



The Watsonville Law Center Newsletter

The Watsonville Law Center helps low-income individuals achieve equal access to the law by helping them to understand, exercise and enforce their rights.

Volume 5

December

2009

Message from the Director: Dori Rose Inda

Yet another year of tremendous change for the Watsonville Law Center! Even in these challenging times WLC has found ways to leverage limited resources and expand services to meet increasing need.

We doubled our staff and space and moved into our new home across the street from the Courthouse. **AmeriCorps Equal Justice Works** and **VISTA** have enabled us to add three new staff, increasing our capacity at a minimal additional cost. A generous partnership grant from the **California State Bar** enabled us to add two more staff to serve Spanish-speaking self-litigants through the **Santa Cruz County Superior Court's Self Help Center**. Our clinics and projects continue to serve more people each year as we strive to meet a growing need.

WLC continues to benefit from the expertise of the local legal community. Over thirty attorneys from Monterey, Santa Cruz, Santa Clara and San Francisco Counties volunteer their expert legal advice to WLC clients through legal clinics. WLC has trained over twenty students from local colleges and universities to interview at legal clinics. Volunteer attorneys and students are core to WLC's ability to provide access to justice for a growing number of community members.

WLC is grateful to all of its supporters

and this year gives a special thanks to the following attorneys for directing *cy pres* awards to WLC: **Will Kennedy** of the **Law Office of William E. Kennedy** and **Scott Maurer** of the **Alexander Community Law Center**, **Robert M. Bramson** of **Bramson, Plutzik, Mahler, & Birkhaeuser**, the **Office of the District Attorney of Monterey County**, **Balám Letona** of the **Law Offices of Balám O. Letona** and **Mark Chavez** of **Chavez & Gertler LLP**. These and other generous donors allowed WLC to increase our core services, expand our consumer education to at-risk youth and survivors of domestic violence, address the foreclosure crisis and institute a new partnership with the Santa Cruz County Superior Court Self-Help Center.

This year of growth for WLC is set against the serious effects of the economic crisis on the Pájaro Valley. WLC is dedicated more than ever to ensuring this hard-working community has access to justice. The past year has been an eventful and rewarding one and it is with great anticipation that we enter the New Year. Thank you for being part of this important work. On behalf of the Watsonville Law Center staff and board, I wish you and your families a holiday filled with peace and a Happy New Year!

-Dori

WLC HAS A NEW HOME

The Watsonville Law Center has moved! As many of you know, WLC sorely needed new space to effectively deliver services and meet growing need. WLC's new location, three blocks from our previous site, is across Second Street from the Santa Cruz County Superior Court, the Court's Self Help Center and the Watsonville Civic Building. With more than twice the space to meet with clients and house increased staff, WLC can expand advice clinics and welcomes new volunteer attorneys who make these clinics possible.



Please update your records with our new address. Please note our phone and fax numbers have remained the same.

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WLC IN THE NEWS:

Register-Pajaronian

August 2, 2009

Watsonville Law Center Gets *cy pres* award from the Law Office of Will Kennedy and the Alexander Community Law Center

"We are extremely grateful and excited to support consumer advocacy on behalf of the most vulnerable consumers in the Pájaro Valley and the surrounding region," Center Director Dori Rose Inda said.

The Mercury News

June 2, 2009

Bill Collectors to Pay \$500,000 to Couple

Desperate for help again, the couple turned to the Watsonville Law Center, a nonprofit agency founded ... to represent the rural poor. The Law Center hooked them up with attorney Balám Letona, a Santa Clara law school graduate who seemed to be heaven sent.

Workcomp Central

June 1, 2009

Pilot Program to Help Injured Workers with Uninsured Employers

The California Division of Worker's Compensation is teaming up with a Central Coast community group to launch a pilot program that will help workers injured while employed by uninsured businesses to collect benefits and serve court papers against their former bosses to enforce the states' mandatory coverage laws.

Goodtimes

October 23, 2008

Community in Action

WLC acts as a strong voice for [Spanish-speaking agricultural workers], ensuring that they receive the assistance they need to thrive within our community.

Santa Cruz Sentinel

March 5, 2008

Foreclosure Assistance Bypasses Local Homeowners

For those feeling frustrated, Dori Rose Inda of the Watsonville Law Center sympathizes. ... Inda has arranged for a team of lawyers to offer a "foreclosure clinic" ... to help low-income homeowners who believe they are victims of predatory lending.

2008 FIELDS OF JUSTICE EVENT

On Thursday, November 20, 2008, the Watsonville Law Center celebrated its sixth anniversary of service to the community through its Fields of Justice Event. WLC Board President **Bob Katz** welcomed everyone and **Todd McFarren** served as Master of Ceremonies.

Assemblymember Bill Monning spoke powerfully of the vital importance of access to health and justice for the whole community and the essential role played by the Watsonville Law Center, and applauded WLC for pursuing this mission.

Carina Chavez, aide to Congressman Sam Farr, presented the WLC Client Award to **Luz and Manuel Fausto**, "for their courage and

determination in defending their rights and achieving justice" in fighting fraud. WLC's **Krystal Tena** presented the Outstanding Contribution Award to the law firm of **Biggam, Christensen & Minsloff**, Santa Cruz County's Public Defender, "for their generous and continuous contribution of pro bono service towards eliminating barriers to employment and in furtherance of justice for the low-income community." Watsonville City Council member **Luis Alejo** presented the Darryel Nacua Award to **Jesus López** of

California Rural Legal Assistance in recognition of his "lifelong commitment to ensuring access to justice for agricultural workers."

Our annual event was held in Watsonville's new Civic Building, with excellent food and wine donated by local merchants. Fields of Justice guests celebrated another year of outstanding service to the community and rededicated themselves to helping WLC face the serious challenges ahead. WLC supporters, staff and clients left inspired and proud to be part of such an outstanding team doing important work.



2009 WLC OPEN HOUSE

The Watsonville Law Center introduced its new location to the community on Thursday, December 3, 2009. Over 50 community members from local organizations, law offices, courts, and agencies joined the festive celebration.

Guests had the opportunity to meet WLC staff, become acquainted with the new office space and view a special exhibition of artwork provided by the **Alisal Center for the Fine Arts group, Hijos del Sol.**

Many thanks also go to the talented **Orlando Castro** for providing delightful guitar music and to **Pessagno** and **Meridian** wineries for graciously donating bottles of their finest wines for the enjoyment of the open house guests.

Thank you to
Hijos del Sol
Orlando Castro
Pessagno Winery
Meridian Vineyards
 For their donations and
 time!



ADVICE CLINICS

WLC holds **eight legal clinics per month** for clients who need information, legal advice, and direct legal services. Clinics specialize in legal issues involving workers' compensation, wage claims, consumer protection, debtor's rights and identity theft, criminal record clearance and family law.

WLC also holds special clinics to meet immediate needs in specialized areas. Since 2008, WLC has held three special clinics on mortgage foreclosure and a clinic addressing consumer and privacy rights for at-risk youth and survivors of domestic violence.

In 2009, WLC served 307 clients through legal clinics, an increase from 277 in 2008.

A new partnership with the **Public Interest Clearinghouse (PIC)** brings urban law students to rural communities for service learning trips. By providing more than ten trained law students at a time, PIC's REAL Project allows us to hold larger clinics and serve more clients. Since 2008, PIC has partnered with five WLC clinics and helped us serve more than 75 clients. PIC students have said working with WLC is a rewarding and educational experience. WLC looks forward to continuing its partnership with PIC in the year to come.

We Can't Do It Without You.

WLC services would not be possible without the dedication of the generous volunteer attorneys who advise at legal clinics. Over thirty attorneys have volunteered to advise at legal clinics and co-counsel cases. We are pleased to list them on page 10. Over twenty students have interned and volunteered at WLC, most from local colleges and universities. We are very grateful to all the supporters who have generously contributed their valuable time to promote access to justice. Thank you volunteers! Your commitment has helped hundreds!



"I remember my first assignment was to draft... contracts... The whole process was an eye opener and gave me the confidence to move on to even more difficult tasks. This whole learning process has taught me more than I could have ever hoped to learn in a law school class room."

- Nick Webber, WLC volunteer

Interested in Volunteering at the WLC?

Volunteer Attorneys

Volunteer Attorneys provide legal advice to clients at advice clinics. If you are an attorney interested in using your expertise to help those who otherwise cannot afford legal assistance, please call Dori Rose Inda at (831) 722-2845 x 13.

Volunteer Interviewers

WLC relies on Volunteer Interviewers to conduct interviews at advice clinics. If you are interested in volunteering as an interviewer, please contact Krystal Tena at (831) 722-2845 x 19.

Volunteer Translators

Since many of our clients are Spanish speaking, we often need interpreters and translators during advice clinics. If you are interested in volunteering as a translator, please contact Krystal Tena at (831) 722-2845 x 19.

Thanks to all our 2008 and 2009 volunteers!

Ignacio Vasquez

Julia Foster

Thomas Munoz

Maribel Baltazar

Ana Aguado

Elizabeth Avila

Isai Ambrosio

Marisa Fernandez

Rocio Llontop

Karina Orocio

Nicholas Webber

Eric Arce

Steve Pleich

Richard Orser

Adriana Melgoza

Patricia Suarez

Jeraline Singh

Jesse Arana

Minerva Ortiz

Daniel Rodríguez

Jose Pérez

Tony Escareno

Anabel Ortiz

June Ponce Padilla

Carmen Herrera

Karina Chavez

Jack Alcantra

Thanks also to our Workstudy students

Grecia Casio

Cristelo Solorio Ruiz

Lyliana Camargo

Celia Castro

