

PRO BONO HERO

by Lauren Kallins, Esquire, Maryland Disability Law Center



Maryland Super Lawyers Magazine may have tapped Todd Chason as a “Rising Star” in 2010 and 2011, but the Maryland Disability Law Center (MDLC) beat them to the quick in May 2008 when Todd accepted his first special education pro

bono case from MDLC. It was a particularly messy case involving a child with complex emotional and behavioral needs and a relationship so toxic between the family and school system that the child’s step-father had been barred from school property. The school system routinely called the police, the child was spiraling into depression and the family was at wit’s end.

Enter Todd Chason. With an even temperament and thoughtful manner that diffused the hostility, Todd was able to facilitate meaningful discussion and planning for his young client who was ultimately placed at a school that both she and her family believed would best meet her needs.

Four months later, Todd accepted his second pro bono special education case, involving a 9 year old student with autism who attended public school in a separate class for students with disabilities but whose parents believed strongly that child needed to be fully included for all classes. The parents were so disillusioned with the school system that they were considering uprooting their family and moving to another county.

Enter Todd Chason—whose respect for the stress and disenfranchisement that the parents were feeling, as well as his complete command of the facts of their son’s case and the applicable law, earned him their trust. So endowed, he was able to re-open the lines of communication between the school team and family and creative planning began to take place. The family and team ultimately agreed on additional supports that opened the door to both academic success and measured steps toward inclusion for the

child. (Post script: all plans to move to another county were scrapped).

“We knew we had someone special on our hands when, despite having resolved the outstanding issues in one of those early cases, Todd asked if it would be appropriate to keep the file open thru the next school—*just in case* the parents had any additional concerns,” remembers Lauren Kallins, a staff attorney at MDLC who coordinates the pro bono program. “That genuine concern he has for the families, combined with his respectful demeanor when responding to school system concerns and his thorough preparation of each case, make for a remarkable advocate,” Kallins continued. “We feel very fortunate to count him as one of MDLC’s special education pro bono partners.

And so it continues—Todd accepts a pro bono case every couple of months from MDLC, no matter how complicated the facts nor challenging the dynamic between family and school. This in addition to his Environmental and Energy and Government Relations practice at Gordon, Feinblatt, his chairmanship of Baltimore County’s Department of Social Services Advisory Board and his position as an Adjunct Professor at Stevenson University.

A Maryland Super Lawyer indeed!

If you are reading this ad,
so are 1,500+ attorneys, judges,
perspective clients, and family members.

If you would like to see your ad **HERE**,
please call Doris at 410-337-9103
for more information on advertising in
The Advocate.