

Bridget Smitha:

With Guardian ad Litem, you're talking about somebody's life. The children that you're working with, they're not a piece of paper, they're not a name on a page. It's an actual person. And just seeing the smiles on their face and knowing that you're there for them is just worth it. I have a very busy practice. I am a partner at Stearns Weaver, so I have cases ranging from insurance to defamation, mostly corporate defense.

Bridget Smitha:

I had a friend that was very involved with the Guardian ad Litem program and he was telling me the difficulties that they were having in finding volunteers. And he said that the main difficulties that they had was that some of the cases can be a little emotional and that there were some people that would rather take the easy, "Let's read the children volunteer programs." And I thought to myself, "You know, these are issues that the children are dealing with on a daily basis. They're having to live with it every day of their life, so why can't I give up an hour or two of my time to help these children and hopefully maybe make their lives a little bit better."

Bridget Smitha:

When I initially started the program, I must admit, I did say, "Can you give me a lighter case? Something that's a little easy for me to get my feet wet." And they did give me a very easy case and it was very light hearted. And as I've progressed, as my experience in the program has progressed, I felt more and more comfortable taking on cases, but I still haven't had a case that I wished I hadn't taken. It's always makes me feel better no matter what issues are involved.

Bridget Smitha:

My favorite memory from the Guardian ad Litem program is there are these two little girls that were having to come from Jacksonville to come to the court hearings, and I guess their grandmother would buy them toys to make the trip a little bit easier. So the one little girl had a Monsters, Inc toy and the Monsters, Inc toy kept going roar in the background. So it made for some comic relief during points of the hearing. Tell yourself, "I'm just going to do one case." If I don't like it after one case, you can go to another program, but I'm very confident that you will do one case and you'll just fall in love.