



# LEGAL AID NEWS

OF NAPA VALLEY

ADVISING SENIORS, IMMIGRANTS, AND LOW-INCOME PEOPLE THROUGHOUT NAPA COUNTY

FALL 2007

## President's Message

We are thrilled to welcome Queen of the Valley Medical Center as the newest funder of Legal Aid. The Queen recently awarded \$48,000 to support our Immigrant and Senior Legal Services programs. It's a common misunderstanding that legal services to the underserved are paid for with public funds. In fact, Legal Aid receives less than 25% of its funding from government sources. Legal Aid must raise the money to fund its operations every year, relying on the commitment of funders like Queen of the Valley, Auction Napa Valley, private foundations such as Gasser and van Loben Sels Rembe Rock, and individual donors to fund legal services.

Legal Aid also relies on the commitment and dedication of the members of its Board of Directors, who generously volunteer their time. Karin Troedson, a board member since 2003, is stepping down to devote more time to raising her young family. Karin's dedication to Legal Aid has been second to none. We're grateful for her service. Thank you, Karin!

We're also happy to announce that we've moved our offices. Legal Aid is now located in Alexandria Square at 1001 Second Street in Napa. The move is an exciting step for us and provides additional meeting room, office space and a nice reception area. We extend a huge "thanks" to our former landlord, the partners of Dickenson Peatman & Fogarty, who provided not only office space but also ancillary support like supplies, fax and copy services, coffee and other comforts of office life.

In this newsletter, we're launching "Staff Spotlight," a new feature designed to introduce you to the members of our extremely talented staff. We're proud of their skills and dedication to serving our clients. Our Executive Director, Diana Dorame, is profiled in this issue.

Michael J. Holman,  
Chairman and President

## Legal Aid Helps Abandoned Immigrant Teen Gain Legal Status

A young Mexican woman, brought illegally into the United States as a child and then abandoned by her parents, was granted lawful residency this summer, thanks to a new federal law and the assistance of Legal Aid of Napa Valley.

Under Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, a new provision of the federal Immigration and Naturalization Act, juveniles abandoned by their parents and who are (or were) in foster care can gain legal residency in the United States.



Legal Aid's Immigrant Children's Outreach Program, started in 2006, teaches persons working with immigrant youth to identify those who may be eligible for special protection and refer them to Legal Aid for screening. If the young person fits the requirements for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, Legal Aid will represent the child for free.

"Maria Moreno is Legal Aid's first client to be granted legal residency under the new law protecting abandoned immigrant teens," said Diana Dorame, Legal Aid's Executive Director and Supervising Attorney. "Her future, once so uncertain, is now full of hope."

Born in a poor area of Mexico, Maria was deserted by her parents at an early age and placed in a Mexican facility for abandoned children. Her father, after spending years in the United States, returned to Mexico to claim her, hiring a "coyote"—someone who takes

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< *New law provides path to citizenship for abandoned immigrant children.*

## Napa County Women Lawyers Event to Benefit Legal Aid

The Napa County Women Lawyers will hold its fourth annual event to benefit Legal Aid of Napa Valley on Thursday October 25 from 6 to 9 p.m. at Bay Leaf Restaurant, 2025 Monticello Road in Napa.

The special evening will include live and silent auctions, featuring a "Lot of Lawyers"—a collection of fabulous wine made by attorney vintners—and a "Lawyers' Lot"—wonderful wines donated by local bar members, and other unique items.

Tickets are \$125 per person, and include passed hors d'oeuvres, a three-course dinner

and wine. \$25 of the ticket price will be credited toward an auction purchase.

Don't miss this great opportunity to get together with members of the Napa County bench and bar to celebrate the work of Legal Aid!

For more details and reservations, contact Heather Yargus at (707) 318-1911.

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*French Laundry Event Honorary Chair Scott Snowden and Joann Ortega Snowden.*

## French Laundry Gala Raises \$60,000 to Benefit Legal Aid

Legal Aid held its second annual “Celebrate Spring” gala dinner on April 5 at The French Laundry, thanks once again to the generosity of Chef Thomas Keller and his terrific staff. The special evening, which raised more than \$60,000 to benefit Legal Aid, was sponsored by Dickenson, Peatman & Fogarty, and Gaw Van Male. The Honorable W. Scott Snowden served as the event’s honorary chair.

“We are so grateful to Thomas Keller for making his world-famous restaurant available to benefit Legal Aid again this year,” said Board Chair Michael J. Holman. “The staff’s meticulous attention to detail and gracious style made this an unforgettable evening.”

The sold-out dinner featured Mr. Keller’s signature nine-course tasting menu paired with exquisite Napa Valley wines generously provided by Brown Estate, Paul Hobbs Winery, Honig Vineyard & Winery, Patz & Hall, Robert Sinskey Vineyards, Soter Wines and Snowden Vineyards.

Sixty guests were serenaded by guitarist David Ramey as they enjoyed hors d’oeuvres and wine in The French Laundry’s beautiful garden. BJ’s Petal Pushers provided the exquisite table arrangements. The elegant invitations were designed by David Hughes of Level, Inc. and printed by John Lister of PressArts.

Major contributors to the event also included lawyers from San Francisco-based law firms Howard, Rice, Nemerovski, Canady, Falk & Rabkin, and Morrison & Foerster.

## Legal Aid Helps Wife of Quadriplegic Obtain Conservatorship

Life can change in an instant, as one young Napa couple recently learned. When Mr. Garcia sustained a head injury that rendered him a quadriplegic with very limited cognitive ability, his wife became the head of the household over night.

Mr. Garcia had been the provider for his wife and their three young daughters. He was the one who spoke English and it was he who had brought them to the Napa Valley.

After the accident, Mrs. Garcia faced the daunting task of caring for her daughters and her severely disabled husband all by herself. This included finding a new home to accommodate his disability and applying for public benefits. With limited English proficiency and minimal skills, Mrs. Garcia became the family’s sole breadwinner and caretaker.

Like many young couples, especially those with limited financial resources, the Garcias had not prepared an estate plan. Because Mrs. Garcia did not hold power of attorney for her husband, finding new housing and applying for benefits was extremely difficult. Mrs. Garcia turned to Legal Aid of Napa Valley for assistance. At no cost to the Garcias, Legal Aid secured a court order granting Mrs. Garcia conservatorship of her husband. The order increased her ability to care for her husband

without legal obstacles, giving her the authority to make binding decisions for him and to sign documents on his behalf.

For financial reasons, Mrs. Garcia subsequently decided to relocate her family outside of California. She returned to Legal Aid ten days before her planned moving date, unaware that the court required 30 days’ notice and a hearing before granting an order authorizing the move. Legal Aid scrambled to get a waiver of notice from Mr. Garcia’s parents and numerous siblings, petition the court for the order and schedule a hearing. Only a day before the family’s scheduled move, the court heard the application and granted the order. With great relief, Mrs. Garcia left the courthouse—and thereafter the state—knowing that her family’s move was sanctioned by the court.

Through its Baseline Legal Services Program, Legal Aid assists Napa County residents who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, the disabled, veterans and victims of domestic violence with access to public benefits, unlawful detainer actions, criminal history expungement, and problems related to employment, family law, domestic violence and civil rights. For an appointment or for information about Legal Aid’s free clinics, call (707) 259-0579.

## Legal Status for Abandoned Immigrant Children

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immigrants across the border unlawfully for money—to smuggle them across the Rio Grande when Maria was only 12.

They found their way to Napa County, where her father, unable to find work, abandoned her once again. Maria was placed in foster care, attended school regularly, and made friends. Life was better, but Maria’s future was still not secure. Because Maria had entered “without inspection”—the federal term for undocumented immigrants—she could be deported at any time to Mexico, a country she can barely recall.

Deputy county counsel Rob Martin contacted Legal Aid to see if Maria would qualify for Legal Aid’s Immigrant Children’s Outreach Program. After verifying Maria’s eligibility for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, Legal Aid took her

case free of charge. Her application for “adjustment of status” or legal residency was approved in August.

Maria is now a proud holder of a “green card”—it’s actually white and blue—that allows her to remain legally in the United States and gives her hope for a better life. In time she will be eligible to apply for American citizenship.

“We’d love to help other young people like Maria,” said Ms. Dorame. “These protections expire after the child reaches 18, so it’s important to act quickly. If you know of any children who may qualify, please refer them to us for a free consultation to see if they’re eligible for this special protection.”

For an appointment, please call Legal Aid at (707) 259-0579.

# Legal Aid Protects Senior Client Abused by Own Son

Sadly, elder abuse at the hands of family members is not a rare occurrence, and Legal Aid of Napa Valley handles many such matters. One recent case concerned Mr. Featherly, an elderly, disabled man who had been hospitalized and was recovering at home in Napa. He needed home care and asked his son to move in on a temporary basis to assist him. His son, who also lived in Napa, was unemployed and available to do so.

Although he knew that his son had had problems with substance abuse and attendant financial difficulties in the past, Mr. Featherly did not anticipate that his son had become so desperate that he would take advantage of his father's illness and dependence on his need for care.

Financial abuse began almost immediately after the son moved into his father's home. He forged Mr. Featherly's signature on his father's checks and changed the names of check payees to his own. When the son's financial problems grew

worse, he would yell at his father all night. Sleep-deprived, his father became more vulnerable and reluctantly gave in to his son's increasing demands for money.

Most egregious was the physical and emotional abuse Mr. Featherly endured at his son's hands. To control his father, the son would take Mr. Featherly's oxygen tube out of his nose and wave it in front of him, taunting him until his father gave him the money he wanted. To get his way, the son also withheld food and medicine from his father.

Although Mr. Featherly was finally able to evict his son from his home, the son started making abusive phone calls, more than 70 times in one week. "Your money is my money," the son yelled, threatening to have Mr. Featherly killed if he did not give him more.

Legal Aid of Napa Valley agreed to take Mr. Featherly's case. Within

two days of meeting with him at home, Kristi Lesnewich, Legal Aid's Senior Legal Services Program staff attorney, obtained a temporary protective order from Napa Superior Court, prohibiting the son from having contact of any kind with his father. The abuse ended immediately. Two weeks later, Ms. Lesnewich returned to court and a permanent order was granted. To this day, there have been no more incidents of abuse.

Through its Senior Legal Services Program, Legal Aid assists Napa County residents aged 60 or older in a broad range of areas, including elder abuse and neglect, public benefits, long-term care and nursing home problems, in-home support services, health care directives, simple wills and small estate planning, and debt and commercial matters. For an appointment, call Legal Aid at (707) 259-0579.

## Staff Spotlight: Diana Dorame

"Diana Dorame personifies the expression: If you want to get something done, ask a busy woman," says Naomi Dreskin-Anderson, Legal Aid's Vice Chair. "Our Board is in awe of what she accomplishes."

As Executive Director, Diana is responsible for overall management of the agency. She also serves as Legal Aid's Supervising Attorney.

"Legal Aid is my passion. I believe strongly that no Napa County resident should be denied legal representation based on their income, immigration status or ethnicity," says Diana.

Since Diana took over as Executive Director in March 2006, Legal Aid has served more than 1,200 clients through its Immigrant, Senior and Baseline legal services programs. The agency's annual budget has grown to more than \$350,000.

A bilingual attorney with more than 20 years of experience, Diana carries a full case load and has personally handled a variety of cases—from eviction defense to domestic violence protection orders to immigration cases, and much more.

"Wearing two hats can be challenging," says Diana, who logs in considerably more than

40 hours a week, often early in the morning before her family awakes, and on weekends. "Unlike some working mothers, I'm fortunate to have a supportive husband who's an equal partner when it comes to caring for our two children."

In addition to representing clients in the courtroom, Diana is actively engaged in client outreach, regularly attending community meetings of the Parole and Community Team, the Outreach Network, and Napa County Women Lawyers, and events such as the American Canyon Chef's Market, Calistoga Family Center Back to School Night and local immigration fairs. She is a member of the executive committee of the Napa County Bar Association. Diana is also a board member of the Napa Valley Coalition of

**"Legal Aid is my passion. I believe strongly that no Napa County resident should be denied legal representation based on their income, immigration status or ethnicity."**



*Legal Aid Staff prepares for move to new office.*

Nonprofit Agencies, serving on its Advocacy Committee and Housing Committee.

Actively involved in the activities of her son and daughter, Diana has been a Girl Scout leader for the past five years and a Troop Consultant for the Napa Girl Scout Service Unit. She participates in her son's Boy Scout troop and supports his Babe Ruth baseball team. She's also been a "soccer mom," coaching her children's Napa Youth Soccer League teams.

Diana and her family love to travel, visiting Europe, Baja California, Washington D.C., Canada, the Southwest, the Pacific Northwest and New York on vacations.

"But it's always great to come back to the Napa Valley," says Diana. "This is our home."

# Thank You, Sponsors!

*We are grateful for your generous support.*

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*February 1, 2007 through September 30, 2007 (partial list)*

## How to Reach Legal Aid of Napa Valley

We provide free legal services to seniors, immigrants and low-income residents of Napa County. Consultations and advice are by appointment. Please call (707) 259-0579 to schedule an appointment or speak with a bilingual legal advocate.

## We've moved!

We're now located at  
**1001 Second Street,  
Suite 335,  
in downtown Napa.**

To learn more about Legal Aid of Napa Valley, including information on our free legal advice clinics and other events, visit [www.legalaidnapa.org](http://www.legalaidnapa.org).

### Staff

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*Pseudonyms are used to protect the confidentiality of actual clients. People in photographs are models unless otherwise identified.*

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