

What are your reasons for giving?



CHRISTINE NOMA
INTERNET PHILANTHROPIST

CHRISTINE NOMA is a partner with the firm of Wendel, Rosen, Black & Dean, LLP, where her practice is focused on all aspects of environmental law. She represents clients in environmental litigation involving cost recovery claims, CERCLA, the Clean Water Act, strict liability, negligence and nuisance causes of action, and real estate toxic tort cases. Chris supports many associations, including the Asian American Bar Association of the Greater Bay Area, where she recently completed a three-year term on the Board of Directors; the East Bay Diversity Bar Coalition (including 2007 co-chair); Legal Assistance for Seniors Board of Directors; the Alameda County Bar Foundation Board of Directors (including serving as president); the Asian Law Caucus Board of Directors; the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association; and the ACBA.

Recently, Chris made her most generous donation to the Alameda County Bar Association Volunteer Legal Service Corporation. While making a donation is not always newsworthy, the way Chris chose to make her donation was. By donating online, Chris joined a growing wave of philanthropists who are changing the face of philanthropy and thus the way organizations such as VLSC conduct their fundraising campaigns.

Thank you again for your generous gift to VLSC. What made you choose to contribute to VLSC?

Lawyers have a duty to give back to the community. How you choose to do so can be in the form of pro bono work, serving on nonprofit community boards, engaging

in public service, and, of course, financial support. There is such a tremendous need for legal assistance in our communities. And, I understand that for most legal nonprofits, their private financial support comes primarily from lawyers, and not from large corporate grants. It's important and critical for lawyers to support organizations such as VLSC. If we don't, no one else may. Making a charitable donation is one small way that I can support the good work of VLSC.

Why did you choose to make your gift online, rather than simply writing a check and mailing it in? Was it easy to make your contribution online?

Welcome to technology! I spend a huge chunk of my day on the computer: checking email, drafting documents, doing legal research. At home, it's online banking, Open Table dinner reservations. Online donations simply follow. It's easy and fast. And "green"—no paper, no driving to the post office, and you save 42 cents.

Does reading about the actual clients VLSC has helped create an emotional connection between you, the donor, and VLSC?

Certainly, reading true life stories is always a great way to connect to the reader. The stories and the photos on the ACBA website give the donor a real sense that you are truly helping "people." Real children, real seniors, real people; it's not just words. Several years ago, I worked pro bono to prevent the loss of an elderly Latina woman and an elderly African American woman of their homes through foreclosure after they were duped into signing home improvement contracts that were financed by predatory loans. Now, I have two school-age children, and can't take the time to volunteer, so donating is my way to give back to the community.

Our goal is to make giving a meaningful experience for the donor, for there to be a sense of social impact. Did we succeed?

Very definitely. The beating heart is a perfect symbol of the "heart" that VLSC staff and volunteers have for the underprivileged and low-income children, seniors, families, and individuals here in Alameda County. The stories and photos give donors a sense of the good work of VLSC and a sense that in a small way, I've also helped the community.

Would you encourage your colleagues and friends to support VLSC? What would you tell them? What would you say to others who may be nervous about online charitable giving to VLSC to encourage them?

I encourage every lawyer in Alameda County to support VLSC and other agencies that serve our low-income and indigent community. The need is great. And you'll feel better about yourself and your personal legacy as not only a lawyer, but as an individual. To those who are nervous about online giving, I would remind them it is not any different than shopping online or paying your bills online. So, go to the ACBA website (www.acbanet.org) and click on the HEART to see what you can do to help!

—MICHELE MOORE

