



Legal Aid Society of San Diego, Inc.

Pro Bono Program

Winter 2008

Volume 8, Issue 2



Pro Bono Program responds to foreclosure crisis

San Diego, like much of California, has been hard hit by the current foreclosure crisis. According to MDA DataQuick, a real estate information service, 50 percent of all existing homes that closed escrow in September 2008 in Southland had been foreclosed on at some point in the prior year. That is up from 45.5 percent in August and 12.6 percent in September 2007. For San Diego County in September 2008, the figure for such foreclosure resales was 47.3%

While San Diego is struggling with the same issues as the rest of the state when it comes to the housing disaster, San Diegans are fortunate to have the Housing Opportunities Collaborative (HOC) to which they can turn. Founded thanks to the inspirational vision of Myrna Pasqual, Esq., the HOC is

a coalition of nonprofit organizations and agencies in the San Diego region. It seeks to promote equal access to housing for all, especially low-income individuals and families.

The HOC, in collaboration with the Pro Bono Program, runs a community service program known as the HOME (Home Owners Mobile Education) Clinics. The Home Clinics bring together attorneys, real estate and mortgage industry professionals, housing counseling agencies, fair housing agencies and other public agencies into one location to give a one-stop shop of counseling resources to distressed homeowners. HOME Clinics are one-day events and the services are provided free of charge. They take place on average once a month at various locations in San Diego county.

Attorneys affiliated with the Pro Bono program have donated countless hours assisting at the HOME Clinics. Between March and October 2008, a total of 1,330 people received assistance from pro bono attorneys at the Home Clinics. The help of these volunteer attorneys is invaluable and very much appreciated by all.

For more information on the clinics, visit the HOC website at www.housingcollaborative.org. To volunteer, contact Susan Turcich, Esq. at susant@lassd.org.

Housing for All

The Housing Opportunities Collaborative seeks to promote equal access to housing for all persons in the region, especially low income and underprivileged individuals and families, by educating the public concerning home ownership and landlord-tenant rights and responsibilities, seeking financial and capacity building resources, providing financial and other counseling, providing informational resources, monitoring compliance with housing related laws, and conducting related activities.

New Immigrant Youth Outreach Project will help abused and abandoned youth

There are over 10,000 substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect in San Diego County each year. Children of immigrants are no exception to this terrible statistic. Immigrant children who have experienced abuse suffer the same emotional and physical scars as abused U.S.-citizen children as they attempt to transition into adult members of society. Additionally, undocumented youth are faced with the inability to work legally or qualify for in-state college tuition. Some are haunted by the constant threat of deportation from the only home they have ever known, while others are not even aware of their immigration status. Many of these children end up in delinquency proceedings for minor offenses that often result from their troubled pasts.

Congress recognized the vulnerable nature of this population and created Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), to help these children on a path toward citizenship and a productive future. LASSD's new Immigrant Youth Outreach Project (IYOP), housed within the Pro Bono Program, will assist eligible abused, abandoned or neglected immigrant youth in obtaining SIJS or other appropriate immigration

remedies. The project will provide outreach education to community organizations and



directly to youth, as well as legal representation. The project aims to specifically help children in delinquency proceedings. IYOP is in its founding stages, but aims to set-up a pro bono component in the future to involve pro bono attorneys in these services.

IYOP is supervised by Equal Justice Works Fellow **Courtney Bolin**. Courtney is a recent graduate of the University of San Diego School of Law. She is LASSD's fourth Equal Justice Works Fellow and the second sponsored by the Morrison Foerster Foundation. Look for more project information and volunteer opportunities, in future newsletters or email courtneyb@lassd.org.

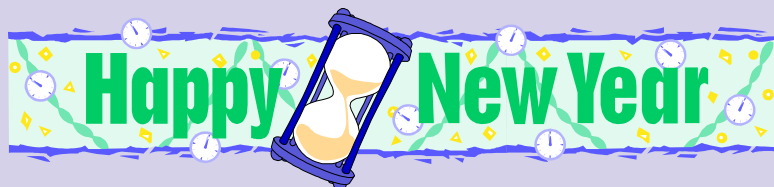
LASSD names new Pro Bono Program manager

We are pleased to announce that in September 2008, staff attorney **Sara Raffer** took over as manager of the Pro Bono Program. She succeeds **Rebecca Nieman**, who recently gave birth to a beautiful baby boy, Sebastian. Rebecca continues to practice law, taking contract work from local law firms. The program will miss Rebecca and we wish her all the best.

Sara has long been an asset to LASSD. She began volunteering at the East County Unlawful Detainer Assistance Program upon passing the bar exam in 2003. Shortly thereafter, Sara was hired as an independent contractor. When a staff attorney position opened a few months later, she was the perfect person for the job.

Prior to her promotion, Sara was the supervising attorney at our Hall of Justice Courthouse Clinic, where clients receive advice regarding unlawful detainers and civil restraining orders. Sara also worked as the Pro Bono Program volunteer and intern coordinator and operated the family, victim/offender and peer mediation program.

Please join us in congratulating Sara on her new position as Pro Bono Program Manager.



Pro Bono Program Unlawful Detainer/ Restraining Order Clinics

The Pro Bono Program's Unlawful Detainer and Restraining Order Clinics assist unrepresented tenants in unlawful detainers (eviction cases). The clinics also serve unrepresented litigants in both civil and domestic violence restraining order cases. The times and locations of the clinics can be found on page seven of the newsletter.

The clinics have proven to be an invaluable resource to pro pers who otherwise have nowhere else to turn to for assistance. They often come to the courthouse scared and confused at their situations. Faced with the prospect of losing their home or needing a restraining order, they are often bewildered by the court process and the forms they have to fill out. Once they find the Pro Bono Program Clinics and sign up for our assistance, the sense of sheer relief of having found someone to help them is immense.

Once people have been assisted, they are asked to complete a satisfaction survey. It is not



uncommon for us to receive comments on the surveys such as: "Great comfort to have this assistance when you're under emotional distress" or "great service."

The Pro Bono Program would not be able to run its clinics so successfully without the help of its wonderful volunteers. Between January 2 and October 31, 2008, volunteers donated 6,000 hours of time in the clinics. Volunteers include attorneys, law students and college graduates. Full training is provided to volunteers on site, and no previous knowledge of unlawful detainers or restraining orders is required. If you are interested in volunteering at one or more of the clinics, please contact **Susan Turcich**, Esq. at susant@lassd.org.

We welcome our newest Staff Attorney Christine Pangan

Christine Pangan joined the Pro Bono Program at LASSD this year to operate the legal clinic at the South Bay Courthouse. She was formerly a staff attorney at SDVLP where she ran the Madge Bradley Domestic Violence Clinic, recruiting and supervising approximately 100 volunteers a year.

Christine grew up in San Diego and attended the Academy of Our Lady of Peace. She double-majored in Communication and Political Science at UCSD. After deciding to pursue law over journalism, Christine attended USD for law school. While there, she did a summer abroad in Oxford and fell in love with England.

She began her public interest career as a volunteer attorney for SDVLP where she worked at domestic violence legal clinics and assisted in Special Immigrant Juvenile cases. Eventually, she was offered a position at SDVLP's domestic violence clinic at the East County courthouse. There she first met members of the LASSD Pro Bono team who ran the Civil/UD clinic, including current Pro Bono Program manager Sara Raffer, Susan Turcich, and former manager Rebecca Nieman.

Still a journalist at heart, she is an associate editor at San Diego Lawyer Magazine. She also serves on the board of New Village Arts, a theatre in Carlsbad, currently in its 8th season.

Lorena Slomanson named President of La Raza Lawyers of San Diego

Our very own contract attorney **Lorena Slomanson** has been elected as President of La Raza Lawyers of San Diego. Lorena contracts to provide legal services at our courthouse clinics and has devoted more than 100 hours of her time in 2008 alone, while also maintaining a civil litigation practice. Lorena has an excellent rapport with our clients and her Spanish-speaking skills and cultural sensitivity are invaluable. She provides excellent service and is a great attorney. We wish Lorena a heartfelt congratulations on her newly elected position and look forward to continue working with her and La Raza to provide needed legal services to the community.

Volunteers Sound Off

The Legal Aid Society of San Diego, Inc. relies heavily on the kindness of the local legal community to provide appropriate services to all of our neighbors in need. In fact, during the first 10 months of 2008, volunteer attorneys, paralegals, students, and other community members donated 13,280 hours to our organization. This overwhelming generosity is the equivalent of adding more than nine full-time employees to the Legal Aid staff! We wanted to give you, the volunteers, an opportunity to let us know why giving back to the community is so important to you. Below are some of the responses we received to the question:



“Why do you volunteer for Legal Aid?”

I volunteer for Legal Aid because it's a chance to use what I have learned to help people who really need it, and who are often very grateful that you took the time out of your day to help them. Many of the people we help are genuinely surprised that someone cares enough about them to volunteer to help them; that's a nice type of surprise to cause for someone. Although the work may not seem at first glance to have as much of a large-scale impact as some of the large cases that we typically work on in our jobs, to the people we're helping, the problems we're trying to solve often mean the world to them.

Sarah Simmons, Esq.
Morrison & Foerster

I volunteer for the simple fact that I desire to help people, with the friendly environment created by the LASSD staff being the icing on my proverbial cake. Although as one person I cannot help everyone, I can use my education and life experiences to help a portion of individuals with immediate legal needs, one person at a time. The immense satisfaction I receive in return from my volunteer work is greater than any compensation I could ever be given.

Lisa Trpic Kingdon, Esq.

I volunteer for Legal Aid because I believe in giving back to my community, and volunteering reminds me to count my blessings - “There but for the grace of God go I” sort of thing. I also volunteer because I enjoy helping people, I find the work interesting, and I enjoy interacting with the other people who work at Legal Aid.

Leyhlund Nelson, paralegal

Working for Legal Aid has allowed me to be a part of an organization that helps those less fortunate, helps reinforce a positive reputation of attorneys, and helps to overall better our community. But there is a selfish aspect to why I volunteer for Legal Aid as well. I volunteer because it gives me a sense of pride in my profession. It reminds me why I became a lawyer, “to help those who need it most.” And believe me, they do. Clients are overwhelmingly appreciative for the help provided, but I truly feel equally appreciative for the opportunity to have such self fulfilling experiences that have been provided by volunteering through the organization.

Jeremiah A. Lowe, Esq.
Walters & Caietti, APC

I continue to volunteer with Legal Aid because with each clinic participant, I am provided with the opportunity to assist someone who otherwise would have had no legal recourse to resolve or at least obtain information regarding his/her legal problems. As a law student, volunteering is also one way that I am able to gain hands-on experience in dealing with people who come from all walks of life and explain to them their legal options.

Deborah Resnicov
University of San Diego School of Law

Volunteering at the Legal Aid Society of San Diego is a great way to put my legal training into practice. The experience teaches you to be a better listener, and to understand more thoroughly the legal process. It's also very rewarding to assist those in need of immediate help, and who are so visibly thankful there's a place to turn to.

Vicky Heithaus
USD Paralegal Graduate

When I started working in the legal field, I learned quickly that while I have the opportunity to work with and for some amazing clients and attorneys, I (like many attorneys) probably spend more time in the office researching and writing than I do interacting with my clients face to face. I began volunteering with the Girls' Rehabilitation Facility (GRF) mediation program because I wanted more opportunities to use skills that I've acquired both in law school and the legal profession, in this case mediation and negotiation skills, in a more personalized setting. I have participated in this program for almost a year now and have no intention of stopping. I love working with the girls in the program and have found that the time I spend with them completes my "lawyer day" by providing me with a concrete experience where I can see that my legal skills are applicable to real life situations. I have also really enjoyed the diversity of both the girls at GRF, from whom I have learned a lot about real life, and the other attorneys. It is fun to socialize with attorneys who work in completely different practices than mine. I've enjoyed the opportunity to get to know them. I feel like the whole volunteering experience has opened me up to a whole new world.

Lauren B. Giardina, Esq.
Disability Rights California, California's Protection and Advocacy System

I volunteer for Legal Aid because of its reputation in the community. Our mediations at the Girls' Rehabilitation Facility hopefully provide the girls with conflict resolution skills that help them to be successful in the future and avoid returning to custody.

Nickie White, paralegal

"Research has shown that people who volunteer often live longer."

Allen Klein
American businessman



Special thanks to our dedicated summer and spring volunteers!

From as far away as Notre Dame School of Law, the Pro Bono Program had an excellent group of summer and spring volunteer law students. These students were picked from hundreds of applicants and were indispensable to the clinical programs.

California Western School of Law students Megan Chambers, Benjamin Lau, Stephanie Smeekens, and Karen Suri volunteered more than 750 hours combined and assisted with such programs as the Children and Youth Advocacy Project and the Unlawful Detainer Assistance Program.

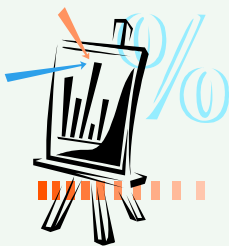
University of San Diego School of Law students Noah Aleshire, Amy Votava, Deborah Resnicov, Katherine Jochim, John Rogers, and Nick Davis volunteered more than 840 hours combined assisting with Peer Mediation Trainings and with self-represented litigant clinics.

Thomas Jefferson School of Law students Jeffery Eaton, Chanda Gonzales, Christopher Mandarano, and Edward Kowanacki volunteered more than 150 hours combined providing needed assistance to both staff and volunteer attorneys.

UCLA School of Law student Kathleen Bolus volunteered more than 250 hours of her time this summer to the Pro Bono Program, bringing needed support to courthouse clinics.

Notre Dame School of Law student Joshua Johnson joined the Pro Bono Program this summer and volunteered more than 250 hours of his time through a generous grant from Ross, Dixon & Bell.

Chapman University student Emily Wilkinson joined the program this summer and volunteered more than 50 hours in our Unlawful Detainer Clinics.



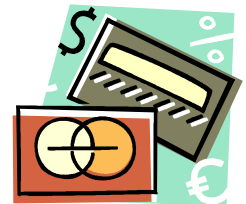
“An investment in knowledge pays the best interest.”

Benjamin Franklin

New United Way & LASSD program promotes financial stability

United Way of San Diego has partnered with Legal Aid Society of San Diego to bring a financial education program to low-income individuals. This program, which is offered at no cost, promotes financial stability through classes that teach the basics of good personal financial management. Students learn all about creating and maintaining a budget, the difference between a credit score and credit history, savings, taxes and much more. As part of the program, students are also eligible to receive a legal consult with an LASSD attorney. Finally, once students complete the course, a \$50.00 check is given to each student to start a savings account.

We have enrolled more than 50 students and we are seeing a significant improvement



in their money management skills. The students are very grateful for the knowledge they are acquiring, and the improvements they are making can be seen on a day-to-day basis.

For more information, contact Shahin Rahimi at (877) 534-2524 ext. 2602 or Veronica Sanchez at (877) 534-2524, ext. 2631.

Volunteer Opportunities

We welcome new volunteers to join us at any time. No prior experience is necessary to participate in one of these programs and many programs are open to both attorneys and non-attorneys. We offer training and support for volunteers:

Program training available with MCLE credit
Training materials provided

Experienced attorneys to mentor our volunteer attorneys
Cases are prescreened before being referred to volunteer attorneys
Volunteers are covered by our malpractice insurance.

To participate in one of our programs, please complete and return the Volunteer Registration Form (see back page). *We look forward to hearing from you!*

Youth & Children At Risk

Mediation: Victim/Youth Offender; Family Intervention; Peer Mediation Training and Group Conferencing.

Education: Representation at School Disciplinary Proceedings and Advocacy on Individual Education Plans.

Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic Program

Advocate for low-income taxpayers who have disputes with the Internal Revenue Service. Provide advice and representation to taxpayers trying to resolve tax controversies through the IRS appeals procedures or through litigation in federal court. Assist at monthly clinics and represent taxpayer-client before the IRS or in court. Training and mentoring are provided. Volunteer attorneys and certified public accountants are needed.

Conservatorship & Guardianship

Guardianship Clinic

Assist litigants, predominately parents, in guardianship cases.

Mondays 9 a.m. - Noon

Room adjacent to Dept PC-2
Probate Courthouse
1409 Fourth Ave., San Diego

Conservatorship Clinic

Pro per clinic, giving facilitator-like assistance to low-income litigants. A volunteer attorney may also provide representation to a client in a conservatorship action.

Tuesdays 2 - 4 p.m.

Room adjacent to Dept PC-2
Probate Courthouse
1409 Fourth Ave., San Diego

Other Pro Bono Opportunities

Economic Impact Program

Provide pro bono legal assistance on:
Corporate matters for nonprofits

High impact litigation which may make law and cause a significant improvement in the lives of our country's indigent residents.

Immigration

Battered Spouse Immigrant Self-Petitions and Applications for Naturalization.

Consumer Issues

Assist clients with cleaning up credit reports, rebuilding credit, license denial applications, expungement of records, advice on budgets, managing money, etc.

Family Law

Domestic Violence Temporary Restraining Order Clinic

9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. every day
South County Courthouse, Room 155
500 Third Avenue, Chula Vista, CA 91910

Open to attorneys and non-attorneys.
Volunteer attorneys may also provide representation in family law cases.

Unlawful Detainer (UD) and Civil Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) Clinics

Downtown Clinics

Hall of Justice, 330 Broadway, San Diego

Civil TRO and UD

Tuesday and Thursday 9 a.m. - Noon
UD

Monday and Friday 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.

East County Clinics

East County Courthouse, Next to Dept. 1
250 East Main St., El Cajon

Civil TRO and UD

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 8:30 a.m. - Noon
Tuesday and Thursday 9:30 a.m. - Noon

South County Clinics

South County Courthouse
Family Law Center Room 155
500 Third Avenue, Chula Vista

Civil TRO and UD

9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. every day

Homeless Advocacy Project

Walk-in clinic providing information and referrals to homeless individuals on various legal problems, such as consumer issues, housing and benefits.

St. Vincent de Paul's Village

1501 Imperial Avenue, San Diego
Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

**Volunteers make the
Pro Bono Program
possible!**



Legal Aid Society of San Diego, Inc.
 Pro Bono Program
 1475 Sixth Avenue, Suite 400
 San Diego, CA 92101

Name _____

Mail, fax or email your form:
 Fax: (619) 471-2774
 SaraR@LASSD.org

Street Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone _____ Fax Number _____ Email Address _____

Date of Birth _____ Social Security Number _____ Languages Spoken _____

FOR PROSPECTIVE VOLUNTEER ATTORNEYS

State Bar Number _____ Date Admitted to CA Bar _____

Areas of Legal Practice and Years of Experience in Each Area _____

Have you been involved in any disciplinary proceedings? _____ If yes, please explain:

Areas of San Diego in which you are available to take cases:

- All Areas Central North County South Bay East County

Please indicate which areas you are interested in obtaining training and taking Pro Bono cases:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic Violence/Temporary Restraining Order Clinic | <input type="checkbox"/> Unlawful Detainer Assistance Program |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Law Representation | <input type="checkbox"/> Guardianship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Outreach Project | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservatorship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mediation Involving Youth | <input type="checkbox"/> Immigration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Expulsion Hearings and Special Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Consumer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Impact/Corporate and High Impact Litigation | <input type="checkbox"/> Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disabled Homeless Project | <input type="checkbox"/> All Types of Cases |

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____