



PRESS RELEASE

Media contact: Susana Villegas

619-947-5742, svprcommunications@gmail.com

August 31, 2023

The Legal Aid Society of San Diego Mourns the Passing of its Longtime Executive Director, Gregory Evans Knoll

Knoll led Legal Aid for 50 years and helped hundreds of thousands of low-income people

San Diego, CA – The Legal Aid Society of San Diego (LASSD) mourns the passing of its longtime Executive Director, Gregory Evans Knoll, on August 27, 2023. Greg served as the CEO/Executive Director/Chief Counsel of the Legal Aid Society of San Diego for 50 years and helped hundreds of thousands of people during his lifetime.

A highly celebrated student athlete born in Newark, New Jersey, Greg attended the University of Missouri on a basketball scholarship and majored in business. He later attended Rutgers Law School, where he studied under Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and interned at Newark Legal Services. These experiences led Greg to dedicate his life's work to addressing the harsh realities of poverty, systemic racism, and discrimination.

Greg moved his family to San Diego for his first job at LASSD as a Staff Attorney. A year later, he was appointed CEO and led an organization that delivers high-quality, free legal services to low-income people throughout the county. He grew LASSD from a small group of attorneys with a budget of \$700,000 in 1974 to an organization that today has a staff of 212, including 80 full-time attorneys, engages an additional 200 volunteers annually, and has a budget of \$25 million.

Knoll revolutionized the delivery of public health care to low-income people. Under his leadership, LASSD founded the Consumer Center for Health Education and Advocacy in 1999 and was one of the founders of the Health Consumer Alliance, a coalition of 10 legal aid organizations throughout the state that provides health consumer advocacy services and education statewide. Since its inception, Greg has continuously served as either the Chair or Co-Chair of the Joint Professional and Consumer Advocacy (JPCA) Committee for the Healthy San Diego program.

“We are devastated by the loss of Greg, our friend, colleague, and mentor,” said Joanne Franciscus, Chief Operating Officer of LASSD. “Greg will forever be remembered as one of the most ardent champions of the poor that San Diego and California have ever known. His legacy of selflessly serving and upholding the rights and dignity of people in need over the course of 50 years will live on. We extend our deepest sympathy to Jo Anne and the rest of their family, and our heartfelt gratitude for sharing this remarkable man with all of us.”

Greg received numerous awards, including San Diego County's Martin Luther King, Jr., Drum Major for Justice Award, San Diego Barrio Station's Cesar E. Chavez Social Justice Award, San Diego Law Library's Bernard E. Witkin Award, and San Diego County Bar Association's Outstanding Attorney of the Year Award. In 2022, Greg became the first-ever active legal aid director appointed to the California State Bar Board of Trustees.

On September 23, in recognition of his lifetime of work addressing the root causes of systematic inequality and injustice, the California Lawyers Association will posthumously award Greg the Lorin Miller Award.

Greg is survived by his wife of 27 years, Jo Anne Sawyer Knoll, his sister, Kimberly Ann Knoll-Dove, his sons, Jeffrey Scott Knoll and Jason Evans Knoll, his stepchildren, Jamaal Michal Sawyer-Dymski and Naima Luisanna Sawyer-Dymski, and his grandchildren, Jason Guzman, Katrina Guzman, Kianna Knoll, and Jacob Knoll.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation to the [Gregory Evans Knoll Legacy Fund](#).

###