



PRESIDENT'S PAGE ASHLEIGH E. AITKEN

Unity Through Service

recently attended service at the Christ Our Redeemer AME church in Irvine. The main reason for my visit was a colleague of mine from the Orange County Fair Board, Barbara Bagneris, is an usher and informed me that Bishop Kevin Vann was giving an upcoming sermon at the church. It was important for both faiths in that it marked the first time a Roman Catholic bishop from Orange County had delivered a sermon at the AME church. At the service, the bishop spoke of unity, and how we all have more in common than we may believe at first sight. I couldn't agree more. Both churches are devoted to their faiths, are made up of people who want to make the world a better place, and believe in the concept of community service. These concepts truly transcend the labels some tend to identify with on Sunday mornings. (For those that may believe I only attended the service so that the bishop would know I attended church that Sunday, nothing could be closer to the truth. I figure I need all the help I can get.)

I had the same experience at the recent Black Chamber of Orange County dinner. I was honored to speak on veterans issues and take all the credit for the work of the entire Fair Board and its Heroes Hall exhibit. Now, you may wonder how a plaintiff's attorney felt at a Chamber of Commerce dinner, but I was struck by the event's theme of community partnering. The Black Chamber honored those in the community that were doing good deeds, and answering the call of those less fortunate. High-ranking executives from Disneyland, Southern California Edison, and CHOC Hospital were recognized, not for their business acumen, but for the work they were doing in their communities to enrich diversity and help the underprivileged. My initial reaction was a desire to do more in my own community. (My second reaction was to remain low profile, as my firm has been in litigation with each of those corporations.)

The theme of this page is not to make you stop and think, "Ashleigh goes to way too many events." That is true, but my calendar is a monster of my own creation. Whenever I attend another organization's dinner, I always look for ideas to bring back to the OCBA, and make the organization stronger. As I look at our own bar organiza-

tion, I cannot believe the opportunities the OCBA provides for those interested in community service, and the sheer volume of people that participate. At the recent reception for those awaiting their bar results, the OCBA handed out a calendar filled with all the volunteer opportunities that were available to them if they wanted to start getting involved. Service at the OCBA is an area that truly needs no improvement.

OCBA in the Community

The Community Outreach Committee, led by Shirin Foroootan and Nichole Wong, has several activities this fall for those looking to give back. September was the annual Race for the Cure run/walk, and the OCBA team was captained for the fourth time by Jennifer and Rob Tennant. Approximately sixty OCBA members participated and raised money in the fight against breast cancer. On October 17, the committee is partnering with a local food bank to assemble and package food boxes for those in need.

Also in October, the Community Outreach Committee, in conjunction with the Military & Veterans Issues Task Force, are collecting clothes, gift cards, and personal hygiene supplies for the 5th Annual Orange County Stand Down event, a veterans resource expo that provides homeless and transitional veterans with access to free medical care, job placement and housing information, and legal advice. The OCBA, along with our Lawyer Referral & Information Service (LRIS), will have a booth in the legal village with volunteers assisting our veterans with questions on how to access *pro bono* and "low bono" legal help. (www.orangecountystanddown.com).

Other opportunities abound. The Mentoring Committee is looking for mentors (those in practice over seven years), and the Military & Veterans Issues Task Force is holding two more *pro bono* trainings this fall to assist people in becoming certified before the VA, and to explain how to assist with the most common legal issues affecting veterans.

In Catholic school we learned that you give back through time, talent, or treasure. As lawyers, we are too busy to focus on all three, but we can all focus on one: making a donation of old clothes, buying an extra set of deodorant or toothpaste, volunteering for an hour in a clinic or at the Stand Down event,

or volunteering to take on a new OCBA member as a mentor. Please take a moment to visit the public service tab on the OCBA website. Even a small amount of giving makes a real difference in the life of someone less fortunate.



My "Exhibit One" at the Pearly Gates. I hope coattails work.



Black Chamber of Commerce of Orange County

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