

# JUSTICE FOR ALL

VLSC NEWSLETTER  
SPRING 2017



ALAMEDA COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION VOLUNTEER LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION



## TICKETS AVAILABLE NOW!

We are excited to invite you to a night of socializing and celebrating the hard work of our volunteers at VLSC's hallmark fundraising event! We will honor our 2016 Volunteers of the Year, Pro Bono Leadership Award recipient, and Wiley W. Manuel Certificate for Pro Bono Service recipients.

This year we're switching things up to a reception-style event. Don't worry, we're still hosting a silent auction with dozens of items donated from local shops, restaurants, and even a live auction! All proceeds benefit VLSC.

This is VLSC's big fundraising event of the year, so please consider donating even if you are unable to attend. Thank you for your support!

Please contact Katrielle Veslenio at (510) 510-302-2209 or [katrielle@acbanet.org](mailto:katrielle@acbanet.org) for more information!

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## START SMALL BAY AREA

In March, VLSC launched a new program, Start Small Bay Area, providing pro bono legal and financial counseling to low and moderate income entrepreneurs. VLSC has partnered with New York based Start Small Think Big and their Executive Director Jenny DaSilva, to bring Start Small's proven small business pro bono technical assistance model to the Bay Area.

To start this new program are three new VLSC employees: Legal Program Manager Megan Bacigalupi, Financial Program Manager Eliane Orru and Communications and Program Coordinator Mauna Minagar. Welcome Megan, Eliane and Mauna!

We would like to say a special thank you to our **Founding Partners**. Their generous support has made this effort possible.

- Cooley LLP
- DLA Piper
- Duane Morris LLP
- Fenwick & West LLP
- Fish & Richardson
- Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP
- Goodwin Procter LLP
- Latham & Watkins LLP
- Morrison & Foerster LLP
- Shearman & Sterling LLP

We would also like to thank our wonderful **community partners** who are working with us to ensure a strong and diverse client pipeline.

- La Cocina
- Kiva
- Small Business Majority
- Working Solutions
- Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center
- Project ReMade
- Pacific Community Ventures
- FreeForm
- Alameda County Small Business Development Center
- United States Small Business Association San Francisco District Office
- City of Oakland Business Assistance Center

If you would like more information about Start Small Bay Area, or would like to get involved, please contact Megan Bacigalupi at 415.966.2187 or at [megan@startsmallthinkbig](mailto:megan@startsmallthinkbig).

start  
small! THINK  
BIG

# VLSC 2017 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: APRIL SEO



*April Seo*  
*Seo Family Law*

### **VLSC FAMILY LAW DAY OF COURT (FLDOC) VOLUNTEER**

*April is a regular volunteer at our Family Law Day of Court.*

#### **Why do you volunteer with VLSC?**

I have volunteered with VLSC from about 6 months after I obtained my license. VLSC provided me with valuable training as a young attorney. I feel that it is our privilege and responsibility to continue to give back to the courts as well as those litigants who cannot afford to obtain private legal representation.

#### **What other community activities are you involved in?**

I am a volunteer attorney with Tri-Valley Haven for Women (domestic violence clinic), a member of the Earl Warren American Inns of Court and am honored to have recently joined the board of the Alameda County Family Law Association (ACFLA).

#### **What is one thing that you wished our donors/supporters knew about VLSC?**

I think that it is critical for VLSC to support the efforts of Family Law Facilitator (FLF) and Self-Help as well as the judicial

officers in providing volunteer assistance with the self-help calendar. Having come from a background with the Facilitator's office in my career, the coordination of volunteers and ongoing, consistent support is mission critical.

#### **Do you have a particularly memorable volunteer experience or VLSC client?**

Working with two self-represented litigants to reach an out of court settlement is particularly rewarding. It's not always about the law or who is right/wrong. It is when you can hone in on what's important, usually the children, that the parties who may have been quite contentious are able to reach a mutual agreement. This is one of the most rewarding aspects of volunteering, making that little bit of difference in someone's life or assisting parties in improving their co-parenting relationship so that people can move forward from the conflict.

#### **How does having the opportunity to work with an attorney help the clients/litigants?**

I think this provides an immense difference. Litigants who otherwise would not have access to an attorney sometimes just need someone to explain the process or procedure. Family court can be quite confusing and intimidating to navigate without assistance. FLF and Self-Help provide a critical service but often are limited in how many people they can realistically assist per day. It's important that the volunteer attorneys are present at the time of hearing and can explain the court orders if there is any confusion in the litigant's understanding of the orders or their obligations, etc.

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: MELISSA TUNG

## **VLSC FAMILY LAW DAY OF COURT (FLDOC) VOLUNTEER**

*Melissa is a regular volunteer at our Family Law Day of Court.*

### **Why do you volunteer with VLSC?**

I enjoy working with the community and providing assistance to litigants who are often confused by the court system. I started my family law career as a law clerk for the San Mateo County's Family Law Facilitator's Office where I assisted self-represented litigants all day. I enjoyed hearing about their family law issues and providing them with a method to effectuate their goals.

It is rewarding for me to see a litigant learn about the system and they are often so thankful just to have a few seconds of an attorney's time. It makes all the time and effort worth it to see someone leave a hearing feeling heard by the Judge.

Volunteering with VLSC also allows me to get to know the Judges and clerks better. Each department is a little different so it's helpful to get some one-on-one time with the Court.

### **What other community activities are you involved in?**

I am a member of the Family Law Section and Barrister's Section of the Alameda County Bar Association and Contra Costa County Bar Association.

### **Do you have a particularly memorable volunteer experience or VLSC client?**

Helping a woman understand the family court process and assist her in finalizing her Judgment after years of being inactive because she did not understand the next step. She was so thankful to see that there was light at the end of the tunnel.



*Melissa Tung*  
*Seo Family Law*

### **How does having the opportunity to work with an attorney help the clients/litigants?**

I believe it is so beneficial for self-represented litigants to have the opportunity to speak with an attorney. Often times they do not understand what exactly is going on or how to move the case forward. Self-represented litigants are able to ask attorneys questions before orders are made. They can also obtain information to help them understand their options. It is helpful for litigants to be able to appear at their hearings with some guidance.

# 2016 GUARDIANS OF JUSTICE



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**Individual Guardians of Justice**

Justice James Lambden, Cheryl Poncini, Neil Rubenstein

The Guardians of Justice are firms, individuals and businesses who pledge exceptional annual financial support to VLSC. Their commitment ensures the long-term viability and success of VLSC's mission and programs. On October 20, 2016, VLSC friends and staff gathered at Rosenblum Cellars in Oakland to celebrate the generosity of fourteen firms and businesses and three individual donors who made contributions at the Guardian of Justice level in 2016.

Guests at the reception enjoyed fine wine and cheese, and most importantly great company, as they celebrated VLSC's loyal contributors. VLSC CEO Tiela Chalmers spoke about the power of pro bono work, and the profound effect that financial contributions to civil legal aid programs can have on the lives of people in our community.



***Thank you to all the Guardians of Justice for helping to bridge the justice gap in Alameda County!***

# CLASP



**CLASP - Free drop-in legal clinic: Open to all**



February 4th marked the launch of VLSC's new Community Legal Assistance Saturday Program (CLASP), a drop in legal clinic in Oakland held on the 1st Saturday of every month. Doors are open to the public from 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. The clinic provides brief free legal consultation, advice, and referral services to address individuals' legal questions regardless of residence or income. It is most helpful to clients who need an initial consultation, some brief assistance, or don't fit the criteria for other legal services assistance.



*CLASP Volunteers*

Since February, volunteer attorneys with experience in a wide spectrum of areas of law, including family, criminal, immigration, housing, employment, consumer, personal injury, probate, and real estate have assisted

over 100 clients. The clinic's success relies heavily on the committed volunteers that dedicate their Saturday mornings each month. This includes not only attorneys, but also interpreters, law school students, paralegals, and social workers who volunteer to provide clients with the most seamless assistance possible.

In the past three months, the clinic has seen a high need for immigration, family law, and personal injury attorneys, as well as Spanish interpreters. If you are interested in volunteering or learning more about the clinic, please contact Christina Wiellette

at [christina@acbanet.org](mailto:christina@acbanet.org).



**VOLUNTEER LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION**

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We're on the web!  
[www.acbanet.org/VLSC](http://www.acbanet.org/VLSC)



**VLSC STAFF**

**Tiela Chalmers**, CEO

**Christina Wiellette**, VLSC  
Manager

**Daniela Meza**, VLSC Clinics and  
Volunteer Coordinator

**Katrielle Veslenio**, Events and  
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**Cynthia Chandler**, BALI  
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**Megan Bacigalupi**, Start Small  
Bay Area Legal Program Manager

**Eliane Orru**, Start Small Bay Area  
Financial Program Manager

**Mauna Minagar**, Start Small Bay  
Area Program Coordinator

For more information about  
volunteer opportunities, please  
contact Daniela Meza at [daniela@acbanet.org](mailto:daniela@acbanet.org)  
or (510) 302-2219.

For more information on ways  
to support VLSC, please contact  
Katrielle Veslenio at: [katrielle@acbanet.org](mailto:katrielle@acbanet.org)  
or (510) 302-2209.

**JUSTICE FOR ALL:  
CELEBRATING PRO BONO**

**VLSC AWARD RECIPIENTS**



**Volunteer of the Year**  
**Matthew Kretzer**  
Retired



**Volunteer of the Year**  
**Peggy Chang**  
Buresh, Kaplan, Feller & Chang



**Rising Star**  
**Shane Nielson**  
Family Law Group, LLP



**Pro Bono Leadership Award**  
**Levine Family Law Group**

**WILEY W. MANUEL CERTIFICATE FOR PRO BONO LEGAL SERVICE RECIPIENTS**

**Joel Ackerman\***

**Phillip Campbell**

**Christina Cisneros †**

**Nikki Clark**

**Rachel Ehrlich**

**Teresa Green**

**Patricia Gutierrez De  
Sunseri**

**Michael Kent\***

**Matthew Morrison**

**Shane Nielson**

**Felipe Parker**

**Matthew Quiring**

**Pamela Ross, Jr.**

\* = 75+ volunteer hours  
† = 100+ volunteer hours

Please join us on Thursday, May 18, 2017 as we honor the VLSC volunteers who provided pro bono legal services in 2016. There will be an exciting silent auction with sports packages, restaurant gift certificates and much more. All proceeds benefit VLSC.