



Contra Costa Lawyer Online




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The urgent legal needs of Contra Costa's more than 200,000 impoverished residents are met by BayLegal.



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The cy pres award was from a class action matter that local attorney, David Birka-White, had recently resolved on behalf of his clients. Candice Stoddard sat down with Birka-White to learn more about him.




[Summer Program Gives Students a "Crash Course" in the Realities of Being a Lawyer](#)
By offering these students a realistic depiction of the daily life of attorneys, they might be able to identify whether these realities matched up with their career expectations.

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The Contra Costa Lawyer is the official publication of the Contra Costa County Bar Association (CCCBA), published 12 times a year - six in print and 12 online issues.

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Inside Guest Column

Sunday, December 01, 2013

"We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." – Winston Churchill

For most of the year, the Contra Costa Lawyer focuses on how we make our living. For December, we are focusing on how we make our lives. As Churchill reminds us, our "life" is more than how we make a living—it is defined by more than what we get—it is defined by what we give.

So this month we celebrate giving back to our community. Not surprisingly, our members serve others in more ways than we could have imagined. In fact, our members give back in so many different ways, we could not cover all of them in this issue, so keep your eyes open throughout the year for our Pro Bono Spotlight and find out even more ways that the Contra Costa County Bar and its members give back to our communities.



Many of our members take advantage of the myriad opportunities provided by (or supported by) the Bar Association to provide legal services to those in need. This month, we look at some of these services. Verna Haas writes about Contra Costa Senior Legal Services, Senior Self-Help, a Wills Clinic and Consult-an-Attorney, all of which serve our aging population here in Contra Costa County. Carla Young Garrett describes this year's 9th Annual High School Moot Court Competition, which was created by the Center for Economic and Civic Education and was sponsored by the CCCBA. This year's competition focused on the case of *Maryland v. King*, a case involving questions about the legality of taking DNA samples from people who have been arrested for, but not yet convicted of, a serious crime.

Our members don't just stick to the charitable offerings of the CCCBA—they find causes that inspire them to action. Eric Berkowitz tells us about Bay Area Legal Aid, which provides legal services to the impoverished residents of Contra Costa County. Bay Area Legal Aid covers all civil areas of legal need, and it does so with 15 local attorneys and **a lot** of volunteers. CCCBA members are not only volunteer lawyers for BayLegal, some of them are Board members as well. It is certainly an organization that meets an acute need here in our county.

Rubicon Programs also serves residents of Contra Costa County in need, but it focuses on helping those with disabilities, mental illness or the stigma of a criminal conviction. Raegan Joern tells us about Rubicon, and how it works not only to represent people who need help, but empowers them to become their own advocates.

Another organization meeting the desperate needs of an otherwise underrepresented group is Court Appointed Special Advocates, or CASA. Gregg Chavaria takes us inside the rewarding experience of a CASA volunteer and shows us what a huge difference one

can make in the life of a child who has no one else to speak for them.

Sometimes our help comes in different forms—more familiar to our day-to-day lives. In a spotlight article, Andrew Gillin tells us about a summer internship program that takes local high school students (this year, 16 students from 13 different local high schools) and brings them into a law firm for a week, giving them a real look at what attorneys do. They take them through basic civil procedure, allow them to sit in on a mediation and generally try to inspire them to consider law as a career.

Maureen Dixon, on the other hand, works with students who are in need of writing coaches. Writing is such a large part of what lawyers do, and is a skill that is not being taught in many places. The WriterCoach Connection seeks to fill that void, teaching students the skills of writing and setting free their voices in the world.

Carol Langford addresses the ethics of pro bono service in our monthly ethics column. Should our pro bono service be compulsory or should it be voluntary? Grounding her position in the language of Bus. & Prof. Code 6068 (h) and the language of proposed California Rule 6.1, she points out that if all attorneys gave 50 hours of pro bono service a year, there would be more than 30 million lawyer hours of free legal aid given in California alone every year. Think of all the good we could do with that much legal work.

Switching from legal aid to issues of health, we bring you the Immunity Project. Begun in the Bay Area, it seeks nothing less than the eradication of HIV. How? It studies people who have a natural immunity to HIV and seeks to create a vaccine. Once they have this vaccine, they hope to distribute it world-wide—for free. The impact would be monumental and would stretch across the globe changing lives in every single country. Making the vaccine available for free ensures that it is not just the developed world that has access to these life-saving vaccines, but that it is also available where the need is greatest—where there is no access to drug cocktails or prevention campaigns.

Last, but certainly not least, we shine a spotlight this month on David Birka-White, who named the Bar Fund as the beneficiary of a \$27,000 *cy pres* award. We learn more, not just about the case that brought about this generous award, but about the man behind that case and why he chose our very own Bar Fund as the beneficiary.

As you can see, the generosity of spirit in Contra Costa County is great, and though we have filled an entire issue of the Lawyer, the causes and organizations represented here are but a fraction of the opportunities for pro bono work or volunteerism in this county alone. However, if you are moved to give but *still* need ideas on how to contribute to your community in the upcoming year, check out this month's Coffee Talk and Theresa Hurley's article on Free Legal Workshops and the Education Outreach program. They are full of great ideas!

As we enter into a time of year filled with holidays and family, we here at the Contra Costa Lawyer wish you and your family a holiday season filled with love, happiness and joy.

– The Editorial Board

President's Message: Final Thoughts

Sunday, December 01, 2013



In January, I officially assumed the office of President of this organization at our annual Installation Luncheon. I kicked off the year with a talk about hope and optimism. I spoke of goals and dreams and challenged each of you to look into your past to a younger, more idealistic version of yourselves, to pick out a dream, large or small, and to try to achieve it.

I suggested that none of us should simply accept difficult circumstances as the norm; that we should always hope and strive for something better, despite what bitter truths we may think we have learned in the past. And I said that if all else failed, we could at least feel better about ourselves and our circumstances by reminding ourselves of some small thing that we value in each day of our lives.

A year ago, we were still coming out of the Great Recession. Home values were still greatly depressed. Joblessness was high. Cuts in court funding left us in doubt about whether we would have much of a justice system in the future.

I don't know how it seems to you, but to me, our outlook seems much brighter now. Have all of our problems been solved? No. We have seen improvement—large in some areas, small in others. But our feeling about ourselves seems much better. We have, at least, the hope of improvement and the belief that improvement is possible.

In this past year, I have come to know more of you than I did before. Yet, still I have the sense that of our 1,700 members, no more than half are very active in our bar or get anywhere near the value out of it that is there to be had.

In my year I have:

- Given my talk to about 100 of you at the Installation Lunch and was thrilled to see the rapt attention you gave to our newest California Supreme Court Justice Goodwin Liu as he told us about the court and his new position on it.
- Helped in the formation and implementation of the Discovery Facilitator program.

- Attended many solo section breakfasts and broke bread with my fellow early risers.
- Sat next to Willie Brown and fumbled through the gavel-passing ceremony with our new Judge, Judy Johnson.
- Spent many a deadline-pushing evening crunching out these columns.
- Played softball with Judges Austin, Becton and Goode.
- Met regularly with Judges Austin and Goode to discuss ideas to help our members in their trial practices.
- Presided over board meetings where difficult public policy positions were debated and much, much more.

All of these things have enriched me. And the beauty of it is, they are experiences that any one of you can have too, if you decide to make the most out of your membership and pursue a position in leadership.

This organization can be as meaningful to you as you want. Or it can just be the organization to which you mechanically pay dues.

A few weeks ago, I was privileged to be invited to attend a reception for our past Presidents—even though at that time, it was a bit premature and I was only a half-past President. About 30 past Presidents attended, the most senior being Ken Larson, who served as bar President in 1967! It was a night of good cheer. I was regaled with stories from the past—both recent and remote—about the colorful figures who have peopled the history of our local legal community. If nothing else, the treat of seeing how our 50- to 70-year-olds looked 20 and 30 years ago with their dark, curly hair and mustaches was a delight. And each person there was enthusiastic in expressing their enjoyment at being able to attend.

I am sure that my term will have about as much lasting impact as one of these columns. But I hope that those of you who were there to start the year with me took my call to heart and made this your year of optimism too, and that it was as rewarding to you as mine was to me. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

In addition to serving as CCCBA's President this year, **Jay Chafetz** has a solo practice in Walnut Creek and specializes in personal injury, medical malpractice, elder abuse, trust and estate litigation and general civil litigation.

Pro Bono for CCC Residents: Bay Area Legal Aid

Sunday, December 01, 2013

Where can people with limited English proficiency turn when they receive eviction or foreclosure notices they cannot understand? Who helps domestic violence survivors navigate the court procedures that could bring them to safety? Where are the experienced lawyers who make sure that poor, and often disabled, residents get the public benefits they need to survive? And who provides these services free of charge?

In Contra Costa County, there is just one answer to all of these questions: Bay Area Legal Aid (BayLegal). Unlike neighboring counties, where there are dozens of specialized legal aid organizations, the urgent legal needs of Contra Costa's more than 200,000 impoverished residents are met by BayLegal's 15 local attorneys and cadre of volunteers. The volume of cases handled at BayLegal's Richmond-based office and its eight mobile advocacy sites is astonishing: In 2012 alone, the office handled nearly 2,000 cases, while its domestic violence and housing clinics assisted thousands more litigants. All of these services were done without charge.

"The need is so tremendous everywhere in the county," sighed Managing Attorney Susun Kim as she took a breath after a long day. "It's always been there. Until we built up our office to its current capacity, these people were just left in the cold."

Kim has a lot to be proud of. When she arrived in Richmond in 2004 to take the helm of BayLegal's three-attorney office, she was told that they were being evicted and had to find new digs within just one month. Kim also learned that a key grant had been lost. And just to make things more interesting, she had newborn twins at home, as well as another young son. "I pulled my hair out every day," she said with a laugh.

From that inauspicious beginning, Kim became a one-woman cyclone of activity, devoting herself in equal parts to fundraising, building a staff of first-rate attorneys and support personnel, and integrating BayLegal as a strategic partner with other social service organizations. It hasn't been easy. For example, in 2010, she heard of a new anti-poverty initiative organized by the United Way of the Bay Area, called SparkPoint. The program aims to help impoverished families return to self-sufficiency by providing "financial education," including coaching, job training, credit help, and the like. Missing from SparkPoint's planned offerings was civil legal services.

"I started going to their meetings. No one knew who I was or why I was there," Kim recalled. "People sometimes forget what civil legal services can do to bring people stability, peace and a chance for self-sufficiency." Eventually, Kim convinced SparkPoint to include BayLegal's services in the program. Not only do SparkPoint participants now benefit from BayLegal's assistance in debt collection, foreclosure and other areas, the United Way has heralded BayLegal's services as integral to achieving the SparkPoint mission.

BayLegal's Contra Costa County office now operates under approximately 25 separate grants in addition to receiving funding and administrative support through the firm's regional structure. Most of the local grants are in the \$10,000-\$20,000 range and none are permanent, which makes fundraising practically a full-time job for Kim. "I think about it when I am in the shower, when I am driving, all day," she said. "It takes a lot of time convincing organizations and local jurisdictions how critical our work is and how much

need there is.”

In addition to SparkPoint, the Contra Costa office receives substantial support from Community Development Block Grants (distributed through HUD) and National Mortgage Settlement funds channeled through the California attorney general, plus county and federal funds to assist former prisoners re-enter society, as well as a number of private foundations.

None of these fundraising efforts would bear fruit if the legal work done in the trenches by BayLegal’s attorneys was not of the highest quality. “The lawyers there are just exceptional,” said BayLegal Board member and Miller Starr Regalia partner Bill Speir. “All of them could get much more lucrative jobs at private firms, but they have chosen to work for the benefit of others.”

Everyone agrees that legal aid work is not a road to personal riches, and the caseloads of BayLegal’s attorneys are crushing, but the personal satisfaction of representing people in need is something a high salary cannot buy. Housing attorney Kari Rudd recalls a construction worker who walked into the office in January 2013. “He had already lost his San Pablo house in foreclosure. He had been there for decades, and now the investor who bought the house was starting eviction proceedings.” Rudd quickly determined that the bank had been engaging in tactics that were both illegal in California and were against the terms of the National Mortgage Settlement. Rudd registered a complaint with the California monitor for the Settlement, who pressured the lender to rescind the trustee’s sale. Additionally, Rudd was able to negotiate an agreement modifying the underlying mortgage and reducing the loan principal amount by \$155,000. “I have never seen that kind of reduction,” Rudd said. “If he hadn’t walked into our office that day, he would have lost his house completely.”

These kinds of results are BayLegal’s stock in trade, and when clients cannot come into the office, BayLegal lawyers go to them. In clinics all over the county, including in Pittsburgh and Richmond courthouses, BayLegal attorneys work with about 2,700 clients per year providing critical assistance in obtaining restraining orders and related relief against domestic violence, and in fighting evictions. Almost as important, the attorneys screen the clients for services and benefits they may be entitled to but are not receiving.

For longtime Board member and Danville attorney Bill Gagen, being a part of organizations like BayLegal is not only rewarding, it is part of his civic duties. “A lot more needs to be done to help our citizens living below the poverty line,” he said. “It’s a social responsibility we all share.” For the thousands of people for whom BayLegal’s efforts have meant the difference between dignity and hunger or homelessness, Gagen hit the nail on the head.

For more information, visit the website at <http://baylegal.org/>.

Pro Bono for Children: Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)

Sunday, December 01, 2013

"The thing I'm thankful for most about my CASA volunteer is that she keeps her promises to me, when so many other people don't."

Dear friends of the Contra Costa County Bar Association, this holiday season, we are thankful for all the people who have helped Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) make a difference in a child's life.

For 32 years, our CASA volunteers have been *keeping their promise* to the abused and neglected children they serve in Contra Costa County, and their commitment enables these vulnerable children access to desperately needed health, therapeutic and educational services.

CASA's mission is to recruit, train and support community volunteers who advocate for the most vulnerable children who are victims of abuse or neglect. CASA volunteers prevent them from becoming lost in an overburdened legal and child welfare system. Most importantly, CASA volunteers help them so they can become healthy, contributing members of the community, instead of crime statistics. Our volunteers make real the hope that one person can make a difference.

Below is "Natalie's Story" as told by her CASA volunteer, Gina. Her story highlights the despair that many children face in foster care and the crucial role a CASA volunteer plays in turning this despair around and finding them a safe, permanent home while advocating for their best interest.

I met Natalie in March 2004. She was nine years old and living in a therapeutic group home for emotionally disturbed children. She greeted me with a smile, and while she was excited to meet me, she gave me only occasional eye contact. I'm not sure what I was expecting, but Natalie looked like your typical nine year old—adorable, with a few teeth missing in front, reminding me of the sweet innocence of childhood. I momentarily forgot that she was a child who had experienced an enormous amount of trauma and rejection.

Natalie would later comment, "I had lost my family and everything that was familiar to me at age five. By age seven I was moved to a group home with other children who like me, were angry, confused and depressed. I was alone and far away from those that I loved."

As I began to advocate for Natalie it became abundantly clear she was extremely intelligent, athletic, artistic, and had one unchanging desire ... to be a part of, and loved by, a family. My initial role as a CASA volunteer was to make sure that she had access to vital health, therapeutic, and educational services. However, I also found myself in the role of cheerleader, confidant, and at times, a source of unsolicited motherly advice to a child who was virtually alone in life's journey.

Despite the positive benefits of being in the CASA program, Natalie was beginning to lose hope of ever being adopted. She was now 11, and could not understand why she was still at the group home and not with a foster family. These feelings led to renewed anger, and then depression. As her CASA [volunteer], I provided guidance, support, and

made sure she knew that I would be there for her during these difficult times.

Approximately one year later, hope reappeared for Natalie. A family inquired about her. It was a joyous day indeed because this was not just any foster family, but a family that wanted to adopt Natalie.

Natalie was reborn the day she moved in with this family. I noticed amazing changes in her disposition, confidence, and personality almost immediately. With each visit, I saw Natalie bloom into an empathetic, loving, polite, caring, and mature teenager. The awakening of her inner beauty was astounding.

I worked diligently with all parties involved to assist in the adoption process. Joining a family and opening up her heart to trust and love again was both exciting and emotionally challenging for Natalie. The power of a loving and stable family triumphed and Natalie was adopted.

Today Natalie is 18. She graduated from high school this past spring with a 3.6 grade point average and has begun her freshman year at a California State University. Before leaving for college, I was fortunate to spend some time with Natalie and to hear her say:

“As I look back at those painful years I realize there were a few people in my life who were instrumental in shaping my future. Among those few individuals who showed me unconditional love, hope, and taught me by example right from wrong was you, my CASA volunteer. I wish that every child in foster care could have the gift of hope, a CASA volunteer!”

I’m honored to have been Natalie’s CASA volunteer for five years. I’m so pleased that Natalie’s dream came to fruition, and she is now part of that loving family she has always desired. Her future is bright and she has and will continue to make her family proud.

Reading inspiring stories like Natalie’s is why we are committed to “keeping our promise” to the children we serve. By maintaining critical access to health, educational and therapeutic services to the children we serve, our CASA volunteers are “the difference” in the direction these children’s lives take: Moving them away from the cycle of abuse and neglect to a life filled with hope.

CASA volunteers are not attorneys, but rather they’re citizen advocates. They’re ordinary people from various walks of life who do extraordinary things in the lives of abused and neglected children in our community. Last year, our CASA volunteer advocates provided over 17,000 hours of service to their children. No other children’s service organization in the county uses volunteers in such a unique and powerful way.

Join us in helping to “keep our promise” to the children we serve, and support CASA today, for a lifetime of positive returns. Please visit our website at www.cccocasa.org to learn more about becoming a CASA volunteer or to donate.

Pro Bono for Students: Center for Economic and Civic Education

Sunday, December 01, 2013

It's 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, October 12, 2013. The Bray Courthouse and Annex are filled with students, coaches and parents milling around the Jury Assembly Room, munching on muffins, sipping on coffee and juice, and practicing arguments one last time. More than three dozen lawyers commune in the front of the Bray, waiting to be assigned courtrooms. Why did 80 students and 40 attorneys voluntarily get up so early on a Saturday? (Hint: It wasn't for the t-shirt.) It's the ninth annual High School Moot Court Competition, sponsored by the CCCBA.

Every October a local nonprofit corporation—the Center for Economic and Civic Education, or CESQD (run by Carla Young Garrett)—creates and organizes the competition as an arena for students to hone and showcase their analytical, persuasive and speaking skills. Each year, CESQD adapts a current USSC case (in IRAC fashion) to give students a chance to test their moxie in our courthouse. This year's case, *Maryland v. King*, involves taking DNA from someone arrested for, but not yet convicted of, a serious felony. Previous cases have dealt with same-sex marriage, student free speech, the Affordable Healthcare Act, juvenile Miranda and the death penalty.

The competition is not for the faint of heart. Each team of two to four students is bombarded with questions by a three-judge court made up of lawyers, challenging the students to think on their feet. They must argue both petitioner and respondent sides, and they're scored on their arguments-in-chief, rebuttals and ability to answer questions. Each round takes about 40 minutes, giving the attorneys plenty of time to pepper the students with questions and assess their skills.

This year, there are 36 teams (mostly local, but one group flew in from Las Vegas and one appeared via video conference from Austin, Texas, thanks to our excellent, hardworking and helpful IT staff). After they have each argued both sides, the top four scoring teams advance to the semi-finals; this year presided over by the Honorable Leslie Landau (stalwart finals judge) and the Honorable Steve Treat. For the final round, Judges Landau and Treat combine forces with one of the lawyers to make up the court.

At the end of the day, the feedback from both attorneys and judges is excellent:

"These students have bright futures. I heard only the last two rounds, but I can tell you, I heard better advocacy than we often get from attorneys in real cases. It's obvious how much hard work they've put in." — Judge Steve Treat

"Moot Court provides the students with a real sense of advocating for a client, and offers an insider's peek into how legal arguments are made and the demands of inquisitive judges. As a volunteer judge, it's great to see the passion of these budding advocates grappling with issues presented in recent cases while learning about the legal system along the way." — Vrej V. Garabedian, Esq.

For many of the lawyers, the day is summed up like this:

"It was fun being a moot court judge! I figured it was the closest I would ever come to

wearing judicial robes (I wore a suit for moot court—next best thing).” — Harry Gilbert, Esq.

For more information or to get involved, contact Carla Young Garrett at (925) 708-6527 or email mootcourt2013cesqd.org, or visit the website at www.cesqd.org.

Pro Bono for Seniors: Free and Low-Cost Legal Services

Sunday, December 01, 2013



Contra Costa County is home to many free or low-cost programs specifically designed to assist seniors with legal issues. Some of these services are court-based, some are offered by nonprofits and some are made possible by pro bono attorneys. Below is a description of the major programs, their services and contact information. Many of these programs welcome volunteers and, indeed, some depend exclusively on volunteers.

Contra Costa Senior Legal Services (CCSLS) has been serving seniors, ages 60 and over, since 1979. CCSLS advocates for and provides free direct legal representation to some of Contra Costa County's most vulnerable citizens. Staff attorneys are available to consult with and to represent clients in civil matters such as unlawful detainers, credit card defense and financial elder abuse. In-person appointments are available at the office in Richmond, and clients may also schedule phone appointments to discuss their matters.

CCSLS also offers **Consult-an-Attorney Clinics** and a **Wills Clinic** providing simple wills, staffed by pro bono volunteers. These programs are conducted in senior centers throughout the county. A monthly Wills Clinic is also offered at CCSLS. If you would like to assist in a Wills Clinic or Consult-an-Attorney Clinic, please contact Laine Lawrence, Executive Director, for more information at (510) 374-3712.

In 2009, in cooperation with the Superior Court, CCSLS created the **Senior Self-Help Clinic**. This clinic was designed to support the Contra Costa County's Elder Court. Every Tuesday, from 9 a.m. to noon, attorneys assist seniors who are in need of advice and assistance with their legal matters, including assistance with completing elder abuse restraining orders and help with filling out the appropriate forms to evict an abusive member of a household.

CCSLS also conducts a workshop for Pro Per Conservators of the person, which is focused on how to become a pro bono conservator (to be distinguished from the Conservator Workshop described below, which addresses duties of a conservator, and is conducted at the Law Library). In the monthly workshop, participants learn about the conservatorship process and the forms necessary to become a conservator of the person, and receive instruction in how to complete those forms. This workshop, open to

all county residents, addresses general and limited conservatorships. It is offered on the first Monday of the month at 1:30 p.m. in the 2nd Floor Conference Room at the Family Law Building in Martinez.

The **Conservatorship Workshop** at the Contra Costa Public Law Library focuses on the duties and responsibilities of conservators of the person and estate. This free, all-day workshop is offered on a bi-monthly basis and is taught by local members of the Professional Fiduciary Association of California. This workshop is recommended—and may become mandatory next year—for all self-represented conservators. Please contact the Law Library for further information at (925) 646-2783.

The **Elder Law Center** is an organization designed to connect seniors, who have suffered financial elder abuse, with pro bono attorneys. The best way to contact the ELC is through their website at <http://thelawcenter.cc/the-elder-law-center/>.

The **Lawyer in the Library** program in Martinez is sponsored by the Law Library and staffed by pro bono attorneys. It operates on the second Tuesday afternoon of every month and volunteers are welcome and appreciated. Please contact Cary Rowan for details at (925) 646-2783.

Among the court-sponsored programs, also available to seniors with specific needs, are the **Guardianship Clinic**, the **Family Law Facilitator** and the **Small Claims Advisor** and workshops. These programs, like the conservatorship workshops, are not specifically focused on seniors, but are important resources for self-represented residents—including those over age 60.

In sum, there are numerous ways to become involved and make a difference for seniors. Whether volunteering for a clinic, providing advice at a senior center or offering to take on a case, your participation is a vital and valued component of improving the quality of life for many vulnerable seniors.

Pro Bono for the Disabled: Rubicon Programs

Sunday, December 01, 2013

"We find legal solutions that preserve our clients' basic security and address their most critical needs. This allows them to focus their energy on their health, family and work, instead of wondering where the next dollar for a meal or rent will come from. It's work that has soul in it." — Kelly Dunn, General Counsel and Director of Legal Services, Rubicon

Rubicon provides legal services to low-income Contra Costa County residents facing disability, mental illness or the consequences of having a criminal record. People with disabling medical conditions are provided with skilled representation on Social Security disability applications. Our 12-person Legal Services team empowers clients to access health insurance, housing, jobs and financial stability.

Rubicon provides legal services to 800 indigent community members each year in four practice areas:

- Legal Barriers to Work
- Mental Health Legal Services Partnership
- Social Security Disability
- HIV Legal Services

Ana is just one of those 800 people. Working with Rubicon, Ana accessed healthcare benefits and avoided eviction. More inspiring, she came to understand her rights and advocate for herself.

Ana is a young immigrant who speaks limited English and is unable to work due to debilitating mental illness. When she first came to Rubicon for help, she lived in a garage—her brother helped by paying her rent and providing one meal a day. Ana had no other income.

We discovered Ana had been denied food stamp and healthcare benefits. We successfully appealed the denial of her benefits and referred her to a financial assistance program for disabled immigrants. While Ana and our attorney were working together, her landlady tried to kick her out on a moment's notice and keep her rent check. By then, Ana had grown more secure after working with our attorney—she understood her rights and advocated for herself.

Rubicon attorneys are motivated by enabling people like Ana to enjoy a better quality of life. They welcome your expertise. Rubicon staff and clients would benefit from volunteer attorneys available to answer questions and provide phone based consultation—particularly in the areas of probate, tax, immigration, housing and family law. Family law is a critical need for volunteer services. We have found that many of our clients have been separated from their children during the course of their struggle. Ready to improve the quality of their lives, our clients seek connection with family.

VOLUNTEER: Provide pro bono consultation to Rubicon attorneys or clients in the areas of probate, tax, immigration, housing and family law.

DONATE: For every dollar you donate, 95 percent goes directly to programs that guide people to jobs, housing and health services.

CY PRES: Nominate Rubicon's legal services for a *cy pres* award.

For more information or to get involved, contact Rachel Lee Holstein at rachelleeh@rubiconprograms.org or (510) 231-3965, or visit the website at www.rubiconprograms.org.

The Ethics of Pro Bono Service

Sunday, December 01, 2013



Early in recorded history, lawyers—or their precursors—worked without compensation, except for the occasional "gratuities" they received. Today of course, things are much different. But every lawyer is exhorted by the Bar to help represent the poor and the disadvantaged. Despite this, legal aid lawyers are continually overworked and overwhelmed, not to mention underpaid.

Should every lawyer be *required* to perform pro bono service? The issue has been debated for the past 35 years among legal services lawyers, bar association officials and other representatives of both the profession and public interest groups. But little consensus has been reached.

One of the most compelling and widely discussed statements favoring mandatory pro bono was the testimony of Orville H. Schell, then-president of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, before a U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee over a quarter of a century ago. Schell concluded not only that pro bono was "one of the profession's principal obligations," but that there was a "longstanding general lack of commitment by lawyers" to do this work.

Most controversial was his view that pro bono service should be mandatory. "Not to have it enforceable will leave the providing of these services right where it is now, on the shoulders of a few lawyers of good will while the great majority go merrily on their way." Schell's reasoning did not rest on the frequently advanced theory that lawyers hold a monopoly on legal work through their licensing; he pointed out that "plumbers and TV repairmen" were also licensed. Instead, he cited lawyers' role in the administration of justice.

"I am now convinced, as a philosophical matter," Schell stated, "that lawyers, unlike groups such as plumbers, manufacturers of can openers and oil barons (unhappily), undertake an obligation to the public when they enter the Bar. That obligation is to devote some portion of their professional life to the delivery of legal services at non-compensatory rates or no fees at all. Believing then, that the profession does have such an obligation, I submit that one way or the other, it must be made an enforceable obligation."

I fully agree; Business and Professions Code section 6068 (h) states that it is the duty of an attorney "Never to reject, for any consideration personal to himself or herself, the cause of the defenseless or the oppressed." For that Rule to have any real meaning, it has to be read as mandatory. Our new proposed California Rule 6.1 will state that a lawyer "should aspire to provide or enable the direct delivery of at least 50 hours of pro bono publico legal services a year." Just think: With approximately 1.2 million or more lawyers in the country, if even half did the ABA proposed and California recommended 50 hours a year, that would mean *30 million* lawyer-hours a year devoted to those in need.

The bottom line is that when every lawyer, no matter how small a practice or how large, participates either by providing services or by donating to one of the many legal aid offices, not only the poor but the entire legal system benefits. It makes us better people. It makes for a better image of lawyers. And yes, it helps someone in need.

I just wrote a check to a scholarship fund to help transitional law students (students in need who left college and did not go right into law school) with their law school tuition. It wasn't for a lot; after all, I have a son in college. But someone out there will breathe a little easier knowing they have cash to help pay for their first year law books.

I'd say that's the best money I have spent all year.

Carol M. Langford represents attorneys, accountants, doctors and nurses in matters before their licensing boards. She is an adjunct professor of ethics at U.C. Berkeley Boalt Hall School of Law.

CCCBA's Bar Fund Receives Generous Cy Pres Award

Sunday, December 01, 2013



In August, the CCCBA staff was surprised and thrilled when a courier delivered a check in excess of \$27,000, payable to The Bar Fund. The check was a *cy pres* award from a class action matter that local attorney, David Birka-White, had recently resolved on behalf of his clients. The case was presided over by Judge David Flinn, who granted Birka-White's request that The Bar Fund be the recipient of these *cy pres* funds. Because this is only the second *cy pres* award that the CCCBA has received, Board member Candice Stoddard sat down with Birka-White to learn more about him and this award.

Tell us a little about yourself and your practice.

My story as a lawyer started in Contra Costa County over 35 years ago. As a law student in the mid-'70s, I clerked for Will Duberstein in Walnut Creek. He was a sole practitioner, who had practiced in New York City for about 50 years, and was probably close to 75 at that time. I learned to practice law from the old school. Everything was dictated to a secretary. We researched cases out of books. We shephardized cases. There were no computers. We had a mimeograph machine that we hand-turned with ink-backed paper for copies. There were no printers. Copy machines were relatively new. An IBM Selectric typewriter was considered fancy.

When I graduated from law school, Duberstein asked me to consider San Ramon for my office location. I said, "You can't be serious. I am going to San Francisco. Last time I looked, San Ramon had more cattle than people." He said, "They are going to put in an exit called 'Crow Canyon Road.'" I said something like, "That's exactly where I want to be, with the crows and the cows." He calmly stated, "If you open your office in San Ramon, you will have clients the minute you pass the bar." I thought it over, and for reasons unknown, opened my office on Old Crow Canyon Road. He was right; there were almost no lawyers in San Ramon at the time. I got business walking in off the street the day I opened in 1979.

We did everything: Divorces, criminal cases, personal injury, custody battles, formed corporations and wrote wills. Then in 1986, we had a change in the direction of my practice and I started working on major product failure cases, involving defective plastic pipe for residential properties. Fifteen years later, we had litigated dozens of these cases

and were among the first to prosecute class actions for defective building products. We eventually settled five consolidated ABS Class Actions in the Contra Costa Superior Court for close to \$100 million with Hon. Ellen James (ret.) serving as our judge. We put together a group of top-notch contractors as part of the settlement and re-piped thousands of homes. We oversaw the administration of the fund for well over 10 years. The settlement provided an unprecedented service to the class members. I credit Judge James and later Judge Mark Simon for their courage in overseeing these cases.

So, for the last 25 years, I have specialized in class action cases involving large scale product failures and consumer fraud—often in the building industry. We represent plaintiffs against misbehaving corporations.

I have long felt that class actions are critical to the fair representation of consumer groups. Because governmental resources are challenged, in the absence of class actions, corporate wrongdoing can go unchecked. So our cases are large, take a long time and involve high risk.

Did you always want to be a lawyer?

Yes. When we recently moved our office to the Danville Hotel (from San Francisco), I came across a term paper I wrote in the sixth grade, about 1963. It was entitled, “Occupational Choice: Lawyer.” When I re-read it, I was surprised to see what I wrote—things like “the excitement of being an advocate,” “the importance of helping your fellow man” and qualities like “good character, common sense, think logically, patience, writing skills and wisdom.” I don’t recall what resources I consulted at the time, but those qualities for a lawyer are timeless. I believe that the practice of law is an honorable profession and fundamental to a democratic society. I still wake up every day excited to do my work—it’s been a lifelong privilege—and hope to practice for many years to come.

What do you do when you’re not working?

I have always worked long hours, but I have tried to keep weekends for my family. My wife, Elizabeth, and I have been married for 32 years and we have three great children. She is a wonderful person with many talents and a writer by profession. There have been times when I have been “absent” because of my work. Whatever success we have achieved is largely attributable to her patience, understanding and commitment to our family.

I am a lifelong woodworker and photographer. I exercise every day. I have played many sports: football, basketball, baseball, rugby, tennis, golf and skiing. I regularly play competitive pool—primarily 8-ball; it is challenging and meditative as well.

On the intellectual side, I have long had a passion for listening to and reading great speeches. I have always been interested in politics, culture, democracy and humanity. Justice and fairness are constant themes in my areas of interest.

Some of my favorite thinkers and speakers are Noam Chomsky, Tariq Ali, Michael Parenti, Arundhati Roy, Howard Zinn and Chalmers Johnson. I enjoy the African American leaders and educators because of their insights into governmental oppression, racism, imperialism and relationships between poverty and capitalism; not to mention the sometimes unfortunate legacy of the United States Supreme Court in perpetuating racism while increasing broad ranging corporate interests. I continue to study Malcolm X, Angela Davis, Martin Luther King, Paul Robeson, Lorraine Hansbury, Langston Hughes, James

Baldwin and the fabulous Cornel West. These voices express the injustices and suffering of the past and present as well as the hope for the future.

When I was at Berkeley ('74), a lot was going on: "counter culture," Vietnam War, Nixon; the kidnapping of Patty Hearst by the SLA was near where I lived, and there was a lot of activity around the Black Panthers. When I was in my early 20s, I attended a Black Panther meeting in Oakland. What I observed firsthand was a thoughtful, complex and misunderstood community organization intended to help people in need. In 1969, J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI, said the Black Panther Party "represents the greatest threat to the internal security of this country." The comment was a gross exaggeration at the time—and today seems absurd.

We all have the responsibility to think critically about controversial issues. We must have the courage to criticize ourselves and others, and yes, that includes America. Not gratuitously or venomously, but with the knowledge that we all need to shed preconceived notions about a lot of issues if we want to be better people and improve the world. None of us can change the world dramatically, but we can take important steps every day.

I think lawyers are in a unique position to make the world a better place. However, as a group, we need to speak out against injustices of our society. We are all busy, raising families, building careers, but we should do more. I love America, but I am anti-injustice. The distinctions are important. For example, one debate that should be heard from the bars to the universities is whistleblower Edward Snowden vs. the NSA. Is he a traitor or a hero? Those kind of debates are healthy.

Tell our readers about the *cy pres* award, the underlying case, and who all participated.

The case from which the *cy pres* award was presented to the Contra Costa County Bar Association was a class action known as "Old Cal-Shake," or the Shake Roof Cases. The judge was Contra Costa Superior Court Judge David Flinn. This case was precedent setting and involved "fake" wood shakes made from cement and perlite. One defendant settled for about \$70 million after we selected the jury. As to the second defendant, "Old-Cal Shake," we had a six-week trial. We had a great staff and I worked with a number of superb lawyers on our team. Steve Oroza of my office, and my co-counsel John Green and Bill Friedrich of Farella, Braun + Martel were critical to our success.

Judge Flinn is a great judge and a rare public servant. Without his dedication and courage to certify these cases as class actions, thousands of people would have gone uncompensated for their defective roofs. Trial judges are important to the fair prosecution of class actions. Contra Costa County has been fortunate to have the talents of Judge Flinn for so many years.

Why did you select The Bar Fund as the recipient of the *cy pres* award?

The Bar Fund was the right choice for a number of reasons. *Cy pres* awards come from the remainder of the unclaimed settlement funds. First of all, the law regarding *cy pres* awards looks favorably on supporting organizations that provide legal services to those in need. In this case, the resources of the Contra Costa County courthouse were extensively used. Judge Flinn managed the litigation, was trial judge and oversaw

administration of the settlement. We even set up a special office in Martinez during the trial. I also feel a sense of loyalty to the Contra Costa court system since it is where I first began practicing law. I asked Judge Flinn to consider The Bar Fund as the recipient of the *cy pres* award. After some debate, he so ruled. The CCCBA has long provided unselfish services to its residents. The Bar Fund was the ideal recipient of this award and I am proud to be a part of it.

Summer Program Gives Students a “Crash Course” in the Realities of ...

Sunday, December 01, 2013



In July 2013, Gillin, Jacobson, Ellis, Larsen & Lucey hosted an internship program designed to provide local high school students with a better understanding of the realities of being a lawyer, or working for a law firm. During the one-week internship, students were given the opportunity to sit in on a real mediation, view and discuss courtroom footage, ask questions of attorneys and other legal professionals (from the firm and elsewhere) with different backgrounds and skill sets, and learn more about all the “moving parts” that make a law firm function. Throughout the week, students were encouraged to participate actively in discussions, and think critically about whether law school, or law firm employment, was something that they might want to pursue.

Finding and Engaging the Students

By working directly with counselors in local high schools, our firm was able to spread the word about the internship program to a large number of high-achieving students with an interest in gaining a better understanding of the legal profession. We sought and contacted interested students from 28 local high schools. As a result, we received over 70 applications from students, a number well beyond our capacity. This indicates that student interest in the law is widespread, and we are convinced there is an ample demand for programs like ours. We chose students for participation based on the strength of their application and academic references, with a goal of creating a diverse mix of students from high schools throughout the Bay Area.

During the program, we sought to provide students with a wide variety of information, generally in one- to two-hour segments during a six-hour day. Each session focused on a distinct topic, including: How law firms are typically structured; a procedural overview of civil actions, from the beginning of a dispute to resolution (Civil Procedure 101); an introduction to the “nuts and bolts” of personal injury and tort litigation; the role of mediation and trial in dispute resolution; and review of the facts, litigation history and trials of several cases that our firm had handled.

Additionally, several of our firm’s support staff (including paralegals, library science specialists and bookkeepers) discussed their respective roles in the firm, and how they came to be here. One of our firm’s recent “alumni” paralegals, Madeline Dang, discussed how she successfully made her way through college, the LSATs and working for our firm; and how she then got admitted to law school for this upcoming year.

After a shy start, the high school students became more forthcoming: They were eager to

learn what lawyers do, what the support staff does, what skills helped one succeed in law and how one gets into law school. They were also interested in things that never crossed our minds, for example, how one of our younger paralegals enjoyed moving out of his parents' home; and how, since then, he manages to get dinner every night.

We are extraordinarily grateful to guest speakers, who provided valuable contributions to the students' curriculum and experience. Attorney Steve Harper discussed the many lessons that he learned in the course of his extensive civil litigation background, as well as from his current role as a mediator. Matthew Orebic, Deputy City Attorney for the City of Berkeley, discussed the professional, ethical and political realities of municipal employment, and the important role that city attorneys play in helping municipalities deliver effective government.

Shaping Future Careers

The students involved in the program represented a wide range of backgrounds and ambitions. One student had an already targeted interest in immigration law, another hoped to end up in politics, and many had no idea whether a career in the law might be right for them. The one common factor among them all was their willingness to devote a week of their precious summer to an unpaid internship, so they could learn more about the legal profession. They were dedicated, thoughtful and on time!

In all, 16 students from 13 local high schools participated in the five-day program, and the feedback that we received was overwhelmingly positive. One student described the experience as: "much more helpful than any law or mock trial class in understanding the life and mindset of a lawyer."

Our hope was that, by offering these students a realistic depiction of the daily life of attorneys and support staff, they might be able to identify early on whether these realities matched up with their particular career expectations and skills. One participant pointed out: "Listening to all the speakers talk about what their role was in the firm showed me that there is more to law than the trial." This was exactly the type of broader perspective that we hoped to deliver.

At the conclusion of the event, GJELL partner Jim Larsen summarized what most of us were thinking: "This was a talented and interested group of students. At first, we all thought this would be a hard week, and a tough audience; but it was actually fun to spend a week teaching them about the legal process, and getting a chance to hear their concerns and answer their questions. It renewed my appreciation for what we do, and their interest made me feel optimistic about the future of our profession."

Following the success of the inaugural internship program, GJELL plans to make this an annual event. We hope that we can continue to partner with local high schools to provide students a deeper, real-world understanding of the legal profession, and help students decide whether a career in the law might be right for them. The large number of student applications that we received shows that the demand for this type of program is there, and we hope that other law firms, legal departments and other entities join us in taking on this challenge.

WriterCoach Connection: It's About Writing and So Much More

Sunday, December 01, 2013



"I want to be an author, but first I guess I'd better write a little more." The comment jumped out at me from the student's draft paper on his previous experiences with writing. We were getting to know each other: Him, a ninth-grade English student at El Cerrito High School and me, a volunteer writing coach. "I love to write, too," I said. "I'm working on a book right now." We had it—that instant connection that gets you talking in a meaningful way. The young man was responsive and interested. He told me he likes football and music and writes short stories.

We talked about the strong points of his essay; he had chosen to write about respect and valuing one another's opinions. He felt disrespected if other students didn't agree with him. I asked questions to help him think more deeply about his topic. Did he believe that to show respect you always had to agree with someone's opinion? Can you respectfully disagree? We spoke about the differences between being disrespected and having your writing critiqued. We talked, and he wrote, lengthening his essay and re-organizing it so that he had strong opening and closing paragraphs and three, well-thought-out points in between.

This is the heart of WriterCoach Connection—a student and coach working together one-on-one to strengthen the young person's writing and critical thinking skills. In Contra Costa and Alameda counties there are now 650 trained, volunteer writing coaches working with more than 2,200 students in nine middle and high schools. In West Contra Costa, the program is at Richmond High, El Cerrito High and Portola Middle School. At Richmond High, the coaches work with the ELD4 (English Language Development) classes and with the students in 10th grade English classes in the Law and Engineering Academies, providing 10 to 12 sessions a school year. Most English classes include a variety of writing assignments, including persuasive and literature-based essays, as well as autobiographical narratives. In the Law Academy, some of the assignments may also have law-related themes, such as one upcoming prompt for students to conduct a mock trial on paper using characters and themes from "Lord of the Flies."

In addition to developing critical thinking and writing skills, WriterCoach Connection helps students find their own unique voices and develop their confidence. We believe these abilities help young people create academic success, meet personal challenges with self-assurance, expand their career options and become greater contributors to their communities.



"WriterCoach Connection works," says West Contra Costa Unified School District Superintendent Dr. Bruce Harter. "Student writing achievement goes up, teachers get much-needed relief with the extra individual attention to students, and community members bond with their schools as they walk the hallways with their students and sit with them to help develop more effective writing and deeper critical thinking. Everyone wins, and we need more of it."

The program has been expanding rapidly in West Contra Costa County for the past three years. "Much of this growth has been fueled by the West County school district's recognition of the critical importance of writing support in the new Common Core education standards, and the district's willingness to embrace WriterCoach Connection as part of the school curriculum," says its director Robert Menzimer. "The people in the district are a complete delight to work with, and we're so grateful to be partners with them in West County public education."

Back in the classroom, my student was finishing revisions to his essay. He gave it one last look and changed the title from "I Think People Should Stop Disrespecting Me" to "I Think People Should Agree With Me More." Yes, it's about writing—and so much more.

Maureen Dixon is a board member, trainer and site coordinator for WriterCoach Connection, a program of the non-profit Community Alliance for Learning. For more information on WriterCoach Connection, or to volunteer, visit www.writercoachconnection.org.

Get Involved: Free Legal Workshops and the Education Outreach Program

Sunday, December 01, 2013

Ever hear these sentiments?



- “Sleazy lawyers, just out to get money.”
- “He used every trick in the book to get him free.”
- “Lawyers run the world.”

These are thoughts regarding lawyers often voiced by the general public.

How often do you hear these statements about lawyers?

- “He was so helpful and kind, I left feeling like I had a much better understanding of my situation.”
- “I had no idea what to do when I arrived and within 15 minutes she helped me fill out a court form that I had struggled over for hours.”
- “I never knew that someone who grew up where I did could become a judge!”
- “Lawyers actually help people—for free!”

These are some of the responses we hear about the volunteers at the CCCBA's free legal workshops and Education Outreach program. Read on to see how you can get involved and give back to your community.

Got an hour?

Speak to a middle or high school class about the legal profession. Inform seniors about the importance of jury duty and “When You Become 18,” the responsibilities they have once they become adults. Talk about the nature of law and the U.S. Constitution. Discuss the myths and misinformation about the legal system.

Got a few hours?

Volunteer for one of CCCBA's free legal workshops. Help those who want to help themselves.

Our free legal workshops are drop-in legal clinics where attorneys help members of the public handle their own legal problems. The attorney listens, asks questions and gives guidance to the individual about their options, the risks and benefits of those options and the potential next steps to resolve the issues.

Bilingual (Spanish/English) volunteers are encouraged to participate.

We need attorneys in the following areas of practice:

- Bankruptcy
- Family Law
- Immigration
- Real Property/Landlord-Tenant
- Wills & Estate Planning

Got a morning?

Become a court tour docent. Take students on a tour of the Martinez courthouses, intrigue them with information about the detention facility. Observe a court proceeding in process, then lead them in a scripted mock trial, where they find that justice isn't always so easy to serve!

Got a few hours a week for a few months?

Work with Mock Trial students at one of our county's high schools.

For more information on volunteering, please call (925) 370-2548.

Immunity Project

Sunday, December 01, 2013

HIV controllers are miraculous—they are people who have a natural immunity to HIV. Like the best comic book heroes, controllers are born with this superpower. They won the genetic lottery. Although controllers carry low levels of HIV, the virus is in a dormant state and they do not contract AIDS. Controllers are incredibly rare. Only 1 out of every 300 people who are living with HIV has this incredible power.

The essence of controllers' immunity is the unique targeting capability contained within their immune systems. Like the finely tuned laser scope on a sniper rifle, the immune systems of controllers have the ability to target the biological markers on the HIV virus that are its achilles heel. When a controller's immune system attacks these biological markers it forces the virus into a dormant state. Non controllers are armed with sniper rifles, but they are missing this critical targeting ability.

Immunity Project is a team of scientists and entrepreneurs based in the San Francisco Bay Area who are developing a revolutionary vaccine platform using an entirely novel approach: to adopt the unique targeting capability inherent in controllers to give everyone that same immunity to the targeted disease. The first vaccine being developed using this platform is a vaccine for HIV. It is designed to turn everyone who receives it into an HIV controller. Immunity Project will offer the HIV vaccine to the world for free.

To develop the vaccine, a machine learning algorithm—similar to what is used in the most advanced spam filtering software—was developed to identify the achilles heel biological markers on the HIV virus. The vaccine formulation consists of the achilles heel biological markers and FDA approved chemicals that cause an immune system response. The Project's proprietary formulation enables the vaccine prototype to be stored in inert powder form without refrigeration and delivered to patients through a nasal inhaler. The Immunity Project vaccine is the first to be developed that does not contain any living or non living virus, giving it the potential to be among the safest vaccines ever developed. To date, the team holds ten granted patents—and more are pending—covering the vaccine formulation and delivery technology.

The Immunity Project HIV vaccine prototype has yielded positive results in animals and is now ready for Phase I Human Trials.

The Team

The team is world class:

- Dr. Reid Rubsamen. Stanford MD and MA in Computer Science. 60+ patents for novel drug delivery technologies. Founder of Aradigm.
- Dr. David Heckerman. Stanford MD and PhD in Computer Science. Inventor of the spam filter. Distinguished Scientist at Microsoft Research. Adjunct Professor of Computer Science at UCLA.
- Dr. Charles Herst. UC Berkeley MA in Bacteriology and Northwestern PhD in Tumor Cell Biology.
- Dr. Salim Abdool Karim. MD and PhD. Professor of Clinical Epidemiology at Columbia. Director of CAPRISA.
- Naveen Jain. Entrepreneur and CEO of Sparkart.

Current Status

The team has made significant progress and is now ready to conduct Phase I Human Trials in the United States and South Africa:

- Achilles heel biological markers identified on a HLA restricted basis for HIV—Complete
- Key patents filed, successfully prosecuted, and issued—Complete
- Funds raised for platform development and animal studies—Complete (\$1MM unrestricted grant from Microsoft Research.)
- Animal studies successfully conducted with positive results—Complete
- Article authored for publication in a major peer reviewed journal—Complete
- Partnership formed with HIV/AIDS-focused non profit organization (NPO) to facilitate fundraising on a non profit basis—Complete (Fiscal sponsorship agreement in place with Until There's A Cure, a leading NPO focusing on HIV/AIDS and based in the San Francisco Bay Area.)

Every day that passes 5,000 people die from AIDS. This is equivalent to 10 Boeing 747s falling out of the sky every day. For more information about Immunity Project, please visit <http://www.ImmunityProject.org>.

The Bar Fund Gala Reception [photos]

Sunday, December 01, 2013

On September 19, 2013, more than 175 guests gathered at the Lafayette Park Hotel in support of Contra Costa Senior Legal Services (CCSLS) and to honor retired Contra Costa Superior Court Probate Commissioner Don Green. The event raised over \$55,000 for CCSLS, thanks to the generous donations of our sponsors, supporters, guests and volunteers.

Below are photos from the event. More photos can also be found on our Facebook page.

[gallery ids="7169,7170,7171,7172,7173,7174,7180,7175,7176,7177,7178,7179"]

Court Volunteer Appreciation Reception [photos]

Sunday, December 01, 2013

On October 22, 2013, Contra Costa Superior Court held an appreciation reception to acknowledge the contributions of over 500 court volunteers throughout 2013. Volunteers have helped settle court cases and handled mediations, assisted with the court's tour program teaching school children about the court, supported young people in the juvenile division, provided information to the public and much more.

Below are photos from the event. More photos can also be found on our Facebook page.

For more information on the Court Volunteer Program, visit the Contra Costa Superior Court's website.

[gallery ids="7156,7157,7158,7163,7159,7161,7162,7164,7160"]

Welcome to Our Newest Members!

Sunday, December 01, 2013

Please welcome our newest members that have recently joined the CCCBA:

Haitham Amin Michelle Law Lynda Attenborough Josephine Lee Roxana Ayala Bradford
MacLane Daniel Camp Charles Marshall Hilda Campbell Nicholas Pate Seth Curtis
Charina Rhone John Dodd Christina Richards Ainsly Dora Willis Routson-Thomas Amy
Erb Elliot Silver Jessica Fluehr Meeti Sudame Renee Haase Joulia Tchembrovskaia
Stacye Johnson Suzanne Tong Michael Kasin Stephen Vokshori Shari Kumin

Coffee Talk: How do you plan to contribute to your community in 2014?

Sunday, December 01, 2013

I plan to contribute to my community by being an active member of Rotary International. Rotary is an amazing organization that focuses on improving health, poverty and education, both locally and around the world. It's also a fun fellowship. I enjoy being in a service organization with other lawyers and professionals in a non-legal arena. Rotary clubs are in most communities and attract individuals committed to high integrity and service. My membership in Rotary is a worthwhile use of my time and resources and it allows me to make a difference in my community.

Dess Benedetto, Family TLC, Inc

By advising Veterans gratis about any legal matter that I can.

Peter G. Loewenstein, Law Offices of Peter G. Loewenstein

Working with youth, building the next generation will continue to be my contribution to our community in 2014. I will be working with Boy Scouts in the Walnut Creek/Pleasant Hill area as chair of the Iron Horse District and with the Boy Scouts' National Youth Leader training program. By working with these young people, I'm confident in the future of our community and country. If anyone would like to help, just let me know.

Kenneth P. Strongman, Esq., Mediation Office of Kenneth P. Strongman



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Pro Bono for CCC Residents: Bay Area Legal Aid

The urgent legal needs of Contra Costa's more than 200,000 impoverished residents are met by BayLegal.



Spotlight



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Summer Program Gives Students a "Crash Course" in the Realities of Being a Lawyer

By offering these students a realistic depiction of the daily life of attorneys, they might be able to identify whether these realities matched up with their career expectations.

News & Updates



President's Message: Final Thoughts

This organization can be as meaningful to you as you want. Or it can just be the organization to which you mechanically pay dues.



The Bar Fund Gala Reception [photos]

More than 175 guests gathered at the Lafayette Park Hotel in support of Contra Costa Senior Legal Services (CCSLs) and to honor retired Contra Costa Superior Court Probate Commissioner Don Green.