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LACLJ celebrates its 40th anniversary!

Monday June 3, 2013
Omni Hotel in Downtown

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Message from the Executive Director

Next month, LACLJ will celebrate its 40th anniversary at its annual awards gala! Our organization has come a tremendous way over the past four decades—constantly evolving to meet the changing needs of communities throughout Los Angeles County. Although much has changed since 1973, the passion and conviction of everyone involved in LACLJ has remained true to the values integral to our mission. Our committed board members, attorneys, staff, interns, clerks, volunteers and donors like you are the reason LACLJ has been able to have a lasting impact in the lives of low-income families for 40 years. **Thank you to all who have made this milestone possible!**

As we reflect on LACLJ's 40-year legacy and look forward to its future, we would like to especially recognize everyone who has helped mold our organization into what it is today: **our LACLJ alumni**. Because of you, LACLJ has changed the lives of thousands of families— preserving the rights of the disenfranchised, fighting for child safety, averting homelessness, saving individuals from abusive relationships, and so much more.

If you are an alumnus of LACLJ, we would love to hear from you! Please click [here](#) or send an email to Linda@laclj.org with pictures, testimonials, or anything else you would like to share. Thank you for keeping in touch!

We hope also that you will join us in celebration on June 3rd. For more details about our 40th Anniversary and Awards Gala, visit our [event website](#).

Resolving High Stakes, High Conflict Custody Cases

LACLJ and Partners Support Families through Innovative Pilot Project

Since 2011, LACLJ has served as the lead agency for one of seven pilot projects created by California's Sargent Shriver Civil Counsel Act. The largest pilot focusing on custody disputes, the project is a collaboration between LACLJ, Levitt and Quinn Family Law Center, and the Los Angeles Superior Court. The project provides free legal services to low-income families in high-stakes, high-conflict custody disputes - a large percentage involving domestic violence, child abuse, and other serious allegations that affect children's health and safety. This groundbreaking program provides much-needed resources to support separating families and promote child-centered outcomes. LACLJ believes that the health and well-being of children is improved when separated parents can efficiently resolve disputes and reduce litigation, and when courts have all the evidence needed to make child-focused orders. In the long-term, quality parenting plans can also help reduce the cost and involvement of social and protective services.

Two examples of the type of cases LACLJ and its partners support as part of the Shriver project are of clients William* and Lisa*.

William, a father with custody of three sons, was referred to the Shriver project when his ex-wife hired a private investigator to abduct and transport their 15-year old son to Tennessee. Distraught, William represented himself for an entire year to regain custody of his teenage son. Meanwhile, his ex-wife was represented by an attorney and procedural roadblocks delayed the court from deciding the case. Through the Shriver project, Levitt and Quinn stepped in to this difficult case to assist William to regain custody. After seven months of litigation and negotiation with the mother's attorney and the teen's court-appointed attorney, an agreement was reached that reunited the teen with his Dad and brothers in California.

Lisa legally separated from John four years ago after a history of domestic violence and an incident where her ex-husband attempted to strangle her. At the time of separation, they shared custody of their five-year old daughter. When Lisa remarried and became pregnant with her new partner, John began harassing her – wanting to rekindle their relationship. Angered by the fact that she had moved on, John made repeated and credible threats to kill her. Through a partnership with the Los Angeles County Bar Association's Domestic Violence Project, Lisa was referred to the Shriver project to obtain representation at her restraining order hearing. Through LACLJ's Pro Bono Project, Jones Day represented Lisa at her hearing and secured a three-year restraining order, including favorable custody and visitation orders, in

William and Lisa turned to the family court to protect themselves and their children, but struggled to do so without help to litigate their difficult cases. In a time of dwindling public resources, the Shriver project provides much-needed legal services to clients like William and Lisa. Through strategic relationships with family court programs and targeted services, LACLJ and its partners are working toward long-term solutions for families in conflict.

DACA/Deferred Action Workshop



Ready DREAMers! — LACLJ Attorney Laura Urias explains the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) application process and answers students' questions at our free DACA Workshop at East Los Angeles College, South Gate Campus on Saturday, April 27. Students and their families were able to bring in their documents and receive legal guidance from LACLJ staff.

Free Young Parents Workshop on Family Law



On **Monday, May 20, 2013**, LACLJ will host its free monthly workshop, **Young Parents Day**, at the Stanley Mosk Courthouse downtown.

Hosted by LACLJ's Teen/LA Attorney Sharon Balmer-Cartagena and Family Court facilitators, **Young Parents, Bright Futures** is a free legal education program for parents between 13 and 24 years old and their families. It is held on the third Monday of every month at the Stanley Mosk Courthouse in downtown Los Angeles. As part of the program, young parents will get:

- 1 A brief introduction by a Los Angeles Family Court judge;
- 1 An overview of family law by the Teen LA Attorney;
- 1 A session on communication and co-parenting skills by Family Court Service mediators;
- 1 A resource fair, with community organizations offering information, resources and referrals; and
- 1 An optional mediation session for co-parents who attend the program together to immediately resolve issues.

If you know of a client or someone who could benefit from this family law education program, please spread the word! Check out our flyer [here](#).

Young Parents, Bright Futures was created by the Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice, in partnership with the Los Angeles Superior Court, to educate young parents and their supporting family members about the family law legal process. The goal is to increase participants' ability to co-parent, communicate, and problem-solve without further Court intervention. The program is made possible through a grant from the Legal Services Trust Fund of the State Bar of California.

Autistic Sons Return to School & Supportive Services

Emily, an undocumented monolingual Spanish speaker, came to LACLJ after losing custody of her two autistic sons, ages 5 and 7. She had suffered from an abusive relationship with the father, who harassed her and used the legal system to intimidate her. Emily originally had full custody of her children, while the father had limited visitation due to his drug addiction. However, at a hearing where the father had an attorney and Emily did not, she lost custody. Overwhelmed and intimidated, Emily was unable to express the situation to the judge. For six months, she tried to see the kids but couldn't because the father threatened to deport her if she did. Emily had to call the police every time she wanted to see them. While this frustrated Emily, the last straw was seeing her children suffer the most by missing school and not receiving the specialized support they needed. While living with their father, the boys had missed school 30 times and missed numerous language therapy sessions, affecting their behavior and speech progress. LACLJ Attorney Carolina Andrade represented Emily in court and told her story, showing that the children's safety was at risk. Through Carolina's representation and advocacy, Emily regained full physical custody of her sons. Emily's plight illustrates how direct legal representation can protect children and support their health and well-being.

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