Impacting Lives One Case at a Time: Jennifer Prieb Estremera

Jennifer Prieb Estremera, an associate at Dorsey Whitney LLP until she accepted a federal court clerkship in March 2011, began taking cases from CLSEPA in March 2009. One of the motivating factors behind Ms. Estremera’s desire to take on pro bono work has been being able to help people who do not have the means to help themselves. According to Ms. Estremera, “a simple letter with the name of a firm and an attorney can make a difference in helping clients.” Wanting to take advantage of her law degree in order to assist people, Ms. Estremera has been an invaluable resource to CLSEPA.

Oftentimes the efforts of pro bono attorneys such as Ms. Estremera can prove to be an important life changer as was the case with her client, Mr. B.

In late June 2010, Mr. B came to CLSEPA’s Volunteer Attorney Program evening clinic seeking assistance with an identity theft issue. Mr. B had been the victim of repeated identity theft after losing his wallet in 1995. For 15 years, the thief had caused numerous problems for Mr. B, including withdrawing money from his bank accounts, renewing his driver's license with the DMV with a changed address, and committing traffic violations using Mr. B’s license. Fortunately, Mr. B was able to resolve each of these situations as they arose, by giving fingerprint and photo comparisons to police and other investigators. The thief, however, continued the fraudulent acts. As a result, the unrelenting misuse of Mr. B continued on page 5.

CLSEPA Awarded Sobrato Family Foundation 2:1 Challenge Grant

Raising $20,000 could mean $61,000

The Sobrato Family Foundation has generously awarded Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto a 2:1 Challenge Grant. This is a phenomenal opportunity for CLSEPA and our clients. We have just received $20,000 from the foundation. In addition, they have pledged an additional $21,000 for 2012. In order to receive the full $41,000, however, CLSEPA must raise $20,000 this year from a combination of gifts from new donors and increased donations from current supporters. That's $2 from the Sobrato Family Foundation for every $1 of new money we receive. We hope we can count you among our supporters as we strive to qualify for this exciting grant.

Let us know if you want to contribute to our goal! Send your gift to Candice Greenberg, Executive Director, CLSEPA, 2117B University Avenue, East Palo Alto, CA 94303, or email her at candice@clsepa.org.
Negotiating with Landlords to Solve Problems

By Rico Altman-Merino

answering an unlawful detainer, or eviction lawsuit, is the most common direct legal route to preventing homelessness. But landlord-tenant law encompasses a whole range of other procedures that go a long way to help our clients secure stable, adequate housing. Unfortunately, landlords sometimes exploit their renters in myriad ways, by failing in their legal obligations as lessors or, in the worst cases, through intimidation or discrimination. The current difficult economic conditions put pressure on both parties, exacerbating client need and encouraging landlord malfeasance. CLSEPA combats this trend from a number of angles.

Community education and outreach events play an important role. They attempt to head off housing crises in families by emphasizing practical issues. For example, the rental market is riddled with inequalities in access to information. Simple practices like diligently collecting documentation and keeping organized communication records have a direct positive effect. CLSEPA designs these events with the hope that community members will be motivated to take control of their tenancies.

We also encourage clients to exercise their rights as tenants by helping them put pressure on landlords or file small claims suits when these rights are violated. One recent housing client had been living with her son and daughter in a converted garage. The owner of the house had not obtained the city permits required to establish the legitimacy of a residential rental unit. When the landlord discovered that the client was dating an African-American man, he refused to allow them to enter the house to use the kitchen and shower, in violation of their verbal agreement. When the client, outraged by his clearly illegal behavior, withheld a portion of rent, he threatened to evict her and her kids. CLSEPA’s counsel helped her secure a cash settlement.

Our client roster is loaded with similar stories. CLSEPA recently negotiated the return of a client’s security deposit. Housing staff convinced one landlord to give a client a rent credit that had been promised but never received and to give another client the right to live with her family in her former apartment after she had been transferred to another unit while her former home was undergoing structural repairs. Another client had neighbors who were making excessive noise, interfering with his work schedule and exacerbating his diabetic symptoms. The manager agreed to transfer the client to a comparable unit with the same monthly rent and the same amenities. Another tenant came to us after her mother died last year. The woman’s health had been rapidly deteriorating, and she could not walk up the stairs. The management company (who no continued on page 4
Capital Campaign Update:
Taking Steps to Secure Our New Home

By Sunil Kulkarni

LSEPA is working hard to get a new home! In 2010, JP Morgan Chase (Chase Bank) generously donated a 1/4 acre property at 1861 Bay Road in East Palo Alto. We have demolished the two unusable structures on the property and plan to put up an inexpensive 2,000-square-foot modular building in their place. A permanent home of our own will enable CLSEPA to use more volunteer attorneys, expand programs, and help more low-income clients. CLSEPA is extremely grateful to work with our pro bono architect, Dave Lee, and our amazing project manager, Chris Lee at Vance Brown Builders.

We have been in our current 972-square-foot office since 2003. Over the last 8 years, we have grown from a staff of 4 to 11 employees with dozens of part-time volunteers. There are not enough work areas for all of us and too few places for private conversations with clients. We regularly turn away volunteer attorneys due to lack of space.

CLSEPA has raised approximately $370,000 from individual donors and organizations. In addition, we have received donations of time, materials, and services from numerous people and companies.

We now only have to raise $30,000 to reach our goal of $400,000!
But we need YOUR help. Contributing to CLSEPA's capital campaign is an important way to provide access to justice for low-income people in East Palo Alto and on the Peninsula. Every gift, no matter the size, will make a difference. All contributions are tax-deductible. Depending on the amount donated, naming and donor recognition opportunities are available. In-kind contributions are also appreciated.

Please contact CLSEPA's Executive Director, Candice Greenberg, to support this exciting project or with any questions. Candice can be reached at 650 326 6440 x 304 or candice@clsepa.org.

Alternatively, please visit our website at http://www.clsepa.org/capitalcampaign.html

CLSEPA’s current cramped quarters

We hope you will help us make our dreams a reality
The Volunteer Attorney Program
Leveraging Support for Low Income Clients

By Carolyn Tucher and Luis Landeros

Access to the judicial system for low-income families and individuals is essential if they are to enjoy the protections of the law. Without the means to hire a lawyer, they are often helpless victims of switch and bait tactics, discrimination, and fraud among other abuses. When individuals come to Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto, they benefit from the generosity of some of the best attorneys in the area. In 2010 240 lawyers donated over 14,000 hours to our clients.

CLSEPA’s Volunteer Attorney Program (VAP) handles a wide variety of civil and consumer cases. VAP Supervising Attorneys Julie Quinlan Hansen, Renee Glover Chantler, Managing Attorney Katrina Logan, and Program Coordinator Luis Landeros are the team that supports both the clients and the pro bono attorneys.

Under the supervision of Julie Quinlan Hansen and Renee Glover Chantler, Stanford Law School students as well as attorneys, take part in the screening and intake of clients. Following the interviews, the screeners prepare intake memos highlighting the various issues involved. VAP program staff then contact partner firms to find attorneys interested in taking the cases. When a case is placed, VAP staff members follow up, offering help with locating translators and interpreters, answering questions, and providing support. Some cases are short; some are long. The satisfaction of using the safeguards in the law to protect victims is the reward for the volunteers. Clients express their thanks with tears and tamales.

Pro bono attorneys also take on a variety of cases from our immigration, anti-predatory lending and housing practice areas. Because of the large volume of cases CLSEPA receives, assistance from pro bono counsel is much needed. CLSEPA attorneys from the various practice areas also provide training sessions both in our offices and at the firms. Volunteer attorneys often receive MCLE credit for attending these trainings.

CLSEPA is always seeking to expand the number of participating firms and solo practitioners. It is through the generous help and assistance of pro bono attorneys and volunteers that it was possible for our small staff to assist over 1,300 clients in 2010.

Paralegals and legal secretaries also contribute vital services to CLSEPA’s clients. See the story of Lori Bates on page 6.

To offer your help to the Volunteer Attorney Program, please contact Luis Landeros at Luis @clsepa (650) 326-6440 x305.

Negotiating with Landlords to Solve Problems (continued from page 2)

longer operates the complex) offered to relocate her and her family to a first-floor apartment, but at a rental rate that they could not afford. The new landlord promised our client that they would pay closer attention than their predecessors did to the legal rights of tenants with disabilities.

To be sure, many of these issues lack the urgency of an eviction, but addressing them through negotiation and frank communication with landlords allows CLSEPA to help our clients achieve financial stability. Most importantly, these efforts help avoid the stress and potential hostility of a court confrontation, which serve only to further alienate landlord and tenant and ultimately weaken our community.
TOP LAW FIRMS CONTRIBUTING
250+ HOURS IN 2010:
Bingham McCutchen LLP
Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP
DLA Piper US LLP
Fenwick & West LLP
Foley & Lardner LLP
Latham & Watkins LLP
Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP
Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP
Sullivan & Cromwell LLP

Impacting Lives One Case at a Time: Jennifer Prieß Estremera (Continued from pg 1)

B’s identity was a constant source of stress and worry to him and his family.

Working together, Ms. Estremera and Dorsey & Whitney Paralegal Teresa Castro helped Mr. B file a report with the DMV so that he could obtain a new license and alert their offices about the theft.

As they waited for the DMV to act on the report, Ms. Estremera and Ms. Castro gathered evidence of the fraud that had taken place, including bank, credit card and traffic records. Most importantly, they brought to the attention of the DMV and police a 1997 police report referencing the thief’s booking photo and fingerprints from a DUI arrest (for which he used Mr. B’s ID), as well as Mr. B’s August 2010 driver’s license that the thief had renewed in Mr. B’s name, using the thief’s own address, photo and thumbprint.

In late February, their hard work and the evidence they collected led to the identification and arrest of the thief and to the end of Mr. B’s long ordeal. Mr. B and his wife can live without the fear of this continued ordeal. Mr. B and CLSEPA greatly appreciate the effective assistance of Ms. Estremera and Ms. Castro provided.
Lori Bates: Volunteering after the Nine to Five

“Unravel the frustration of being unable to help her own family with immigration issues. She wanted to assist others.

Soon, however, she was spending her Wednesday afternoons with the Anti-Predatory Lending program. The experience has opened her eyes to the “broad social consequences that result from predatory lending.” Lori sees her work at CLSEPA as helping people stay in their homes. She assists in client intake, corresponds with banks and maintains client files.

Lori is the Attorney Development & Recruitment and Human Resources Coordinator for Mayer Brown LLP. She observed the pro bono work the firm’s attorneys were doing for CLSEPA and contacted Candice Greenberg, Executive Director, to see if our agency could use her secretarial and paralegal skills. She quickly became a weekly regular on our team of volunteers.

Lori explains that working at CLSEPA lessens the heart-ache she feels when she reads the news about families being removed from their homes as a result of foreclosure. Many are victims of predatory lenders or loan modification scams, she finds. They do not understand what has happened or how to fix it. “My interest,” says Lori, “simply lies with wanting to help right a great wrong.”

Would you like to volunteer? Contact Candice Greenberg at candice@clsepa.org or at 650-326-6440x304.

Anti Predatory Lending Fellow: Elissa Stone

Elissa Stone is a CLSEPA Fellow and a recently admitted member of the California Bar. She graduated from the University of San Francisco School of Law in 2010 with a certificate in Public Interest Law and extensive experience in juvenile dependency. While awaiting Bar results and transitioning to full-time work, Elissa volunteered with the CLSEPA anti-predatory lending division. USF provided a generous grant so that Elissa could continue to work with CLSEPA for three months. She is currently working at CLSEPA assisting clients with loan modifications and foreclosure prevention. Elissa is also a 2007 graduate of the University of California, Santa Barbara, where she was involved in community organizing.
Meet CLSEPA’s New Board Members

**John P. Kelly** is the founder of BlackStone Discovery. He is responsible for the company’s strategic direction, overall management and growth. Prior to starting BlackStone Discovery, Mr. Kelly held executive positions at Garage Technology Ventures, Netscape Communications, NightRider Overnite Copy Service (IKON Office Solutions), and the law offices of Morrison & Foerster. During his career he has been recognized for his success in new company creation, building high energy teams, and in developing and delivering technology for the legal industry.

Mr. Kelly holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of California at Berkeley, and a Masters in Business Administration from Santa Clara University. He is active in the local community and in youth sports.

When asked what motivated him to join CLSEPA’s Board. He responded, “The legal world can be intimidating enough, getting access to legal representation shouldn’t be.”

**George C. Best** is a partner at Foley & Lardner LLP, specializing in intellectual property litigation. His practice is focused on patent litigation and appellate work before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

Dr. Best joined the CLSEPA Board after working with CLSEPA clients on a range of immigration and landlord/tenant disputes. In these matters, he saw first hand how CLSEPA and its volunteer attorneys have a significant effect in their clients’ lives, often with a fairly small investment of pro bono time.

As a new member of the Board, Dr. Best sees the primary short-term challenges as being related to the build out of the new office space and managing the change in location. Longer term challenges include helping CLSEPA raise its profile and expand the range of services it provides to the residents of East Palo Alto. He is looking forward to helping the established members continue CLSEPA’s recent track of success.

**Eugene Illovsky** is a partner at Morrison & Foerster LLP in Palo Alto. He specializes in complex civil and criminal litigation, corporate internal investigations, and corporate counseling. Mr. Illovsky’s experience also includes white collar criminal representation for private and public companies as well as for their executives.

Mr. Illovsky currently serves on the Criminal Justice Act Appeals Panel for the Northern District of California. He is also a Master of the American Inns of Court and was a Visiting Lecturer at Boalt School of Law at UC Berkeley.

When asked why he decided to join CLSEPA’s Board, Mr. Illovsky answered, “I jumped at the chance to help the terrifically dedicated and talented people at CLSEPA continue their important work. I hope we can keep expanding CLSEPA's positive impact in the community.”
Save the Date!
The Palo Alto Area Bar Association’s 22nd ANNUAL CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT
benefitting Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto

Stanford University Golf Course
Monday, October 10, 2011

Play one of the nation’s top golf courses!
Enjoy a great day of fun!
Help a very deserving cause!

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