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ASIAN AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION
of the Greater Bay Area

AABA Newsletter

President's Column

By Ted Ting

October 2014



Hey True Believers-

This newsletter captures numerous impressive events that AABA has offered this summer and early fall. Our committees have been very busy putting on one event after another.

But I'm especially proud of the work that AABA did this past quarter on the Reception celebrating the career of California Supreme Court Justice Joyce Kennard. Spearheaded by our extraordinary Vice-President Eumi Lee, the Planning Committee (which also included Miriam Kim, Kimberly Chin, Marina Sarmiento-Feehan, Kristy Young, and Alice Jensen) put on a second-to-none gala that honored Justice Kennard's retirement after twenty-five years of service.

Justice Kennard's story has been told so often, yet I was struck by how many students and attorneys were just now learning about her.

To refresh your memory: Justice Kennard was born in the Indonesian province of West Java. Her father passed away in a concentration camp when she was just one. As a mixed-race child, she experienced racism and very poor living conditions, which led her mother to move them to the Netherlands. Justice Kennard had hoped to attend college, but her plans were derailed by a partial amputation of her leg at the age of sixteen. In 1961, despite being a disabled female with considerably less resources than most of us have today, she journeyed here and found a job. She put herself through college and law school, and after several years

Her story would sound like pure fiction if it hadn't actually happened.

I can understand why more recent Asian American attorneys are not more familiar with her. All that they would know is the California Supreme Court was composed of four Asian Americans. They wouldn't recall that in 1989, Justice Kennard was only the second female justice ever, never mind the first Asian American.

I feel quite fortunate to have met and talked with her in 1996 when I was a law student. She was an inspiration to me and I know she inspired many others too. If we make sure we continue to share her story, she can inspire new generations of future attorneys. This is why we felt it was incredibly important to host such an event. Indeed, as we might not see four Asian American justices again in the near future, we must memorialize the road paved by the very first one.

Excelsior!

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Emotional Send-Off Caps Justice Kennard's 25 Years on the California Supreme Court

By Marina Sarmiento Feehan, AABA Board Member

Two-hundred well-wishers including judges, civic leaders, attorneys, law students and friends of the Honorable Joyce L. Kennard gathered on September 19, 2014 to celebrate the Justice's 25 years on the California Supreme Court. As the longest serving justice of the state's highest court, Justice Kennard is "well known for her independent streak, willingness to pen dissents and her lengthy grilling of lawyers during oral arguments in California's highest profile cases," as stated by Howard Mintz of the [San Jose Mercury News](#) [1]. Of Dutch, Indonesian, Chinese, and German descent, Justice Kennard hails the United States as her "chosen country," the country that gave her the opportunity to become the first Asian-American on the California Supreme Court, despite various obstacles in her childhood and an above-the-knee amputation as a teenager.

During what Justice Kennard termed as her "last public appearance", the Justice shared personal stories, impressing upon those gathered the love and appreciation she had for her mother, Wilhelmine. While Wilhelmine died of cancer in 1968 in Holland, her bequest of \$5000 provided Justice Kennard with the financial start she needed to pursue a college education in the United States. Those at the farewell ceremony were shown a rare treat – a film of Justice Kennard's life courtesy of Patty Kinaga, the Japanese American Bar Association, and Pacific Film Currents. The film put into context Justice Kennard's contribution not only to the Asian American and the legal community but to America as a whole, giving us a glimpse into Justice Kennard's determination, courage, and intellect.

Attendees were enthralled as they listened to introductory remarks by the Honorable Martin J. Jenkins of California Court of Appeal for the First District. True insight into the depth of their friendship and Justice Kennard's compassion came when Justice Jenkins shared that during the last few months of his father's battle with cancer, Justice Kennard cooked homemade meals for him every week. Hearing the gratitude and sadness in Justice Jenkin's voice, almost every member of the audience was moved to tears, including Justice Kennard. Justice Kennard's caring extended beyond her family, friends and colleagues but also to her staff, research attorneys and judicial externs.

While Justice Kennard leaves behind an impressive judicial legacy, having presided over cases ranging from the death penalty to Proposition 8 and authoring opinions such as *Kasky v. Nike, Inc.*, it was Justice Kennard's compassion and caring for others that left a mark on the audience. Justice Kennard warmly acknowledged the "instigators" who prompted the farewell reception, Dale Minami and Ruthe Ashley, friends who, out of love and respect for Justice Kennard, felt the best way to cap her quarter-century on the bench was to have a party! In what ultimately felt like a small intimate celebration, attendees were moved by the inspiration that is Justice Kennard. As Justice Kennard is truly a national treasure, we hope that she does not retire entirely from public life and continues to influence generations of attorneys.

Dale Minami, Justice Kennard and Justice Jenkins

Dale Minami, Justice Kennard and Justice Jenkins

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Justice Jenkins and Justice Kennard

Justice Jenkins and Justice Kennard

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PreviousNextPreviousNext The event was made possible through a first-ever collaboration of Northern California Asian bar associations with AABA as the lead host. Special thanks to the Justice Kennard Planning Committee (Eumi Lee, Marina Sarmiento Feehan, Kimberly Chin, Kristy Young Coleman, Alice Liu Jensen and Miriam Kim) and event photographer Jacklyn Fang, J.D. Candidate, UC Hastings College of the Law.

[1] http://www.mercurynews.com/crime-courts/ci_25117048/california-supreme-court-justice-joyce-kennard-retiring


AABA Law Foundation Board Members Help Raise Money for Scholarships to Aid API Law Students

By Kathy Aoki, AABA Newsletter Committee Member

Note: This is the last story in a three-part series about the AABA Law Foundation written by AABA Newsletter Committee Members Alston Lew and Kathy Aoki. This story is about the AABA Law Foundation Board

members and their work to raise money for scholarships that are presented to API law students at the annual AABA Installation Dinner.

Miriam Kim

 **Miriam_Kim_cropped** What inspired Miriam Kim to become a member of the AABA Law Foundation (ALF) Board?

“As a recipient of various scholarships, I wanted to ‘give back’ by raising money for law student scholarships,” said Ms. Kim, who currently serves as the 2014-2015 ALF Board President.

“I am responsible for [setting] the vision of the Foundation and ensuring that we get our work done,” said Ms. Kim, who has served on the ALF Board the past two years. She said the ALF Board members responsibilities are fundraising and administering scholarships.


A graduate of Harvard with an A.B. in East Asian Studies, Ms. Kim received her J.D. from UC Berkeley School of Law (Boalt Hall). Her law school tuition was approximately \$10,800 and did not increase much while she was a student. Ms. Kim paid for her legal education with a combination of scholarships, loans, work and savings.

“When I tell attorneys the cost of law school tuition today, most of them are surprised by how much it has risen and are delighted to help current law students,” said Ms. Kim, who is a partner at Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP, where she handles business litigation with an emphasis on trade secrets litigation and internal investigations for high technology companies in Silicon Valley. “Most people want to give back and simply need to be asked to help.”

Since Ms. Kim joined AABA nine years ago, she has served as a Co-Chair of the Employment Committee before her current position on the AABA Board as Secretary.

Although Ms. Kim was not a recipient of an AABA Law Foundation Scholarship, she feels strongly about asking AABA members to donate to this worthy cause. “Those who decide not to donate typically say that they have already made commitments to other worthy causes,” said Ms. Kim.

Billy Chan


 **BChan_cropped** Billy Chan’s involvement in AABA began in 2001 when he worked on the AABA Newsletter Committee. Mr. Chan served with distinction as AABA President in 2010-2011.

“After my presidency, my AABA involvement decreased and I missed being involved,” said Mr. Chan, who is serving his first year on the ALF Board. His board responsibilities are to evaluate and develop short-term and long-term fundraising goals and strategies.

Mr. Chan is a solo practitioner with his own firm – The Law Offices of Billy Chan – where he has a corporate transactional practice. He is a graduate of UCLA where he earned a B.S. in Political Science and Sociology with a Specialization in Business Administration before matriculating at UC Berkeley School of Law (Boalt Hall). Mr. Chan said his tuition was around \$20,000 a year and was paid by “loans, grants, blood, sweat and tears.”

Although Mr. Chan holds no special position on the ALF Board or received an ALF Scholarship while in law school, he feels strongly about the work done by the ALF board members. “The other board members have been doing a great job of raising funds from individuals; I haven’t asked any individuals yet. My focus has been trying to figure out how to structure our activities so that we maximize our revenue and streamline our operations, and at the same time I want to do our best to ensure that when we do receive contributions, we aren’t diverting funds from one worthy cause like AABA or other nonprofits,” Mr. Chan said.

Emi Gusukuma

 Former AABA President Emi Gusukuma is dedicated to her work in public service. She has been an active AABA member for more than 15 years and now serves as Secretary on the ALF Board. “We did a lot of work to get the ALF board up and running during my tenure as President of AABA,” said Ms. Gusukuma, who joined the ALF board in March 2013.

A graduate of UCLA with a B.A. in Political Science with an emphasis (minor) in Asian American Studies, Ms. Gusukuma received her J.D. from UC Hastings College of the Law. She recalled that her law school tuition began at \$5,000 and increased about \$2,000 a year. She said her father paid for her tuition while she also took out loans for other expenses that included housing, books, and food.

Ms. Gusukuma has more than 15 years experience practicing all aspects of employment law and related litigation. She currently is a Special Counsel at the Miller Law Group where her focus is on counseling clients on a variety of employment law issues that arise in the workplace, including discrimination, harassment, wrongful termination, retaliation, leaves of absence, and wage and hour claims. She is a regular presenter in Miller Law Group’s Employment Law Basics for HR webinar series, and is often called upon to conduct working training sessions.

Although the American economy has improved since the recession hit in 2009, there are still many people, including attorneys, who are unemployed. How do members of the ALF Board convince AABA members and others to donate money for scholarships?

“We see examples of it everywhere – AABA members volunteer to mentor students, they participate in Career Day, and they give to the Summer Law Clerk Reception,” said Ms. Gusukuma, who was not a recipient of a ALF scholarship.

“Donating to ALF is but one form of their generosity,” Ms. Gusukuma continued. “Miriam deserves special mention here – she was able to secure donations from members of her firm (Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP), a number of whom were not AABA members, but gave generously nonetheless.”

Are there any particular reasons why people say they cannot donate money to this worthy cause?

“For example, if we ask for a donation too late in the year, folks may have already made their 501(c) (3) contributions for the calendar year,” explained Ms. Gusukuma. “Sometimes, folks aren’t in a position to give, and we are always mindful and sensitive to that. In both of these instances, we usually ask if it’s OK to follow up with them in the next year.”

Christine Noma

 Christine Noma’s inspiration to join the ALF Board came from ALF Board

President Miriam Kim.

“I was inspired by the excellent work of Miriam Kim, our former ALF President. I also know how important it is to support the outstanding young law students entering the API community,” said Ms. Noma, who has served on the ALF Board for a year-and-a-half. She said her responsibilities as a board member are to evaluate and interview scholarship applicants and also to enact policy.

Ms. Noma, who graduated from UC Berkeley with a B.S. in Business Administration and received her J.D. from UC Hastings College of the Law, now works as a partner at Wendel, Rosen Black & Dean in the firm’s Environmental and Employment practice groups. Her practice is primarily in the area of environmental litigation, compliance, and employment representing employers.

Ms. Noma recalled her law school tuition was approximately \$2,000, which she paid through student loans and with help from her parents.


“I believe it is important to ask attorneys, particularly those who have been in practice for 10+ years to support students,” said Ms. Noma, when asked about the importance of asking attorneys to donate money to ALF for scholarships. “Ten years ago, the cost of law school was a fraction of what it is now and if you go back further 20-30 years ago, the tuition now is almost unbelievable. If we want to encourage young lawyers to give to the community, they can only do so if they are not buried under a mountain of debt. By giving to the Law Foundation, we can encourage our young lawyers to become community leaders and support the legal needs of the API community. “

What are the main reasons why people cannot donate to this worthy cause and how do ALF Board members convince people to change their minds? Ms. Noma said reasons “are always centered around money” and “everyone is trying to make ends meet.” She said if a prospect is a young attorney, he or she may have student loans or family obligations to consider so the “key is to match the ‘ask’ to the person’s ability to pay.”

“I think it is important for AABA members to recognize and honor the level of support provided by the Founders’ key donors. This year, we reached out to past recipients of the Joe Morizumi Award for Exceptional Legal Advocacy to join the founders of this award, Dale Minami, Mike Lee and Joan Haratani, in contributing to the Joe Morizumi Scholarship to provide financial support to a law student with demonstrated commitment to the API community. The response was overwhelming. The donors included judges, public interest attorneys and private firm lawyers. Each dug a little deeper in their pockets to support our future young community leaders and lawyers,” said Ms. Noma, who has been a member of AABA for 32 years.

“The Judges’ Scholarship relies upon donations from API judges and their support has grown over the years as more and more API judges fill the ranks. Ray Ocampo has single handedly sponsored a very special scholarship in memory of his parents and the Foundation and he is amazing in the depth of his commitment to AABA and the Foundation. Finally, there are all of the individual donors to the Foundation without whom this would not be possible,” Ms. Noma said.

Eumi K. Lee

 Eumi K. Lee is honored to serve on the ALF Board and help raise funds for scholarships. “As an AABA member and officer, I am proud of the Law Foundation, and I was honored when

asked to be part of the Board. As a law school professor, I know what these scholarships mean to our students,” said Ms. Lee, who serves as the ALF Board Treasurer. “For example, the summer grants make it possible for Asian American law students to work for public interest organizations given that many of these positions are unpaid.”

Ms. Lee works as a Clinical Professor of Law at UC Hastings College of the Law. Among the courses/clinics she has taught are the Individual Representation Clinic (in-house litigation clinic), Criminal Practice Clinic (criminal clinic that places students in Bay Area District Attorney and Public Defender offices), Roles & Ethics (professional responsibility seminar) and Criminal Procedure. She described her role in the Individual Representation Clinic by stating, “In that clinic, I supervise students in wage-and-hour trials in state court, SSI/SSDI disability administrative hearings/appeals, and clean slate petitions and hearings in state court. Clean slate is our newest practice area, and I developed this practice and related materials about four years ago,” said Ms. Lee.

Besides Ms. Lee’s teaching obligations, she co-founded and formerly served as the co-chair of the Hastings Institute for Criminal Justice. Her scholarship interests include the criminal justice system and clinical pedagogy.

Ms. Lee, who has been an AABA member since 2000 and on the ALF Board since its inception, is a graduate of Pomona College with a B.A. in Politics (focusing on urban policy and race relations) and Georgetown University Law Center, J.D. (cum laude). She said the approximate cost of her law school tuition was between \$28,000-\$30,000. Ms. Lee remembered that her law school tuition increased but she could not recall how much.

“I paid for law school myself,” said Ms. Lee, who did not receive an ALF scholarship. “I worked 20-30 hours a week while going to law school. Luckily, I was named a Public Interest Law Scholar at Georgetown, which covered a third of my tuition. In addition, I took out the maximum amount of federal loans.”

Ms. Lee noted that, although some people, when asked to donate, will respond with statements like “not right now” or “I will later,” she has found that the majority of AABA members who are asked to donate are more than happy to help. “Our members are very generous,” said Ms. Lee. “I think many of them do not realize how much law school costs have increased, particularly state universities. Once our members hear the present cost of tuition, I think they are convinced of the need to donate.”

Beating the Heat at AABA’s Public Law Potluck

By Jennifer Kishimizu, Public Law/Public Service Committee Co-Chair

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On September 14, 2014, AABA's Public Law/Public Service Committee celebrated the end of summer at its Public Law Potluck, graciously hosted by Rhoda and the Honorable Stuart Hing at their Pleasant Hill home.

Amidst 90 degree temperatures and surrounded by a beautiful backyard landscape, approximately 40 public law attorneys and students joined together to share their favorite dishes and enjoy the sunny weather.

In addition to the endless supply of food and drinks, Rhoda and Judge Hing also surprised their guests with an impromptu raffle, including prizes such as wine tasting certificates, Lake Merritt boat rentals, and gift certificates to local Bay Area vendors. For many, the Potluck was a great opportunity to meet new members, introduce their spouses and partners to one another, and reconnect with old friends and colleagues.

Special thanks go to Rhoda and Judge Hing for opening their home to host this event and the Potluck Planning Committee consisting of Jenny Kim, Alston Lew, Julie Soo, and Jennifer Kishimizu.

Justin Nishioka's Optimism Helps Him Succeed in His Evolving Legal Career

By Kathy Aoki, AABA Newsletter Committee Member

How does Justin Nishioka describe himself in one word and why?

“Optimistic,” said Mr. Nishioka.

Justin_Nishioka_crop

“When working as an attorney, you are often in situations where people are stressed and feeling challenged and unjustly treated. Such day to day encounters can be a bummer unless you are optimistic and realize that all this contention will soon pass and you have helped resolve a matter that allows people to move on with their lives,” said Mr. Nishioka, who works as a Deputy City Attorney for the City of Hayward as a litigator and Information Technology Department Advisor. “And optimism motivates me to ride out my convictions if you don’t think you can overcome obstacles, or tempt chance by taking a seat at the table, and then you can’t realize your potential and most effectively advocate for your client.”

Mr. Nishioka, who describes himself as “Black and Japanese American,” is a Bay Area native who is the sixth of seven children and attended Valparaiso University in Indiana and San Francisco State University before matriculating at the University of Minnesota Law School. His legal resume includes working as a law clerk for a private defense litigation firm and for the City of Oakland. Mr. Nishioka’s most challenging case was Oakland v. American Legal Services, where he served as the lead attorney in a trial that resulted in a \$15.1 million dollar judgment; the largest judgment ever awarded to the City of Oakland and is the largest immigrant consumer protection judgment in the nation.

“Nothing beats having courageous clients, a brilliant intern, the best possible second-chair attorney one could ever imagine, an incredibly encouraging supervisor and an entire community of immigration advocates on one’s side,” said Mr. Nishioka, who commented on what he learned from working on the American Legal Services case.

“Like the tactics in a sporting match, [anticipating] the various moves of the opposition and having a response in mind for each possible move will reduce the stress by eliminating surprises and last minutes shuffling on your part,” said Mr. Nishioka, on how he keeps his cool and deals with stress during his most challenging case[s]. “Good preparation fosters confidence, which is the mindset necessary to remain cool and exercise good judgment.”

“My mother and father inspired me to be an attorney,” said Mr. Nishioka. “They are attorneys who are involved in their communities and [with their] family, and as a consequence live fulfilling lives. As an attorney, I have met other attorneys along the way, who have continued that inspiration by generously sharing with me their insights and lessons learned. If I had not become an attorney, I would have been possibly the least coordinated aspiring professional athlete the world has ever seen.”

Mr. Nishioka said he has experienced racism including “racism from the ethnic groups to which I identify. Generally, the discrimination I have experienced is focused on being Black more so than being from Asian descent. Still, the degree of severity is not the same as the discrimination suffered by my mother (who grew up in the segregated south) or by my father’s family (internment), but discrimination is harmful.”

He commented that when people learn of his cultural makeup, “they often assume my father is Black and my mother is Japanese. This assumption,” Mr. Nishioka said, “I can prove, is not necessarily the case for all persons of Black and Asian ancestry.”

Mr. Nishioka thinks pursuing a legal career is still desirable by many people despite rising law school tuitions and difficulties for attorneys to find employment after passing the bar exam. “The desirability of pursuing a legal career varies from person to person – some for financial possibilities, some for the broad range of subject areas covered by the law, some to be agents of social change and some to maintain the ideals of fairness and equality in society. But for most, the answer is all of the above in varying proportions.”

“The three most important characteristics an attorney should possess are honesty (not an oxymoron for lawyers), compassion (empathy), and civility (non-abusive behavior),” said Nishioka. “These ingredients mixed with legal sense and persuasive advocacy will engender respect from the law.”

Mr. Nishioka, who has been an AABA member for five years, credits Jenny Huang for bringing him into AABA. He first met Ms. Huang as a Fellow at the law firm Justice First, when she bought him a ticket to an AABA Holiday Party and “the rest is history.”

“And while Jenny was certainly the impetus for me to join, I am currently a member of AABA to continue the historical fight against Asian discrimination, to work on issues facing the Asian community, and to advance the role of Asian Attorneys in America,” said Mr. Nishioka. “The growing interface between AABA and other minority bar associations is something I look forward to.”

When not focused on his legal practice, Mr. Nishioka enjoys playing his guitar and the piano, cooking for friends, movies and an occasional game of baseball, golf or handball.

What is Mr. Nishioka’s ultimate career goal as an attorney? “Other than going to wherever I can be most effective,” said Mr. Nishioka, who was a bass player in the Valparaiso University Orchestra and has campaigned for Barack Obama, “I haven’t decided on my ultimate career goal as an attorney, though I strongly believe in the self-reflection necessary to reassess the direction of one’s career goal and priorities as life circumstances change and alter.”

Pathways to General Counsel

By Michelle Park Chiu, Education Committee Co-Chair

On September 4, 2014, over fifty attorneys gathered to hear insights from a distinguished panel of speakers at AABA’s “Pathways to General Counsel” CLE event. The panel featured Marie Oh Huber (Senior VP and General Counsel of Agilent Technologies), Hyun Park (Senior VP and General Counsel at PG&E), Ted Ting

(Assistant General Counsel at Bank of America, current AABA President), and Salle Yoo (General Counsel at Uber), and was moderated by Joan Haratani (Partner at Morgan Lewis and past AABA President).

Each panelist shared insights on why they chose to transition to an in-house position, and valuable pointers to attorneys hoping to join an in-house team on how to pursue those opportunities. The panel also commented on specific challenges facing Asian American attorneys as they seek to become in-house attorneys and develop their careers within a corporate organization, and provided advice on how to overcome those issues. Attendees not only heard helpful information, but also received free Elimination of Bias MCLE credit (a benefit of AABA membership!). Also, during lively networking sessions before and after the presentation, attendees were able to meet with the distinguished panel members.

AABA thanks Joan Haratani and Morgan Lewis for sponsoring this panel and for being a 2014 Platinum Sponsor of the AABA Installation Dinner.

Starting a Law Firm and Choosing the Right Business Entity

By Katharine Chao, Solo & Small Firm Committee Member, & Veronica B. Guinto, Solo & Small Firm Committee Co-Chair

On August 28, 2014, the Solo & Small Firm Committee, in collaboration with the Korean Bar Association of Northern California (KABANC) and the Filipino Bar Association of Northern California (FBANC), hosted a panel discussion that featured AABA Director Charles H. Jung of Nassiri & Jung LLP, past AABA President Billy Chan of The Law Offices of Billy Chan, AABA Judiciary Committee Member Mark Punzalan of Punzalan Law P.C., and Angel O'Neil, a Tax Director at Price Waterhouse Coopers.

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PreviousNextPreviousNext The lively and interactive event at Thirty33 Legal Suites in South San Francisco drew a diverse crowd, from newly minted attorneys to long-time practitioners. The panelists were similarly diverse with respect to their practice areas, their business entities, and the size of their firms. The panelists shared their stories of how they forged their businesses, the types of challenges they faced, and the lessons they learned thus far acting as both attorneys and business owners. Mrs. O’Neil enhanced the discussion by providing invaluable tax information that should be considered when opening a law practice. Below are a few of the useful tips shared:

- The right business entity depends on your practice and personal preference. While a professional corporation can be advantageous tax-wise, it also creates administrative burdens that do not come with other business forms. Sole proprietorships and partnerships give lawyers more flexibility in how to allocate firm resources.
- Consult with an accountant before opening your law practice.
- No business form will shield an attorney from malpractice liability.
- Rainmaking is a matter of hard work and effective networking. Identify potential referral sources, which can vary by practice area (e.g. personal injury attorneys and chiropractors).
- New attorneys can use co-counseling and mentoring opportunities to build their skill sets.
- Think of the growth of your firm in terms of years, not months – perseverance pays off.

If you’re interested in getting involved with the Solo & Small Firm Committee, please contact the co-chairs, whose information can be found at the AABA website: www.aaba-bay.com.

Preschool Beautification Event

By John B. Lough, R., Community Services Committee Co-Chair

On Saturday, August 16, 2014, AABA Community Services Committee (CSC) gave back to the community by participating in a second annual school clean-up. This year, AABA CSC partnered with Family & Child Empowerment Services San Francisco (FACES SF), an organization that provides subsidized child care and enrichment programs for young children in San Francisco, to help create a clean learning environment for young children. Forty-two volunteers consisting of AABA members, family, and friends, as well as individuals from Union Bank and the law firm of Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy, LLP, pulled together to spruce up a school site in the Bayview-Hunters Point Area. AABA Treasurer Hung Chang and AABA Board of Directors Charles Jung and Jennifer Y. Lee also rolled up their sleeves to join these volunteers.

The volunteers formed teams to tackle the needs of the preschool. Some teams painted rooms and furniture. Others drilled holes in walls to secure shelving. Still others did maintenance and gardening work. A few hardy souls tackled the monumental task of organizing a supply closet filled with toys that needed a serious amount of organization. Several teachers, who happened to be on campus that Saturday to prepare for the upcoming school term, expressed their thanks to the volunteers. The teachers now have a cleaner place where they can carry out their task of educating future generations of students.

Special thanks go to CSC Co-Chair Lisa Mak for spearheading the school clean-up project for a second year. CSC also thanks AABA, Union Bank, and Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy, LLP volunteers for their hard work.

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PreviousNextPreviousNext The AABA Community Services Committee serves the greater community through pro bono legal clinics and service activities like the San Francisco Food Bank and Preschool Beautification Projects. If you are interested in becoming more involved, please join the AABA Community Services Facebook Group Page or contact any of the CSC Co-Chairs: Claire Choo (cchoo@dankolaw.com), John B. Lough, Jr. (lough.law@gmail.com), and Lisa Mak (lmak@lawlesssf.com).

Recent Law Grads Find Jobs Through Perseverance and Networking

By William Walraven, AABA Newsletter Committee Member

Finding a job in this economy can be challenging, something recent law graduates are especially familiar with. Just over half of 2013 graduates from Northern California American Bar Association-accredited law schools found full-time long-term legal jobs that required bar passage, a percentage that matches the national average. [1] So how do recent graduates find jobs? The old-fashioned way – through perseverance and networking.

Caleb Wan received his J.D. from Regent University in Virginia in May 2013. During law school, Mr. Wan interned with the Virginia Beach General District Court as well as the United States Attorney's Office in Norfolk. Shortly after graduation, Mr. Wan decided to return to the Bay Area – a place where he had no connection to the local legal community.

After taking the July 2013 bar examination, Mr. Wan applied to all legal jobs that he could find and signed up with several legal staffing agencies through which he found contract work at Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe, LLP. He remained proactive with his job search and continuously looked for a full-time associate position, as he did not want to become content with a temporary contract position.

In reaching out to law school alumni, Mr. Wan tailored his emails to each recipient, attaching a copy of his resume and asking them to forward it to anyone they knew looking to hire an associate. He joined the local bar association and became involved in organizations such as the Asian American Bar Association of the Bay Area (AABA), attending events and letting people know that he was searching for work. His tireless efforts paid off, as he is now an associate with the Law Firm of J. Hector Moreno, Jr. & Associates in San Jose, a firm that specializes in civil litigation, family law, criminal defense and religious liberty cases.

Jill T. Lin received her J.D. from Western State University in Fullerton in 2012. Upon graduation from law school and after taking the bar exam Ms. Lin landed a two-month internship, which then led to a contract position.

Ms. Lin's job search for a full-time associate position included online applications, contacting law firms directly, attending job fairs, reaching out to alumni, and a lot of networking. Her goal was to create a reputation as a hard worker and competent attorney. "I tried to gain contract work, volunteer, and become actively involved in different organizations," said Ms. Lin, who sits on the AABA social committee.

When networking, know your audience and have something relevant to discuss. If you can establish a common bond with someone, they will be more interested in you and more likely to remember you.

Also be “confident about yourself and your skills, which can be difficult when you don’t have a job. But you must portray that you’re capable and confident. It’s not about your current status, it’s about who you are as a person,” said Mr. Wan.

Every event is an opportunity to become involved in the community, even if searching for a job can be frustrating at times and you may not see immediate gains. “You meet people through mixers, continuing legal education events, volunteering, and other opportunities. The more people you meet and know, the more potential there is for a job reference,” said Ms. Lin.

For Ms. Lin, networking helped her become more actively involved in the legal community and make more connections. “Although not everyone you meet is going to give you a job, you never know if one of your connections will refer you for a position when one ultimately comes along,” said Ms. Lin. It turns out someone she had met while networking passed her resume along to her present employer and she was called in for an interview. Ms. Lin is currently an associate with Audet & Partners, LLP, and her practice is focused on complex plaintiffs side litigation, including class actions, personal injury and mass torts.

“Keep an open mind and don’t fixate or limit yourself to one area of practice in your job search,” said Mr. Wan, whose practice includes family law and criminal defense, areas he never considered in law school, but ones he now finds rewarding.

Ms. Lin echoed that sentiment in offering advice for job seekers: “Hang in there and do not let the process discourage you. Be creative in finding ways to meet people and make yourself stand out. People can recognize qualities that would make you an asset to a firm or company. Also, don’t limit yourself to the conception that you have to practice in one particular area of law or for a certain sized firm. More opportunities present themselves if you are flexible.”

[1] Source: American Bar Association Employment Summary Report. <http://employmentsummary.abaquestionnaire.org>