

LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF SAN MATEO COUNTY

Happy Fall!

As we get closer to the end of 2023, we'd like to take this opportunity to reflect on the outstanding contributions of our pro bono partners over the past year. This has been a year of new opportunities and of rebuilding our clinical projects. In addition to handling individual cases through our Domestic Violence, Guardianship and Limited Conservatorship Projects, our pro bonos have been volunteering to give tenants threatened with eviction limited scope assistance at our now twice-weekly Housing Clinic. They have also offered their expertise to assist seniors with end-of-life planning at our Advanced Health Care Directive/Power of Attorney Clinic and worked with survivors from the Half Moon Bay shootings to obtain immigration relief. It has been inspiring to see so many of you come together to meet the needs of our neighbors.

October holds special significance as it is Domestic Violence Awareness Month and includes Pro Bono Week (October 23–28). In this issue of Pro Bono Publico we highlight volunteers who have gone above and beyond to help domestic violence survivors. All three pro bonos have obtained wonderful results for their clients—results that probably would not have happened were it not for their hard work. Domestic violence practice can often be intimidating for attorneys who have not worked in this area before. However, these three attorneys exemplify how, with proper support and mentorship, volunteer attorneys can make a significant and positive impact on the lives of survivors.

Thank you all so much for your continued support of Legal Aid SMC. It is my honor and privilege to get to work with you all every day.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Bilinski
Pro Bono Director
Legal Aid SMC



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Laura Lively

Morrison & Foerster



Laura Lively, a litigation associate at Morrison & Foerster, answered the call when Legal Aid SMC was seeking an attorney to take on an urgent domestic violence restraining order matter.

“Amanda” was seeking safety after being abused by her live-in boyfriend.

Her abuser often drank for days and raged at Amanda, inflicting both physical and emotional injuries. Amanda came to the San Mateo Domestic Violence Collaborative when she learned that the opposing party had hired an attorney and would be taking the matter to trial.

Laura, an experienced litigator, fearlessly jumped into preparing for trial. She even traveled from her main office in Los Angeles to attend the trial in person with her client. After a half day trial and multiple witnesses, the court sided with Amanda and granted her a three-year restraining order. Without Laura’s expert assistance, Amanda would have had to go it alone against an experienced litigator.

Laura says, “Pro bono work, to me, is both an honor and a duty. As a lawyer, I am so privileged to understand and speak the powerful language of law. I think I have a responsibility to find whatever time I can to wield this expertise on behalf of individuals and causes worth fighting for. There is simply no comparison to the profound fulfillment that comes from doing this kind of work.”

We thank Laura for her generosity, and Morrison & Foerster for being a great pro bono partner!

“Pro bono work, to me, is both an honor and a duty.”

–Laura Lively

A portrait of Gloria Liang, a woman with long dark hair, wearing a green sweater, looking directly at the camera. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery.

Gloria Liang

Wilson, Sonsini, Goodrich & Rosati

Gloria Liang, a member of Wilson, Sonsini, Goodrich & Rosati's corporate and securities practice, has volunteered with the San Mateo Domestic Violence Collaborative for about a year and has already secured two restraining orders for clients. One case involved "Clara", a woman with disabilities who was leaving a relationship after many years of financial, emotional, and physical abuse. Clara had been left in a precarious situation with no money or medical insurance after her abuser moved out. He also continued to use his relationship with Clara's child to further the abuse by not returning her on the scheduled time, driving drunk with the child in the car, and telling her he was not her father and not to call him "Dad."

Gloria worked closely with Clara, who was under a lot of stress. Gloria secured a three-year restraining order for her without the need to even go to hearing.

"I'm dedicated to helping victims of domestic violence and abuse because I want to uplift those who are pushed down. I want to empower them to live freely, feel safe, and not be limited by fear so that they can fully love and support others in their lives. I'm grateful to be at a firm that doesn't just "have" a pro bono program but wholeheartedly encourages the practice, eagerly pours resources into it, and ecstatically celebrates the victories of people whose lives are made better. "

Thank you to Gloria and Wilson Sonsini for your dedication to domestic violence survivors!



Kapri Saunders

Jones Day

In the fall of 2020, Jones Day reached out to Legal Aid SMC to see how they could support our domestic violence work. One of the attorneys spearheading that effort is Kapri Saunders, a partner at Jones Day. Not only has Kapri worked tirelessly for her clients, she has also brought in and mentored other Jones Day attorneys on their cases. In one of these matters, Kapri worked with a young man who had asked the court for a restraining order against the mother of his child. The case was highly contentious and spanned multiple contested hearings and a separate parentage action. Kapri remained steadfastly at the client's side throughout this long-term litigation. As a result, the client was granted his restraining order, and was awarded custody of his child. In another matter, Kapri represented a woman who left her husband after many years of abuse. The client was also trying to keep a family business afloat during the pandemic. Kapri and her team secured a three-year restraining order for the client, along with sole control of the small family business.

Growing up, Kapri saw how a lack of access to resources, including counsel, contributed to a domestic violence survivor staying with their abuser and the toll that "going at it alone" took on the survivor and any children in the home. Kapri became passionate about helping survivors of domestic violence. With the help and mentorship of Jeff Rabkin, a Jones Day partner, Kapri was able to combine that passion with her legal skills to help domestic violence survivors obtain restraining orders against their abusers in the Bay Area.

In acknowledging Kapri for her dedication to the clients of the San Mateo Domestic Violence Collaborative, we also want to thank the other Jones Day attorneys who work on these domestic violence cases including Caroline Mitchell, Jeff Rabkin, and Jason McDonell (who mentor associates leading the cases), as well as associates Katie Gonzalez, Diana Calla, Jareli Reynoso Gutierrez, and Maya Baumer. Jones Day staff Amy Reyes, Margaret Landsborough, Daniel Velez, Patrick Sullivan, and others also provide important assistance. Jones Day attorneys and staff in multiple offices across the United States help support the domestic violence cases Jones Day takes on. Jones Day has been an invaluable partner in advocating for survivors of domestic violence.

Thank you to all the attorneys and support staff that allow us to keep our Pro Bono Projects running. Please know that we see and appreciate each and every one of you. With your support, we are working together to build a better and more just tomorrow.

www.legalaidsmc.org/pro-bono-programs