



JUSTICE FOR ALL

VOLUNTEER LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION NEWSLETTER

FALL 2017



For more than a decade VLSC has been partnering with local restaurants to raise money for its programs. This August, we celebrated our 11th annual Dine Around for Justice.

This year's supporting establishments included previous supporters Dona Tomas and Duende, and we welcomed À Côté and Chop Bar to the rotation. Each restaurant donated 15% of one evening's revenue to support legal services in Alameda County.

Thank you to everyone who joined us for a Dine Around for Justice night to support VLSC. And a huge thank you to the owners and staff of all the participating restaurants for helping us continue to close the justice gap in our community.

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JUSTICE FOR ALL

Celebrating Pro Bono

VLSC held its annual Justice for All event on May 18th at the Impact Hub in Oakland. We had our first live auction with Chad the Principal Auctioneer and our own signature cocktail "Justice Juice," concocted for us by the bartenders at À Côté.

This year's event raised over \$58,000, the most in VLSC history! A big thank you to our Justice for All sponsors, Guardians of Justice, and wonderful donors who made the evening a night to remember!



VLSC AWARD RECIPIENTS

Volunteer of the Year
Matthew Kretzer



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



Pro Bono Leadership Award
Levine Family Law Group



Rising Star
Shane Nielson
Family Law Group, LLP



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

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Judge Scott Jackson and
Judge Elan Lambert



Erik Atkisson, Hilarie Atkisson, and
Matthew Kretzer



VLSC supporters



Janice Cho, Judge Tara Flanagan, Matthew
Kretzer, and Judge Alison Tucher



Janice Cho, Shane Nielson, Judge Tara
Flanagan, and Judge Alison Tucher



Janice Cho, Peggy Chang, Judge Tara
Flanagan, and Judge Alison Tucher



Pro Bono Leadership Award recipients
Levine Family Law Group



Judge Kimberly Colwell, Judge Jo-Lynn Lee,
and Judge Brad Seligman



Carolyn Hennel



Judge Tara Flanagan and Glen Olson



Peggy Chang, Scott Buresh, Judge Richard
Hodge, and Gerald Knezevich



Robert Levine, Joanna Funke, Cathy Funke,
and Eileen Eib



Judge Tara Flanagan, Judge Noel Wise, and
Judge Michael Markman



Charles Bendes, Bette Epstein, and
Rachel Dodson
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Bidding during the live auction

BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: JANI MATSUI



Jani Matsui
Aiken Welch Court Reporters

VLSC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jani may be new to the VLSC Board, but she has quickly become one of our most enthusiastic and effective VLSC ambassadors.

I got involved with VLSC when Aiken Welch Court Reporters sponsored Justice for All. The energy of the organization piqued my interest, and provided an opportunity to work more closely with community.

I can speak for my coworkers when I say we are fortunate for the opportunity to volunteer at CLASP. As court reporters, we've sat at tables where people have the luxury of legal representation. There is palpable compassion for those who can't access justice because of income. My involvement helps quell my own cynicism

and fear for the direction of our country's political climate.

My dad opened the Salt Lake City Public Defender's office in 1965. His dinnertime rants and raves, along with a commitment to community, were infectious. He instilled in me the passionate belief that everyone is entitled to legal counsel. VLSC embodies that spirit.

Thank you VLSC for the professionalism and enthusiasm that allows us to provide low-income people with legal services. I have appreciated the inspiration from the board and I'm happy knowing that we are working together for this cause. I also want to thank Aiken Welch for their support and time they've given VLSC.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT: NICK MADANI

Nick is a first-time donor. Welcome to the world of pro bono legal services Nick!

How did you get involved with VLSC?

It was really by chance. I was invited to this year's Justice for All fundraiser by a friend who is involved with the organization and I attended to show my support. It was a really great event.

You made your first gift at this year's Justice for All event. What inspired you to give to VLSC?

I wasn't too familiar with the services VLSC provides in Alameda County and don't work in the legal field. However, listening to the award recipients speak about their volunteer experiences and how they've been able to help so many people was really eye opening. As a non-attorney, I felt that making a financial gift was one of the best ways to show my support and help further the work of VLSC.

Continued on page 7...

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: BRANDY D'ORNELLAS

VLSC CLASP VOLUNTEER

Brandy is a regular volunteer at our CLASP Clinic, held the first Saturday of every month. CLASP is a drop in clinic that provides brief free legal consultations, advice, and referral services.

Why do you volunteer with VLSC?

I believe in VLSC's mission. Throughout my life, I have been exposed to family and friends who struggled with legal issues but could not afford an attorney. One of the reasons I attended law school was to help promote access to legal assistance. Thankfully, my law firm, Roisman Henel + Adams, is committed to volunteering for VLSC – one of our trusts and estates attorneys volunteers at each Community Legal Assistance Saturday Program (CLASP) clinic.

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

I was overwhelmed by the need of our community at the last CLASP. We volunteers were very busy – I saw nine clients in four hours. Each client was struggling with a legal issue that had serious repercussions for their lives, including how to protect a mother from elder abuse in a nursing home, how to become the guardian of a granddaughter, and questions about the probate of a parent's estate.

What other community activities are you involved in?

I've worked with seniors most of my life, and have a policy background, so I am involved with CANHR: California Advocated for Nursing Home Reform. They are at the forefront of all policy affecting seniors in California, and especially policy affecting long term care



Brandy D'Ornellas
Roisman Henel + Adams

residents. I also enjoy mentoring young women considering a career in law or policy.

What are you listening to on your iPhone right now?

My husband enjoys cultivating Spotify playlists. The playlist I'm listening to now is full of acoustic songs – it's great for this time of year because it feels like fall.

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

Most of the clients who reach out to VLSC or attend CLASP have already made several attempts to resolve their legal issue or to obtain an answer to their legal question. Many are on the verge of losing hope and the services offered by VLSC are often the clients' last resort. These services are critical to providing Alameda County residents with access to legal assistance and justice. To VLSC donors and supporters – you make these programs possible.



START SMALL BAY AREA SPOTLIGHT: MAMA LAMEES

VLSC and Start Small Think Big partnered in 2017 to create: START SMALL BAY AREA, a community and business resiliency project that has really been hitting the ground running! Mama Lamees is just one example of the local entrepreneurs your support helps to create thriving sustainable small businesses.

ABOUT THE BUSINESS

Mama Lamees cuisine is a catering business serving homemade, authentic, and fresh Middle Eastern food that is made from scratch. Mama Lamees' cuisine is a feast from the Middle East!

ABOUT THE ENTREPRENEUR

Lamees Dahbour, owner of Mama Lamees, is of Palestinian origin, and was born and raised in Kuwait. The origin of her cooking comes from her mother's kitchen, where she learned to cook at 10 years old.

As an employee of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, Chef Dahbour has lived in various Middle Eastern Countries. These experiences contributed strongly to her culinary skills as she has learned something new from each place she visited.

Today, she blends these experiences

through all the flavors which create her delicious, authentic and unique Middle Eastern dishes. Chef Dahbour puts her talent, love and passion in cooking, and instills those same values in her children.

As a single mother, and survivor of domestic violence, Chef Dahbour teaches her children to never give up. As her success shows, no matter how difficult the circumstances, if you persist, you can persevere. She hopes to pass this business on to her children in the future.



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START YOUR DIVORCE CLINIC

On August 10th, VLSC and Alameda County Court Self Help staff attorneys Diane Luong and Joseph Gacula held a “Start Your Divorce” training and clinic for attorneys and legal staff from the California State Automobile Association (CSAA) as part of their Pro Bono week.

Family law pro bono work is actually very similar to insurance – both see good people at their worst and help them move forward in a way that keeps families safe and secure.

After a morning of intensive training on how to assist self-represented litigants with beginning divorce paperwork, the CSAA volunteers had the opportunity to put their learning into practice at VLSC’s first Start Your Divorce clinic.

Under the supervision of Jenifer Frudden, Frudden & Padilla Family Law, LLP, seven attorneys and seven paralegals from CSAA teamed up to help eight clients complete the initial paperwork to start their divorce and explain filing procedures and service of process.

The Start Your Divorce clinic was VLSC’s pilot clinic for in-house counsel volunteers with no prior experience in family law.

Thanks to the help of Diane Luong, Joseph Gacula, and Jeni Frudden, both the training and clinic were a success!

DONOR SPOTLIGHT, Continued from page 4



Nick Madani
Madani Marketing

Also, the auctioneer was really good. I kind of got caught up when he was asking for donations – everyone was giving! – so I just raised my paddle and kept the momentum going.

What would you say to others not in the legal field who are interested in supporting VLSC?

Donate, donate, donate! Some may think donating money is impersonal but I disagree. When you financially support an organization, you are ensuring that organization has the needed resources and ability to continue their good work. In the case of VLSC, I know my donation is a drop in the bucket for the need to fund crucial legal services.



VOLUNTEER LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

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We're on the web!
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Coordinator

For more information about
volunteer opportunities, please
contact Christina Wiellette at
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For more information on ways
to support VLSC, please contact
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What is AmazonSmile?

AmazonSmile is a website operated by Amazon that lets customers shop the same selection of products, prices, and shopping features as on Amazon.com. The difference is that when customers shop on AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com), the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to the charitable organizations selected by customers.

How does AmazonSmile work?

When first visiting AmazonSmile, you will be prompted to select a charitable organization. Search for "VLSC", select Alameda County Bar Association Volunteer Legal Services Corporation and 0.5% of your purchase will be donated to VLSC!

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