

VIRGINIA Lawyers Weekly

Norfolk firm focuses donation efforts on education during COVID-19

By: Maura Mazurowski | September 7, 2020



A Norfolk law firm is dedicating its charitable efforts to assist local schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cassidy Lewis, chief marketing officer of Cooper Hurley Injury Lawyers, said her firm has always been involved in philanthropic work throughout the community. About a year ago, the firm took its beneficial efforts up a notch by establishing the charitable campaign, “Cooper Hurley Injury Lawyers Cares.”

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March, and as many of the organizations that the firm typically worked with began shutting down, the Cooper Hurley team realized there was one area that they could continue consistently donating to: education.

“For years, our philanthropic efforts have been focused on assisting Hampton Roads residents and organizations. When we took a closer look, we recognized that it was education- and youth-based organizations that we donated the most to,” said Lewis.

In 2017, the firm established the Distracted Driving Awareness Scholarship Program, which aims to bring attention to “one of the most significant car accidents” among young adults by asking graduating high school students to propose solutions that will put an end to distracted driving, said partner Jim Hurley.

“[The program] is designed to put a focus on a dangerous issue that we see far too often at the firm,” Hurley said.

The firm has also organized coat drives for students and made consistent donations to schools over the years.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, Cooper Hurley reached out to local principals and asked how they could best assist schools and students during this time. They quickly realized that although many educational items are usually on-hand for students while learning in a school environment, they may not have all the tools they need at home.



Cassidy Lewis and Jim Hurley

“When students come into the classroom they have everything they need... But at home, the principals and teachers don’t have control over what they have,” Lewis said.

One of the administrators the firm spoke to was Audrey Williams, assistant principal of Larrymore Elementary School in Norfolk. Williams emailed Cooper Hurley a list of items for her 600 students – including wireless mics, headphones, webcams and dry erase markers – that would help set them up for success while “learning from home.”

Lewis said that Williams expected the firm to donate a handful of the items on the list. Instead, Cooper Hurley donated \$5,000 to Larrymore Elementary “in the hopes that the funds will help those students learn how they need to learn.”



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– Jim Hurley

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Lewis said, “I believe those causes you hold in high regard—the ones you feel the most passionate about will naturally be the ones you give more to.”

She added that focusing on donating to educational systems is a “perfect fit” for Cooper Hurley; two of the firm’s four partners’ spouses work at public schools in Virginia Beach and Norfolk. Additionally, many of the firm’s employees have children adjusting to virtual learning in light of the pandemic — including Lewis.

“Virtual learning has been a mix of joy, chaos, flexibility, and my littles and I are learning more about each other,” Lewis said. “Some days everything is structured and perfect, other days we barely get to open my daughter’s laptop.”

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