

COMMUNITY SERVICE AT THE BOYD SCHOOL OF LAW

BY GUEST WRITER PROF. STEVE JOHNSON

"At the William S. Boyd School of Law, we have been committed to building this kind of curriculum from the inception of the school."

A law school's mission consists of teaching, scholarship and service. Training future generations of lawyers is the primary purpose of the William S. Boyd School of Law. We are proud of our graduates. They are an increasingly important component of the Nevada bar and serve with distinction in private practice, the state and federal courts, the Nevada Attorney General's Office and other agencies, and the Nevada Legislature.

Scholarship is also a critical part of our mission. Law schools, like the universities of which most are a part, disseminate knowledge and produce new knowledge. The Boyd School of Law is blessed with an especially productive faculty. Its members serve as editors of important legal journals and as officers of bar and academic organizations. Boyd faculty members are regularly quoted by the national and state media. The hundreds of books and book chapters and the thousands of articles they have written are regularly cited by lawyers, professors and the courts, including the Nevada and United States Supreme Courts.

The principal topic of this month's column, however, is service – particularly service to the community by the students, staff and faculty of the Boyd School of Law. All Boyd students participate in our Community Service Program. In the school's 11 years of existence, the Community Service Program has provided basic legal information to nearly 30,000 Nevadans who otherwise might not have had access to information about certain areas of the law. Students work with attorneys from the law school and the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada. Teams of students are trained to prepare and conduct weekly workshops providing legal information to unrepresented people in areas such as bankruptcy, basic procedures in family or small claims court and paternity, custody and guardianships. Students may also serve as mediators at the law school's Strasser Mediation Clinic. In addition, in 2008, Professor Ray Patterson developed the Mediation in Nevada Today (MINT) community service program, in

which students participate in projects to enhance Nevadans' understanding of available mediation opportunities.

Another innovation is the law school's Street Law Program, co-organized by Professor Rob Correales and Dean Frank Durand. In the Street Law Program, Boyd student volunteers teach subjects such as consumer law, juvenile justice, landlord/tenant law, criminal law and family law to high-school students.

In our Partners in Pro Bono program, students are paired one-on-one with attorneys to work on pro bono cases. The attorneys serve as mentors to the students. The program is a partnership between the law school and the Pro Bono Project at the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada.

Our Thomas & Mack Legal Clinic provides services to communities in need of legal assistance and seeks to improve the quality of, and access to, legal systems that affect communities in need in Nevada. Clinics have provided representation in areas such as child welfare, juvenile justice, education, appellate litigation, innocence and immigration.

The law school's Nevada Immigrant Resource Project (NIRP) coordinates with the immigration clinic to improve the immigrant community's access to quality legal services and information. Past projects have included the creation of a presentation for frontline police officers regarding identifying victims of human trafficking and developing unified intake procedures to coordinate the efforts of the clinic, Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada and Nevada Legal Services in providing legal representation on immigration issues to victims of domestic violence.

In addition to their work with students, faculty members of the Boyd School of Law render conspicuous community service in their individual capacities. These contributions have taken numerous forms, including service to the State Bar of Nevada and other bar groups, advising elected officials and private foundations, participating in voter protection activities, testifying before administrative agencies and legislative committees, writing amicus briefs in prominent

cases and providing pro bono representation. The activities spotlighted below are just a few of the community service efforts made by members of the Boyd faculty in the last two years.

Many members of the faculty are members of law-reform organizations such as the American Law Institute and the Uniform Law Commission (the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws). A very recent fruit of this vine is Nevada Assembly Bill 280, which passed both houses of the Nevada Legislature this session and was signed into law by the governor on May 6, 2009. The legislation amends Nevada's version of the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act, integrating the text of the uniform act and the Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance. The uniform act is the domestic law through which the convention ultimately will be enforced.

Associate Dean Kay Kindred of the Law School was instrumental in the amendments. As a member of Nevada's contingent on the Uniform Law Commission, Kindred served on the drafting committee that crafted the amendments to the uniform act. She also testified before the Judiciary Committee of the Nevada Assembly in support of the measure.

The Boyd School of Law's faculty has advised on or presented information to numerous Nevada and federal governmental agencies. These activities include service to, among others, the Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation, Nevada Department of Corrections, the North Las Vegas Police Department, and Public Defender and Special Public Defender Offices.

Not surprisingly, our faculty members have particular interest in the courts. Professors Anne Traum, Jeffrey Stempel and Jean Sternlight have served on advisory committees for the federal Ninth Circuit, the Nevada Supreme Court and the Clark County Family Court, respectively. Dean John White serves on the Nevada Supreme Court's Article 6 Commission, which reviews and considers all aspects of the Nevada court system, and on the advising committee for the federal district court for Nevada. Associate Dean David Thronson serves on the Nevada Supreme Court's Access to Justice Commission and will soon address the National Center for State Courts Conference of Chief Justices on access to justice issues related to language and culture. Professor Kate Kruse testified before the Advisory Commission on the Administration of Justice (the Hardesty Commission) on proposed legislation governing post-conviction evidence preservation, and she and Professor Mary Berkheiser also have been involved in activities of the Juvenile Court as to alternatives to detention. Professor Martin Geer collaborated with the Nevada State Administrative Office

of the Courts in a project which led to the publication of the "Limited Jurisdiction Courts Bench Book."

Professor Peter Reilly extended the impact of the Boyd School of Law beyond the state. As part of his activities with our Saltman Center for Dispute Resolution, he conducted negotiation training programs for the National Conference of Metropolitan Judges, the District of Columbia Superior Court and the Judicial Administration and Management Staff of the Judicial Branch of Arizona (Maricopa County). In like vein, Professor Nancy Rapoport moderated a program for and spoke before the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges.

In addition, members of the faculty have contributed their energies and abilities to over three dozen organizations working to enhance justice, social justice, economic development and social progress. Supplementing the contributions of faculty and staff, the facilities and resources of the Boyd School of Law support the information needs of the community. The law school's Wiener-Rogers Law Library, the largest law library in the state, is open to the public, and its collections circulate to Nevada residents. Reference librarians are available, by telephone, e-mail and in person, to help members of the public find and use law-related books and electronic resources.

Community service is a fundamental part of the mission of the William S. Boyd School of Law. We welcome and are grateful for the numerous opportunities to serve our country, region and state that have been made available to our students, staff and faculty. **NL**

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