

LAWYERS ALLIANCE FOR NEW YORK

INDIVIDUAL HONOREE



AMBER M. DEGN, ABC News / Disney General Entertainment

In-house attorney utilizes media law expertise to assist nonprofits

Over the last two years, in-house counsel Amber M. Degn has become one of Lawyers Alliance's most reliable volunteers, enthusiastically working with eight nonprofit clients on waivers, releases, and participation documents. One client, the **National Queer Theater**, was selected to present a play as part of Lincoln Center's Restart Stages series in the summer of 2021. Ms. Degn and a colleague quickly reviewed and amended the company production agreement provided by Lincoln Center so that National Queer Theater could take advantage of this opportunity to perform in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Q. How and why did you first become involved with Lawyers Alliance?

I was referred to Lawyers Alliance by the New York State Bar when I was asking about potential pro bono opportunities for lawyers with practices in the transactional field. So much pro bono work is advocacy-based, so being able to find an organization that was able to match me with clients who were in need of more contract-based services or intellectual property-related issues was truly rewarding.

Q. Share a tip for making time for pro bono.

First of all, I am very fortunate to be working for The Walt Disney Company, who is genuinely encouraging and deferential to their lawyers seeking pro bono opportunities. So that certainly makes life easier when you can be transparent with your employer about the fact that you have pro bono matters that need your attention and the response is "Fantastic! We support you." The other part of it is just being realistic with yourself about the work required and making sure you treat your pro bono client's needs as a priority. Maybe it means putting in extra time outside of business hours.

Q. Share a fun or unexpected moment from pro bono work through Lawyers Alliance.

I have a strong personal interest in live theater, so to have the chance to work with nonprofit theater companies through Lawyers Alliance and form relationships with those clients has been so much fun. I have gone to support their plays, have seen some of them go on to do events on Broadway, and it has been such a great experience to be able to share in that theater community through pro bono work.

Q. What's the most rewarding aspect of pro bono work?

Seeing the reassurance that having legal protection provides to these clients is without question the most rewarding aspect. These are nonprofits who are out there trying to do charitable work for the community, so anything to make them feel more secure and confident in what they are doing.

"Amber and her colleague did fantastic work for National Queer Theater, helping us negotiate a production agreement with Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Our production was our Criminal Queerness Festival, showcasing LGBTQ+ playwrights from countries that criminalize or censor queer and trans artists. With the legal help, we were able to pay our artists at a higher rate – something we didn't take for granted while theater artists continued to struggle with unemployment in the pandemic."

— Adam Odsess-Rubin

Artistic Director and Executive Director, National Queer Theater

Employment:

ABC News / Disney
General Entertainment
Counsel, Production

Graduate of:

Loyola Law School

Lawyers Alliance clients:

East Winds
Food Education Fund
Getting Out and Staying
Out
Good Old Lower East Side
(GOLES)
National Queer Theater
Sakhi for South Asian
Women
The Sylvia Center
You Gotta Believe!