

DIALOGUE

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LRIS Feature

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Beyond the Four Walls: LRIS Programs Reach Out to Their Communities Through Television, Radio and Personal Contact

Pro Bono

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Time and again, LRIS programs prove they are community resources, extending their services beyond phone lines and websites to the neighborhoods and living rooms of the people in their service areas. Here are three examples of outreach programs to emulate.

LRIS

San Diego County Bar Association LRIS Brings Personal Touch to Community Outreach

LRIS Programs Reach Out to Their Communities

By: Michelle Chavez, LRIS Director, San Diego County Bar Association LRIS

From the Chair

ABA Approved Attorney Referral System

2010 Cindy Raisch Award

The San Diego County Bar Association's Lawyer Referral and Information Service (LRIS) takes part in several community outreach opportunities. Each year, LRIS spends a great amount of time in the community helping San Diegans become aware of our service as well as assisting them with their legal problems through our Ask-A-Lawyer program. We have three main community outreach strategies: "Ask-A-Lawyer" events, Chamber of Commerce memberships and events, and targeted outreach to many local non-profit community service agencies.



Crowds flock to SDCBA LRIS booth at local street fair.

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Our flagship community outreach program is the "Ask-A-Lawyer" program. There are two components to this program. The first component involves a live television show that airs a few times a year. On each show, attorneys practicing in several different areas of law take calls from the community and answer legal questions they might have. If the attorney is unable to answer the question or if the caller needs representation, the caller is directed to the LRIS referral phone number for further assistance. The second component of this program is our "Ask-A-Lawyer" community event series. These events take place at popular San Diego shopping malls and the event consists of attorneys assisting San Diegans with legal issues in a face to face setting. If the client needs further legal assistance or needs to hire an attorney they are informed about LRIS. At the event, LRIS counselors are available to do on the spot referrals. These events have proven to be very successful and informative to the San Diego community and boost the public profile of LRIS.

Our second community outreach strategy is our involvement with local Chambers of Commerce. We currently hold membership in five large San Diego County Chambers of Commerce and participate actively in their business to business networking events as well as their various community

street fairs. The street fairs consist of hundreds of local businesses spread out over several city blocks; with an average of 50,000 people attending each event, we have seen very good response from the community. At the street fairs, LRIS passes out our promotional items as well as LRIS literature to educate the community about what we do. We also offer FREE on site referrals and legal informational brochures to the community.

Our third community outreach strategy is our direct targeted outreach to local non-profit community agencies. We often visit local agencies and speak about our program and in turn they educate us about theirs. This has proven to be very successful and it ranks third in our client referrals and retained cases. It has also helped LRIS develop a community resource book that each LRIS Counselor can refer to and direct clients to when they cannot afford an attorney.

Atlanta Bar LRIS Begins "Layman's Lawyer Radio Show"

By: Carla Brown, LRIS Director, Atlanta Bar Association

The Atlanta Bar Association's Lawyer Referral and Information Service (LRIS) launched a community service project that hit the radio airwaves in September, 2010.

Every Saturday morning, between the hours of 8:00-9:00am, the Atlanta community can tune into the "Layman's Lawyer Radio Show". The show is hosted by Attorney David Bryman, a LRIS Board member. Experienced Atlanta Bar Association attorneys join Attorney Bryman to offer general legal advice on a different topic each week. Many areas of law such as Landlord/Tenant, Labor & Employment Law, Estate Planning, Workers' Compensation, among others will be covered during a 17-week segment.

Our goal is to reach the average person who needs basic information, but does not know where to turn when searching for professional legal help. Atlanta citizens have the option of calling a 24/7 hotline and leaving a legal question or emailing their question into the show. A sixty second LRIS commercial spot runs several times during airtime to promote the service for those whose may need additional legal assistance.

The fees collected through the LRIS percentage fee program, financially supports the show. LRIS has also received financial support from the Bankruptcy, Estate Planning & Probate and Sole Practitioner/Small Firm Sections of the Atlanta Bar Association. This radio show has become a valuable source to the community and fits in well with our mission to promote fair access to the legal system.

The current series of programs will run through January 15, 2011, and will be streamed live on Saturday mornings at 8:00 am Eastern Standard Time on WQXI 790 Sports Radio's website: <http://790thezone.com>

Baltimore City's LRIS Says, "Good Morning Maryland" on ABC

By: Alicia Gipe, Director of Public Services, Bar Association of Baltimore City

Each year, The Bar Association of Baltimore City strives to increase awareness of our Lawyer Referral and Information Service through new community outreach efforts. In this economy, it is more important than ever to fulfill our mission: providing the public access to legal assistance. Through our LRIS hotline, staffed with volunteer attorneys, we constantly hear the needs of our community.

Responding to the community's voice, we recently began a project with a local ABC News affiliate, WMAR Channel 2. Television stations know that they will get more people tuning in if their locally produced shows offer useful information to their viewers. Aware of stations' need to inform in order to maintain ratings, we arranged for representatives of LRIS to be recurring featured guests on *Good Morning Maryland*, a popular morning lifestyle and news program. The focus of these features is to reassure the public that legal assistance is available and to remind the public that when faced with a legal crisis, they do not have to go through it alone, they can call LRIS for guidance or a referral.

Segment discussions ranged from pro se tips to family law. The response we received made this outreach a true success. Our Association's President-Elect, Adam Sean Cohen, Esq., LRIS Committee Co-Chair, Scott Baron, Esq. and each made appearances on the show.

In recognition of this project, LRIS received the honor of being the recipient of the 2010 *Best Service to the Public Project Award* given by the Maryland State Bar Association.

If one were to ask me, "What have I learned from this project?" I would say that it has taught me that ingenuity is important for successful community outreach. Go down routes you have never taken and explore possibilities your program has never tried before because innovation is key. This experience has significantly raised community awareness of our LRIS program. Our efforts in maintaining access to legal assistance have provided a helping hand in preserving the protection of equal justice for all.

To watch some of our segments on *Good Morning Maryland*, visit http://www.baltimorebar.org/Iris/Iris_in_the_news.html

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