



Bulletin

Texas Community Building with Attorney Resources • February 2004

Attorney Volunteer Spotlight: Bickerstaff Attorney Helps Lay a Cornerstone in the Colonias


A library is a key component of a healthy community, providing a center for learning and a locus for community networks. In many low-income, rural, and border areas across America, a library is just another unattainable dream, and El Cenizo was no exception. With the nearest public library miles away in Laredo, children in the colonia were unable to access resources they needed to complete homework assignments, and the lack of a ready source of information was hindering the development of this community on the border.

“A free public library is a cornerstone of a free and open society, and we want that cornerstone of democracy just like every other American community does,” explained Flora Barton, President of All for Books in the Community (ABC) in the border colonia of El Cenizo. Kristine Patrick at Bickerstaff, Heath, Smiley, Pollan, Keever & McDaniel, LLP, helped lay that cornerstone. The mid-sized Austin firm recently won an award from Texas C-BAR for its commitment to transactional pro bono.

Local residents began working toward their dream of a community library in 2002 with the assistance of the Laredo office of Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA). Diana Song and Israel Reyna, attorneys with TRLA, referred the organization to Texas C-BAR for assistance incorporating as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, and Kristine quickly offered to help. ABC was able to incorporate and get approval for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status with record-breaking speed.

Attending the ground-breaking ceremony for the library was the highlight of Kristine’s experience. “I was able to meet the board members, the local officials, and many of the children. I look forward to working with them in years to come

as a volunteer,” Kristine said about the trip. She also brought contributions she had raised from her colleagues at Bickerstaff. D’Ann Johnson, Legal Services Director for Texas C-BAR, collected books for the fledgling library.

The partnerships that have developed between private attorneys like Kristine, legal aid organizations, and nonprofits working to improve their communities have made a tremendous difference to the people along the border. “With more knowledge and information, we will more confidently and effectively participate in civic affairs,” said Flora. 



Flora Barton of ABC (left) and Kristine Patrick of Bickerstaff display library plans and donation checks from Bickerstaff attorneys.

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Texas C-BAR Welcomes New Board Members

Norman Henry is the President and Executive Director of Builders of Hope CDC in Dallas. Norman has been involved in the affordable housing field for over 12 years. He is a board member of the Texas Association of CDCs and enjoys affiliations with the Enterprise Foundation, West Dallas Fellowship, North Texas Association of CDCs, and Dallas Affordable Housing Coalition. Recently, he has served on the Statewide Title Issues Summit and the city of Dallas Affordable Housing Task Force to address barriers to affordable housing.

Steve Stokes is a Community Investment Officer with Bank One in Austin. Born and raised in Houston, he graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with a BBA in 1978. Steve began as a lender, but has been in the community development area for the last 14 years, coordinating the bank's efforts to serve low- and moderate-income areas in Austin, Waco, Temple and Corsicana. Steve is currently involved in a number of organizations and initiatives in the Austin area, including Texas Home of Your Own Coalition, Leadership Austin, Austin Asset Building Coalition, and Financial Literacy Coalition of Central Texas.

We are excited to have leaders with Norman and Steve's expertise and long experience in the field of affordable housing on Texas C-BAR's board. Welcome!

Texas C-BAR Legal Resource Library Update

The Legal Resource Library at www.texasbar.org continues to grow. The Housing and Economic Development Section has expanded to include an audit for CHDO tax exemptions, links to jurisdictions that certify CHDOs, and information on lead-based paint regulations. The Texas C-BAR Nonprofit Tool Kit and the Nonprofit Guide to Employment Law Issues in Texas are now available in Spanish as well as English. These can both be found under *Texas C-BAR Publications*. 

Texas C-BAR Welcomes New and Returning Attorney Volunteers

October 16, 2003 - January 15, 2004

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With the invaluable assistance of our stellar supporters, Texas C-BAR has leveraged a total of \$1.9 million in free legal resources for nonprofits since our founding in 2000.

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2003 Outcomes

In 2003, Texas C-BAR's achievements included the following:

 Pro bono legal services provided for **167 nonprofits** in **280 legal matters**.

 **155 attorneys** from **39 law firms and corporate legal departments** accepted matters through the pro bono referral program.

 **23 workshops** on key legal issues were delivered to **400 nonprofit managers**.

 **180 legal documents, resources, and links** added to the free online Legal Resource Library at www.texasbar.org.

About Texas C-BAR

Texas Community Building with Attorney Resources (Texas C-BAR) is a statewide business pro bono project which provides community-based nonprofits with the legal tools they need to succeed in transforming distressed neighborhoods into healthy communities. As a special project of Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (formerly Texas Rural Legal Aid), Texas C-BAR currently partners with more than 55 law firms and corporations to help nonprofits build communities and ultimately better the lives of thousands of low-income families throughout the state. For more information about Texas C-BAR, or to participate in our pro bono program, please contact the staff of Texas C-BAR at:

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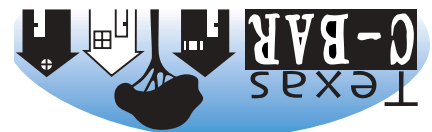
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