



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

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The OCBA in the Community

Assisting the Orange County community is a core part of the OCBA's mission. This long history of service is made possible only by the generosity of OCBA members and other stakeholders. Below are a few examples of ways the OCBA has made a lasting impact by assisting the Orange County community.

CLA SoCal. In the 1950s, the OCBA developed a Legal Aid and Lawyer Referral Service for indigent Orange County residents in need of civil legal services. In 1958, the OCBA's Legal Aid program was incorporated as a separate entity under the name Legal Aid Society of Orange County. In 2019, the organization changed its name to Community Legal Aid SoCal (CLA SoCal). Celebrating its 65th anniversary in 2023, CLA SoCal has grown to a staff of nearly 140 (including 56 attorneys) and has expanded its free legal services for low-income residents in areas of law including family security, housing, health, economic justice, immigration, and elder law. In 2022, CLA SoCal's hotline answered more than 50,000 calls, and staff closed over 10,000 cases resulting in life-changing impact for nearly 22,000 of the region's most vulnerable residents. Volunteer opportunities are available at <https://www.communitylegalsocal.org/get-involved/volunteer/>.

CRF-OC. Educating students about civics has never been more important. A May 3, 2023, article in *The Wall Street Journal* cited to data released by the U.S. Department of Education showing that eighth-graders' test scores in U.S. history and civics fell to the lowest levels on record in 2022, particularly for lower and middle performing students. In Orange County, the Constitutional Rights Foundation-Orange County (CRF-OC) has been empowering Orange County youth through interactive civics and law-related programs for forty-two years. CRF-OC serves every demographic of middle and high schools in Orange County and provides different ways for attorneys to get involved. Programs include Mock Trial (in real courtrooms before sitting judges), Peer Court (a juvenile diversion program), Constitution Day (where judges and attorneys attend classrooms to discuss topical constitutional issues relevant to students), Law Day (an annual conference), Career Forum (exposing students to different careers), and Middle School Moot Court. While CFR-OC is a separate organization, it developed out of a collaboration with a then-OCBA committee named Legal Education for Youth. Volunteer opportunities for CFR-OC are available at <https://www.crfoc.org/volunteer/>.

PLC. During the late 1970s, members of the OCBA and the Bench developed the idea for a law firm that would provide pro bono services by placing individuals with volunteer attorneys in the private bar. The organization's original name was Amicus Publico, which was later changed to Public Law Center (PLC). The OCBA was instrumental in PLC's genesis, including the development of funding, leasing PLC its first office at no charge, and securing PLC's building in Santa Ana. Aided by the contributions of the OCBA, local firms and attorneys, judges, and other stakeholders, PLC has provided free legal services to low-income

residents in Orange County for forty-two years. Volunteer opportunities are available at <https://www.publiclawcenter.org/volunteer/>.

Project SELF. In 1995, the OCBA launched a summer internship program called Project SELF (Summer Employment with Law Firms) aimed at providing career guidance to disadvantaged high school students. The program's focus was to acquaint high school juniors and seniors with the real-world work environment of legal professionals by recruiting and matching students with law firms and government agencies for a summer job. The program also provided students with professional attire and educational workshops on various topics such as the court system, interviewing skills, and personal finance. The program is now a part of Project Youth OC, formerly the philanthropic arm of the OCBA. Since its launch, Project SELF has helped over one thousand high school students.

The OCBA Continues to Assist the Community. The examples above are just a few illustrations of the OCBA's rich history of service to the Orange County community.¹ But the OCBA is not resting on its laurels; it continues to serve local communities in a myriad of ways. For example, the OCBA's Community Outreach Committee selects, plans, and organizes service activities for OCBA members such as food drives, visits to Orangewood Children's Home, and business clothing drives. You can get connected with the Community Outreach Committee at <https://www.ocbar.org/Get-Connected/Committees/Community-Outreach>. In addition, the OCBA's Pro Bono Committee coordinates pro bono trainings and programs for OCBA members. To learn more about pro bono opportunities, please visit <https://www.ocbar.org/Get-Connected/Committees/Pro-Bono>.

Members and other stakeholders can also contribute financially to charitable legal organizations in Orange County by supporting the OCBA Charitable Fund. Over the last twenty years, the OCBA Charitable Fund has provided over \$2.6 million in grants to legal charities in Orange County. One entertaining way to support law-related charities in Orange County is by sponsoring and/or attending the OCBA Charitable Fund's annual Raise Your Glass wine tasting event on Thursday, August 17, 2023. Information about this event is available at <http://www.ocbacf.org/ryg/>. The OCBA has a long history of assisting the Orange County community. I encourage you to embrace that history by volunteering your time and/or making a financial contribution to the OCBA Charitable Fund.

ENDNOTE

(1) The genesis of the above-mentioned organizations, among other stories highlighting the rich history of the Orange County legal community, will be the focus of a podcast being developed in 2023 by the OCBA. 🎧

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