

JUSTICE FOR ALL

VLSC NEWSLETTER
FALL 2016



ALAMEDA COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION VOLUNTEER LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION



Family Law Day of Court Clinic

The Family Law Day of Court (FLDOC) clinic is a partnership between VLSC, the Alameda County Superior Court, and the Court's Self-Help Center. VLSC coordinates volunteers to assist self-represented litigants appearing on Request for Order calendars with family law matters. At the FLDOC clinic, Judges direct VLSC volunteers to help self-represented litigants prepare forms, calculate support amounts, and draft Final Orders After Hearing, with help from the FLDOC Coordinator.

This July, **Christine Knowles** joined VLSC as the FLDOC Coordinator. Christine earned her JD from Santa Clara University School of Law in May 2013 and attended the University of Michigan for her undergraduate degree. Christine has interned and volunteered with the Family Law Facilitator's Offices in Santa Clara and San Francisco Counties as well as the Family Violence Law Center in Oakland. She has also worked with the Northern California Innocence Project in Santa Clara. An Oakland native, Christine enjoys cooking and watching Bay Area sports in her free time.

Know someone who would be interested in volunteering at this clinic? VLSC will be holding a volunteer training for the FLDOC clinic on October 25th. See back page for more details, or visit www.acbanet.org/Calendar.

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Become a 2017 Guardian of Justice

Interested in supporting equal access to justice? Become a 2017 Guardian of Justice today! Contact Katrielle Veslenio at katrielle@acbanet.org or (510) 302-2209.



New Volunteer Corner

Thank you to all of our new volunteers for joining us in bringing access to justice to Alameda County low-income residents!

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CELEBRATE

PRO BONO

www.celebrateprobono.org

National Pro Bono Celebration

October 23 - 29, 2016

The fifth annual National Pro Bono Celebration Week is October 23 - 29, 2016! Support pro bono legal services by becoming a VLSC volunteer! To volunteer, contact Daniela Meza-Gray at daniela@acbanet.org or (510) 302-2219.

Across the country, nonprofit legal service organizations, such as Volunteer Legal Services Corporation, recognize the work of pro bono lawyers and showcase the incredible difference they make. We work hard each day to increase access to justice for all. Through over 40 clinics each month, we seek to expand pro bono legal help to low-income residents in Alameda County.

Incoming Board Member Profile



Hilarie Atkisson is the Senior Director of Corporate Social Responsibility and Pro Bono Counsel at Fenwick & West. In this role, Hilarie aims to identify pro bono, community service, and charitable giving opportunities that provide the greatest possible benefit to our broader community and the most rewarding experiences for those donating their time.

Prior to joining Fenwick & West, Hilarie spent many years directing the firm-wide administration of pro bono programs at two top-tier international law firms. After earning her undergraduate degree from Mills College, she went on to University of California, Hastings College of the Law, where she earned a J.D. During her free time, Hilarie enjoys spending time with her husband and three children, running, and traveling.

Hilarie Atkisson will be joining the VLSC Board of Directors in 2017.

Updates to the VLSC Board of Directors

We would like to thank departing Board members Michael Johnson, Eric Handler, R. Michael Loeb, Neil Rubenstein, and Brian Doucette for their service. We are grateful for their contributions, and wish them well in their future endeavors!

Please also help us welcome incoming 2017 VLSC Board Members Hilarie Atkisson, Jani Matsui, Glen Olson, Toni Mims-Cochran, Casey Williams, and Judge Noël Wise.

Interested in joining the VLSC Board? Contact Christina Wiellette at christina@acbanet.org, or (510) 302-2216.

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Donor Spotlight: Justice James Lambden



Justice James Lambden is a longtime champion of VLSC. We asked Justice Lambden to tell us a little bit about his experience and why he decided to become a VLSC supporter.

*Justice James Lambden
(Ret.), ADR Services, Inc.*

You have supported VLSC since its inception. What would you want to share with others about the impact of pro bono work in our community?

Many of the things attorneys do have broad impacts upon the communities where they practice, but big positive changes are rare and difficult to achieve. I learned very early to watch for small opportunities to do good work and to take the long view.

My law practice began in the middle of a cold December 40 years ago; and my first assignment was to write and deliver a letter firing all the employees working in an office building owned by a client.

The letter bluntly informed the employees that their employment would terminate at the end of December. My supervising partner approved the draft with only one change: he added "best wishes for a happy new year" without any apparent irony.

I felt terrible about that letter for years.

Another of my duties as a young associate was to interview potential clients who walked in off the street. One day a nervous and rather disheveled man, not much older than me, asked our receptionist to speak to an attorney and I was summoned. He needed a haircut. His clothes were neat but none too

"While it is difficult to make big social changes, one compassionate act can change the whole world for a person."

clean and his nose ran because of the cold weather outdoors. My supervising mentor's general instructions were to politely "show him the door." Instead I took him back to my office and gave him a tissue for his runny nose and a cup of hot tea. He thanked me and told me his name was Robert. I asked how I could help.

Robert told me the government was pursuing him; and I immediately worried that he might also tell me that he was wearing aluminum foil under his clothes to repel radio waves. Then he showed me a letter from an attorney in Santa Barbara who was attempting to close the probate of Robert's father's estate. The letter was dated nearly a year earlier and it practically begged for a reply.

I soon learned that this was the government pursuit that terrified my new client. He had been receiving such letters for years and was frightened that the letters found him even after he tried moving north from LA to escape them. He was now living in a single occupancy hotel on 12th Street in Oakland. His only income was a monthly SSI disability payment. He had an engineering degree from Cal Poly but was unable to work. Robert clearly suffered from mental and emotional problems, most likely including paranoia. He suffered debilitating anxiety attacks.

I told him to come back the next day and called the attorney in Santa Barbara, who nearly wept over the news that he had an attorney on the line who might help close the estate file that had been languishing on his

office desk. He had known Robert's father for many years and kept trying to find his son out of loyalty to his late friend.

To make a long story short, with a few phone calls and within a few days, I was able to convince my new pro bono client to sign the necessary papers to receive a small distribution from the estate, which allowed him to move to nicer accommodations, obtain dental care, and satisfy his small debts.

I was also able to convince Robert to ask for help from local social services, and he received treatment for his anxiety attacks and counseling.

I lost track of Robert, but I still think about him. Robert gave me the gift of a life lesson: kindness is incremental and while it is difficult to make big social changes, one compassionate act can change the whole world for a person.

What inspires you to give?

My inspiration for giving was best described by Shunryo Suzuki: "Whatever you attempt to keep, you lose forever; and whatever you give lasts forever."

Why should others donate to VLSC?

Attorneys are among the most anxious and alienated of professionals. They suffer high rates of addiction, alcoholism, depression, and anxiety. Some of this pain may come from the dissonance between the high principles fundamental to the law and the unpleasant reality of adversarial practice. Compassion is one of the "angels of our better nature" as Lincoln advised; and without it, laws can be hollow and often brutal. The mindful practice of compassion eases suffering. Always.

If you hadn't chosen a career in law, what career would you choose?

If I had not chosen to practice law, I'm certain that I would have been a teacher.

I also had artistic pretensions, but quickly learned the difficulties of making a living as an artist. I was fortunate to discover a reliable livelihood as a writer; and there is art even in the writing of legal opinions. I have been one of the luckiest people I know.



Low-Income Landlord Eviction Assistance Clinic Volunteer Training

Join VLSC and the ACBA Real Estate Section for this two-part training on handling an unlawful detainer action from client intake through trial. Topics covered include notice, complaint, settlement, recovery of possession, judgment, sheriff's involvement, pretrial preparation, and trial.

VLSC administers a weekly clinic in Hayward to assist low-income landlords with non-payment of rent eviction matters. Our low-income landlord clients are generally elderly individuals or those relying on rental income to remain housed themselves. All VLSC clients are screened for income eligibility.

Qualifications: Participants must attend both sessions and commit to volunteering at the VLSC Low-Income Landlord Eviction Assistance Clinic in Hayward six times in the next year.

Sponsors: Volunteer Legal Services Corporation and the ACBA Real Estate Section

Dates: Tuesday, November 15 **AND** Wednesday, November 16, 2016 from 5:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Location: ACBA, 1000 Broadway, Suite 480, Oakland

MCLE: 5 hours of general MCLE credit

Cost: \$0, with volunteer commitment

Speakers:

Peggy Chang, *Buresh Kaplan Feller & Chang*

Clifford Fried, *Fried & Williams LLP*

Matthew Quiring, *Fried & Williams LLP*

To Register: Send the registration form to Christina Wiellette at christina@acbanet.org.

Volunteer Spotlight: Nikki Clark



*Nikki Clark
VLSC Family Law
Day of Court Clinic
Volunteer*

“This is one way I can pay it forward for all of the limitless economic opportunity afforded to me as a lawyer.”

Why do you volunteer with VLSC?

I believe that the privilege of practicing law encompasses so much more than billable hours. Lawyers are the essential guardians of our system of justice. As guardians, lawyers honor the elusive concept of justice for all and the basic tenets of democracy when they offer pro bono services to indigent litigants with no other possible options for legal representation. The economic inequality in this country has a profound impact on people's ability to obtain legal services. The divide continues to grow between the minority of people who can afford legal services and the vast majority of people who cannot. This is one way I can pay it forward for all of the limitless economic opportunity afforded to me as a lawyer.

Do you have a particularly memorable VLSC client, pro bono case, or clinic experience?

One pro per day at the Alameda Courthouse, during the morning break, I walked out into the common area on the second floor. I was stopped by a young woman who told me she remembered that I had drafted the order from her previous hearing when I was volunteering with VLSC. She told me that because she had that order, the police were able to enforce it, and prohibit the father of her children from taking the children against her will during her parenting time. She hugged me and told me she was extremely grateful for this service.

What other community activities are you involved in?

I have been very active with the High School Mock Trial competition in Alameda County since 2003. I have coached the Mock Trial team from Oakland Tech, and I have also participated as both a judge and a scorer for the competition. I volunteer as a Judge for the Centerforce Youth Diversion Court in Oakland. I have been a Settlement Officer for the Court to assist family law litigants/attorneys with the settlement of their cases prior to trial. I sit as a Judge Pro Tem in family law departments. I have taught family law classes for both the ACBA and for Cal State East Bay as a volunteer teacher.

What are you listening to on your iPod now?

Drake.

What is one thing you wish our donors and supporters knew about VLSC?

I wish VLSC donors could experience firsthand how much their donations help meet the legal needs of our community and the breadth of services that VLSC makes available to our community. I am a past VLSC Board member. I know firsthand that VLSC has been a tireless and unrelenting force in providing access to justice for so many in our community. The only ceiling on VLSC's ability to offer more services is the limit of the resources provided by VLSC donors, either through financial contributions or in-service hours.

Clinic Spotlight: Fremont Family Law Clinic

Every second Tuesday of the month from 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m., VLSC offers a general family law clinic at the Fremont Family Resource Center in an effort to bring legal resources to South Alameda County Residents. At the Center, clients have access to over 25 State, County, City, and non-profit agencies under one roof, providing a host of social services and local resources in one location.

At the monthly VLSC clinic, volunteer attorneys offer help with a wide range of family law matters, from judgments, to preparing for family mediation, to simply understanding what a court order means. Last month, two VLSC volunteer attorneys helped clients prepare two custody petitions, a judgment, a request for order, and explained the difference between filing for legal separation and divorce, all in just three hours!

Please help VLSC reach all those in need of family legal services throughout Alameda County. South County residents like Yadira are grateful for the assistance VLSC provides in Fremont. "I think this is a great program to help people like me that are struggling to find legal help."

If you are interested in volunteering at the Fremont General Family Law Clinic or any of VLSC's clinics, please contact Daniela Meza-Gray at daniela@acbanet.org or (510) 302-2219 for more information.

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Neil Rubenstein, Justice James R. Lambden, Cheryl Poncini

10th Annual Dine Around for Justice

For the past ten years, the finest local East Bay restaurants have been joining us for nights of delicious dinners, great company, and good times. This August, we celebrated with Doña Tomás, Pizzaiolo, Bocanova, and Duende. Each restaurant donated 15% of one evening's revenue to support pro bono legal services in our community.

Thank you to everyone who enjoyed a delicious meal to support VLSC, and a huge thank you to the owners and staff at all the participating restaurants for their support of VLSC! We look forward to dining with them again soon.



Christine Knowles and friends at Doña Tomás



Todd Feldman, Robert Nuddleman, Jerry Marrs, Glicel Sumagaysay, Andrea Loh, and Jamie Rudman at Bocanova



Ruben Sundeen, Justice James Lambden, Judge Élan Lambert, Judge Alison Tucher, and Marshall Wallace at Duende



Katrielle Veslenio and friends at Pizzaiolo



Steve Hayes, Megan Burns, Josh Kasten, Michael Johnson, Vincent Tong, Pelayo Llamas, Lauren Powe, Robert Frassetto and Tiela Chalmers at Bocanova

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Donations received between September 1, 2015 and August 31, 2016

VLSC believes that access to the legal system is a fundamental right. Your support helps volunteer attorneys to help solve legal issues for low income people in Alameda County. Thank you!

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Oakland, CA 94607

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We're on the web!
www.acbanet.org



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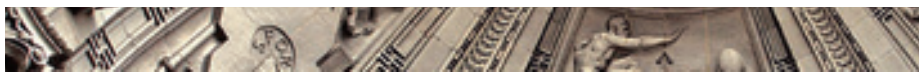
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For more information about
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For more information on ways
to support VLSC, please contact
Katrielle Veslenio at: katrielle@acbanet.org
or (510) 302-2209.

VLSC publishes this newsletter
twice a year to share the latest
VLSC news with our donors,
volunteers, and friends.



Volunteer Legal Services Corporation

Family Law Day of Court Clinic Volunteer Training

This 2 hour CLE training will cover how to prepare Findings and Order After Hearing for common legal issues faced by litigants representing themselves in family law cases, including child custody and visitation and child support. We will also discuss reissuances and service of process, issues that come up frequently for pro per litigants on the Request for Order calendar. This training will prepare attorneys to volunteer at this clinic.

Volunteer Commitment:

This training is offered for free in exchange for commitment to volunteer at six Family Law Day of Court sessions in the next year.

Speakers:

Judge Noël Wise, *Superior Court of California, Count of Alameda*

Blanca Rodriguez, *Self-Help Services Management Analyst,
Superior Court of California, County of Alameda*

Christine Knowles, *Family Law Day of Court Coordinator, VLSC*

To Register: Send the registration form to Christina Wiellette at
christina@acbanet.org.

Date and Time: Tuesday, October 25, 2016 from 5:30 p.m. - 7:45
p.m.

Location: ACBA, 1000 Broadway, Suite 480, Oakland

MCLE: 2 hours of general MCLE credit

Cost: \$0, with volunteer commitment

Food will not be provided.

Designate your Cy Pres to VLSC!

If you are involved in class action matters, please consider including VLSC in your settlement or judgment. We are happy to talk with you about crafting an appropriate designation, and to help negotiate this issue with opposing counsel and the judge.

Questions?

Please contact VLSC Manager Christina Wiellette with any questions at
(510) 302- 2216 or christina@acbanet.org.