



ALEXANDER YOUTH NETWORK

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He Spent 40 Years in High-Stakes Litigation. Now He's Using Every Hour to Protect Charlotte's Most Vulnerable Kids.

*Attorney Blaine Sanders receives two of North Carolina's top pro bono honors for his work as
Alexander Youth Network's volunteer General Counsel*



Blaine Sanders, Of Counsel, Robinson Bradshaw, Outside General Counsel, Alexander Youth Network

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – For most of his career, Blaine Sanders litigated multimillion-dollar real estate and NASCAR cases, argued intellectual property disputes, and represented clients in some of Charlotte's most complex commercial litigation. Today, the Robinson Bradshaw attorney spends his time on a different kind of case entirely: providing the legal and strategic support that allows a nonprofit with more than 500 employees to operate and deliver essential mental health services to children with complex emotional and behavioral needs.

This month, that quiet career pivot earned Sanders two of the state's most prestigious pro bono honors. Last week, the **Mecklenburg County Bar** presented him with the Outstanding Individual Attorney Award at the Law & Society Gala in Charlotte. And the **North Carolina Bar Association** has named him the 2026 recipient of the Thorp Pro Bono Service Award, a statewide honor presented each June to attorneys whose service far exceeds professional expectations.

The recognition centers on Sanders' role as outside General Counsel for Alexander Youth Network, where he has volunteered since 2016. In 2025 alone, he logged more than 500 hours of pro bono legal work for the organization—negotiating real estate transactions, reviewing contracts, advising leadership on regulatory compliance, and handling the legal complexities that come with running one of Charlotte's largest providers of therapeutic services for children experiencing mental and behavioral health challenges. Every hour Sanders donates is an hour the organization doesn't have to divert from direct care.

"There are moments when an organization's mission is tested in real time, when a single legal decision can affect whether children receive care. For nearly a decade, Blaine has brought extraordinary legal skill, deep integrity, and unwavering partnership to those moments, making it possible for Alexander Youth Network to continue serving children with complex needs," said **Brennon D. Graham, president and CEO of Alexander Youth Network.**

Sanders' influence extends well beyond his own caseload. In 2021, Robinson Bradshaw appointed him as the firm's first-ever Director of Pro Bono Services—a role in which he paired attorneys and paralegals at every level with volunteer opportunities across the Charlotte region. Under his leadership, the firm has contributed more than 17,000 hours of pro bono legal work through partnerships with Legal Aid of North Carolina, Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy, Council for Children's Rights, and CLIMB, a free business law clinic Robinson Bradshaw co-founded to serve entrepreneurs in historically under-resourced communities.

The two awards recognize different dimensions of that work. The Mecklenburg County Bar's honor spotlights Sanders' direct, daily impact on the Charlotte community, particularly his service to Alexander Youth Network. The Thorp Award, named for William Thorp, a founder of Legal Services of North Carolina, carries a broader mandate: it recognizes attorneys who have provided sustained, substantial legal services to people who could not otherwise afford representation. Sanders is only the latest Robinson Bradshaw attorney to receive the Thorp honor, following colleagues Brent Torstrick in 2019 and Erik Zimmerman in 2023.

"Representing Alexander Youth Network these past 10 years has been one of the highlights of my career," shared Sanders. "Alexander's mission of treating and healing children is incredibly important to our community and our state. It is a dream job for an attorney to be able to support that work."

Alexander Youth Network serves some of the Charlotte region's most vulnerable young people, children facing serious emotional and behavioral challenges, many of whom come from families with few resources. For an organization of that scale and mission, having a legal advocate of Sanders' caliber working pro bono isn't a luxury. It's the difference between spending limited funds on outside counsel and spending them on the kids who need it most.

About Alexander Youth Network

Alexander Youth Network is one of North Carolina's largest providers of children's mental and behavioral health services, delivering intensive therapeutic interventions for young people with complex emotional and behavioral challenges, many of whom rely on Medicaid and other public systems for care. With more than 500 dedicated staff members working across multiple communities, Alexander helps children find stability, strengthen resilience, and move forward with the support they need. Learn more at alexanderyouthnetwork.org.

About Robinson Bradshaw

Robinson Bradshaw is a Charlotte-based law firm recognized nationally for its litigation, corporate, and regulatory practices. The firm's pro bono program has been honored by the American Bar Association, the North Carolina Bar Association, the Mecklenburg County Bar, the North Carolina Justice Center, and Legal Aid of North Carolina for its sustained commitment to expanding access to justice across the state.

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