

DIALOGUE

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2012 Harrison Tweed Awards Presented at ABA Annual Meeting

The San Mateo County Bar Association and the San Antonio Bar Association were each presented a Harrison Tweed Award during the American Bar Association 2012 Annual Meeting in Chicago. This award, created in 1956, recognizes the extraordinary achievements of state and local bar associations that develop or significantly expand projects or programs to increase access to civil legal services for poor persons or criminal defense services for indigents. It is named for a leader in the promotion of free legal services to the poor and is co-sponsored by the ABA Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants (SCLAID) and the National Legal Aid and Defender Association (NLADA).

The activities of this year's winners demonstrate the wide range of activities that bars engage in to promote access to justice. SCLAID and NLADA congratulate both winning bar associations for their achievements and hope they will inspire other bar associations to increase their commitment to the provision of free legal services to those in desperate need of assistance.

San Mateo County (CA) Bar Association

The San Mateo County Bar Association (Association) was honored for its Private Defender Program (PDP), a highly successful assigned counsel program that is the indigent defense system for the county. This program provides an excellent example of the integration of the private bar and the indigent defense function and has been a model for other programs across the country.

The Association established and has operated the PDP with funding from the county since 1969. Its success is due in part to the importance it places on: representation early and throughout the criminal process; auxiliary defense services such as the use of investigators and experts; and the use of attorney performance measures. The program is known for its quality, client-centered representation resulting in part from the extensive training and support services provided to panel attorneys.

Through its PDP, the Association has demonstrated its commitment to the holding of *Gideon v. Wainwright*. As we approach the 50th Anniversary of that landmark decision, it is most fitting that the San Mateo County Bar Association be recognized for its efforts.

San Antonio Bar Association

The San Antonio Bar Association's (SABA) Community Justice Program (CJP) provides free neighborhood-based legal services to the indigent in San Antonio. This pro bono program offers legal services at afternoon and evening clinics in the heart of San Antonio's low income community in a wide range of civil matters.

One of the innovative features of the CJP is that it brings the courthouse to the community. This is achieved by having volunteer attorneys, law students, district clerks, notaries, interpreters, and judges all take part so that a client's matter can be disposed of the same day the client appears at the clinic. If that is not possible due to the nature of the matter presented, the client can be provided necessary advice on the spot or representation in the courts at a later date.



The CJP is a collaborative effort with Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, which screens clients and provides malpractice insurance for volunteer attorneys. The CJP has served over 6,000 clients in its ten years of existence. It has been a model for the development of similar projects in several Texas counties and represents an innovative, client-centered approach to serving those in need of free civil legal services.

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