

Page: Achievement Award
Category Best Partnership Program
Chapter ACC Southern California
Chapter Size Large (more than 851 members)
Entry Title Pro Bono Partnerships
Entry Description ACC Southern California partners with various non-profit legal service organizations to host quarterly (and sometimes more) pro bono clinics in order to provide vital legal services to various communities in need. ACC Southern California has been partnering with various pro bono entities for a number of years. Like so many other companies, legal service organizations were heavily impacted by the pandemic and were forced to transition their existing programs to the virtual space in order to reach their clients. This created an opportunity for the chapter to provide even more opportunities for its members to volunteer and provide much needed support.
When was the program initiated? 10/1/2016
What was the project objective? The partnerships were initiated to streamline the pro bono experience for our members and make volunteer opportunities more accessible and attainable for practitioners who are juggling both work and personal obligations.
How was the objective achieved? The Pro Bono Committee sourced its pro bono opportunities from various non-profit legal service organizations with existing legal clinics. Such clinics that were completed over the course of a few hours on a single day, versus long-term pro bono projects, which can sometimes include substantial follow-up and/or court commitments and appearances. We found that if the pro bono program was turnkey and virtual, it made it a better experience for our members. In just a few hours they are able to give back to the community and make a difference. Additionally, the pro bono partner takes care of the malpractice insurance so that our members are protected and their companies more likely to allow them to participate. We also found our members much more willing to volunteer on a Saturday or for a few hours on a weekday. Below are the partnerships from this year alone: 5/10/21: LA Center for Law & Justice - Domestic Violence Restraining Order Pro Bono Program (with Squire Patton Boggs) - assisted LACLJ with reviewing applications for domestic violence restraining orders to maximize survivors' chances for success 6/4/21: Alliance for Children's Rights - Adoption Training Info Session - provided the Alliance an opportunity to spread the word about their adoption program for interested volunteers 7/22/21: Bet Tzedek - Self-Help Conservatorship Clinic (Post-Hearing) - assisted self-represented litigants navigate the final hurdles in the conservatorship process 11/9/21: Bet Tzedek - Legal Name and Gender Marker Change Clinic - assisted transgender and gender nonconforming clinic attendees who regularly face accessibility barriers because their identity documents incorrectly describe them as someone else. 2/17/22: Public Law Center - Nonprofit Business Pro Bono Clinic - provide legal support to nonprofit organizations to ensure they can continue to provide valuable resources and services to the Orange County community 4/28/22: Bet Tzedek - Self-Help Conservatorship Clinic - assisted families with caregiving needs with conservatorship applications 5/20/22: Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Citizenship Clinic - provided citizenship application assistance to community members
What was the project budget? The budget was \$1500 which was used for various refreshments. As most clinics are virtual now, we arranged for pizza to be delivered to the volunteers at their homes.
What obstacles were faced while doing this project/program? We can sometimes encounter volunteer drop-off leading up to an event. This is inevitable given our volunteers have full-time work commitments and personal obligations. With that in mind we make sure our legal service organizations are aware of this possibility. We also try to overbook for events to cushion the impact.

In 300 words or less, please state how this project was innovative.

Prior to the partnership with the non profit legal services organizations, the pro bono committee was not very active. Due to some brilliant leadership of a few board members, this committee is now one of the most active of the chapters. It is a real benefit of ACC membership – a place to give back to the community and help people that are having a hard time navigating the legal system. Whether it's providing bilingual legal support to a client who is completing their naturalization petition or helping the parent of an adult child with intellectual/developmental disabilities navigate the conservatorship process to ensure they can provide vital care, our chapter members answered the call. Additionally, it has also become a sponsorship benefit as we are able to partner with some of our sponsors for events. This gives the sponsors a chance to give back while also reaching the chapter members and the legal service organizations get the benefit of law firm support.

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