



PRESIDENT'S PAGE THOMAS H. BIENERT, JR.

Celebrating Volunteerism

Most of us became lawyers to help people. The legal profession is a service industry, and we all help our clients with the myriad complex legal issues they face each day. I would like to dedicate this month's President's Page to honoring "volunteerism" (by that, I don't just mean when your clients decide not to pay your bills for services already rendered). Rather, I want to focus on those volunteers who make our community a better place through their selfless acts. The OCBA's mission is "to enhance the system of justice, to support the lawyers who serve it, and to assist the community served by it." This would be mission impossible without volunteers.

Every October, the OCBA recognizes the volunteers who give their time so generously in so many ways. This year's OCBA Volunteer Recognition Reception will be October 14, at which we will present Suzanne Viau Chamberlain with the Harmon G. Scoville Award. The Scoville Award annually recognizes a member of the Orange County legal community whose career exemplifies the highest standards of the legal profession, who has contributed to the OCBA, and who has championed our constitutional system of justice. Please come help us celebrate those who give so much.

On October 18, the OCBA and the Orange County Asian American Bar Association will sponsor the Fall Food Packaging Event at the Community Action Partnership of Orange County Food Bank in Garden Grove. Even in a community as prosperous as Orange County, there are over 400,000 residents at risk of hunger every month. And 42% of these are children. Volunteers can participate by sorting, labeling, and packing food in boxes to get them ready for delivery. This is the type of work we at the OCBA are celebrating this October. Together, we can make a real difference in peoples' lives.

For those who want to volunteer by putting their legal skills to use, on October 21, the OCBA and the Public Law Center (PLC) are hosting a free "basic guardianship training." Volunteers will receive free training on topics such as Petitioning for Uncontested Guardianships, an overview of a Guardianship Case, review of Judicial Council forms and Pleadings, a view from the bench on guardianship cases, and an overview of the PLC's guardianship clinic. Participants will then volunteer at the PLC's clinic.

In addition to the OCBA's activities, for the past five years, the American Bar Association has hosted a National *Pro Bono* Celebration, in order to create a national spotlight on *pro bono* efforts. This year, the celebration takes place October 19 to 25.

So I encourage each of you to celebrate "volunteerism," including *pro bono* service, community service, and those who support service-organization activities (including board service, writing for the *OC Lawyer*, committee service, etc.). The OCBA provides numerous ways for you to volunteer yourself, including:

- Leadership: Board, Committee Chairs, and Section Chairs;

- Committee Service: Doing the work of the OCBA to plan its programs for the attorneys, the community, and the support of the justice system;

- Community Outreach Participation: Including Race for the Cure Team, Beach Clean Up, Food Packaging, visiting the children at Orangewood, and drives to collect back packs, food, etc.;

- Charitable Giving: Through the Charitable Fund and its grants and events;

- Speaking in the Community: Through the Speakers' Bureau for community groups, for Teenage Legal Survival Skills at high schools;

- Mentoring: Through our one-on-one mentoring program, through our mentoring "HELP-Line" via phone, and through the online video "Mentor on Demand" program;

- Providing Access to Justice: Through the *Pro Bono* Committee and the many *pro bono* clinics, domestic violence, probate, grandparent guardianship, and the significant *pro bono* work provided through the Public Law Center;

- Providing a Voice for the OCBA: The Professionalism & Ethics, Administration of Justice, Legislative Resolutions, and Judiciary Committees all enable the OCBA to play an important role in the legal profession throughout California; and

- The ever-important *task forces*, formed whenever the OCBA has a strategic need, such as the Facilities Task Force which took on the project of getting the OCBA its new headquarters, the OCBA/OCTLA Access to Justice Task Force, and the Section Bylaws Task Force.

Throughout my years as an Orange County attorney, but particularly over the past year while serving as the OCBA President, I have seen first-hand how the OCBA facilitates volunteerism and giving back to our community. And I have been unfailingly impressed with the dedication, effort, and compassion that I have seen. I've benefitted, too. For example, last February my family and I participated in the OCBA's and Second Harvest Food Bank's "Harvesting Event." My kids and I planted broccoli and harvested oranges. One may be surprised to learn that—putting it mildly—planting and harvesting are not something I do every day (my Southern roots notwithstanding). It was a great experience for all of us because we were working as a family, learning new skills, and doing it all to help others. I encourage you'all (as they say on the farm) to get out there and work for others—it will almost certainly do you good, too.



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