when it was over," she says. "It was exhausting work but remembering that this huge farm exists for the sole purpose of providing fresh produce to those in need provided the energy I needed to keep going."

Muir's colleague, administrative assistant Terry Demers, enjoyed stapling fliers for a food drive, dressing dolls, and refinishing and repurposing furniture for



Volunteer Brianna Banfield makes friends with "Miracle."

school reading areas, and gathering and recycling school supplies for schools in economically depressed areas.

"School supplies are expensive and often cannot be purchased, so you end up with classrooms where 25 to 30 students share five pair of scissors or rulers and education time is wasted waiting for your turn," she says.

Detroit attorney Lindsay Medina worked on a church project, driving a truck full of groceries to volunteers who then delivered the food to elderly, low-income residents in downtown Detroit. Medina enjoyed meeting some of these recipients.

"When I walked into the room,

they all started clapping and shaking my hand and saying 'Thank you' — it was a truly amazing feeling to know that one simple act made someone else's day," says Medina, who also ran a 5-km to support the Children's Tumor Foundation.

Marketing assistant Carolyn Scully from the Detroit office has volunteered for several years at the non-profit Buckets of Rain in Highland Park, an urban garden growing fresh produce for neighborhood food banks and handing out food weekly to local residents.

"It's great to see how the neighborhood has embraced and protected the garden," Scully says. "I like meeting the neighborhood

volunteers and working alongside them as they share their life stories."

Financial analyst Seth Haug from the Detroit office volunteered at Core City Stories, whose goal is to preserve neighborhood identity and strengthen community relationships through a storytelling bike tour. Haug worked alongside the Detroit Dialogues team to design the event, and managed the storytellers' audio onsite.

"The event was a success, full of great stories, camaraderie, and of course biking," he says. "It's so great to be a part of a company that also values community and promotes civic engagement."



Photos courtesy of Clark Hill PLC
Terry Demers, an administrative assistant in the Clark Hill Birmingham office, gathered and recycled school supplies, including 100 pairs of scissors, for schools in economically depressed areas.



Marketing assistant Carolyn Scully, from the Clark Hill office in Detroit, volunteers at the nonprofit Buckets of Rain in Highland Park, an urban garden growing fresh produce for neighborhood food banks.



Detroit attorney Lindsay Medina ran a 5-km to support the Children's Tumor Foundation, and also drove a truck full of groceries to church volunteers who delivered the food to elderly, low-income residents in downtown Detroit.