

2007

Alumni News, Winter/Spring 2007

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ALUMNI NEWS

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Message from the Dean

Giving back to the community has always been a priority of our law school and its graduates. Golden Gate law students, faculty and alumni have recently lent their expertise and support to assist a variety of communities: low-income taxpayers seeking assistance with their legal appeals; residents of environmentally contaminated neighborhoods; victims of natural disasters. (As I write this, 9 of our students are spending their spring break in New Orleans assisting victims of Hurricane Katrina, as did another group of our law students last year.)

Such efforts have yielded innumerable intangible, and even tangible rewards—such as the Public Service Award one of our students recently received from the Bar Association of San Francisco. In addition, members of the Golden Gate community recent rallied to raise nearly \$30,000 at the annual GGU Public Interest Law Foundation Auction to support unpaid summer jobs for law students working at public agencies and nongovernmental organizations. Watch this summer's issue of *Golden Gate Lawyer* magazine for more examples of how students, faculty, and alumni are working to apply their legal training to improve the lives of others.

Thank You, Friends of GGU!

From left, first-year law students John Holman, Josh Yung, Derek Myers, and Rob Valane participated in GGU's annual "Thank-a-Thon" to express gratitude to all of the university's generous donors over the previous year.



Dean Frederic White

Clinic Celebrates Settlement Between Client Group and Foundry

by Jill Goetz

Pacific Steel Casting Company, the third-largest steel casting foundry in the United States, and Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) have agreed to a settlement to reduce air pollution from the company's foundry located in West Berkeley, California. The agreement, which will take effect after its approval in Federal Court and expiration of a review period by the US Attorney General and US Environmental Protection Agency, is a major victory for the Golden Gate University School of Law Environmental Law and Justice Clinic (ELJC).

The ELJC represented the Oakland-based Communities for a Better Environment in its lawsuit, which charged Pacific Steel Casting Company with violating the Clean Air Act by exceeding emissions limits and failing to comply with reporting requirements. Pacific Steel Casting denied violating the Clean Air Act.

Under the agreement, Pacific Steel Casting must implement a plan for selecting and inspecting materials in the scrap metal it uses for melting and forming into steel castings and ensure that the metal contains no lead or mercury. The company also must maintain a reserve fund of \$350,000 for emission reduction projects; establish a joint consultation committee that includes representatives from the company, CBE, and the union representing the more than 600 steel workers at the site; and pay for CBE's legal costs associated with the lawsuit.

"The lawsuit and the outcome are important, because they have given some hope to West Berkeley residents who for so long felt the air pollution problem was not being addressed by government agencies," says Helen Kang, Golden Gate University associate professor of law and the Environmental Law and Justice Clinic's lead attorney working on the case. "Credit for this important victory goes to the neighborhood groups in West Berkeley, Golden Gate law students who figured out the legal angle to get the company to listen, and our client—who took a strong stance in the litigation."



Law students, staff and faculty who worked on the CBE/Pacific Steel Casting case included, back row from left, Aaron Sandone (JD 08), Jim Treggiari (JD 08), Visiting Assistant Professor Brent Plater, and Eric Hoffman (JD 08). Front row: Clinical Program Assistant Fe Gonzalez, Benjamin Moore (JD 08), Associate Professor Helen Kang, and Benny Martin (JD 08).

The result of a lawsuit filed by CBE last year, the consent decree represents countless hours of work over several semesters by Golden Gate students and the clinic. The case began in 2005 when a citizen contacted the clinic for help in addressing the intense odors in the area, the result of chemicals used in the mold for casting metal parts. Student clinicians filed a Public Records Act request and visited the local air agency to find evidence.

Next, the clinic filed Clean Air Act claims in the US District Court for the Northern District of California and made a preliminary injunction motion. Their efforts, which also included filing briefs, declarations, and responses to objections to evidence, had them "almost burning the midnight oil," Kang says, and led the parties to enter into settlement talks and ultimately reach an agreement.

Jill Goetz is director of publications and media relations for the School of Law.

Students Assist Taxpayers with Appeals

The School of Law has entered into a partnership with the California State Board of Equalization to give law students hands-on experience representing clients pro bono in their appeals before the tax board. In a press release about the program, State Board of Equalization Chair Betty T. Yee (who holds an MBA from GGU) said, "We're giving law students a chance to test their mettle, practice their adjudicatory skills, and contribute in a very real way. And taxpayers – at no cost to them – will have access to some of the newest legal talent in California."

Through the Tax Appeals Assistance Program, law students from GGU and three other California law schools will offer legal assistance by

gathering evidence, offering advice, and filing briefs to support eligible taxpayers' positions. "This exciting new program furthers the School of Law's mission of providing our students with practical legal training while at the same time offering an important and needed service to California taxpayers," says Kim Stanley, associate dean and director of GGU's Tax LLM Program.

The law students will handle appeals involving Homeowner and Renter Property Tax Assistance (HRA) claims, head of household filing status, state assessments following federal actions, statute of limitations, and relief of interest and penalties. As the program grows, students' caseloads may extend to other individual and business tax cases.

Speaker Discusses Transnationals' Liability for Environmental Damage

In February, the GGU Environmental Law Society, International Law Society, and Graduate Law Programs hosted a lecture on international environmental litigation by Peter Odhiambo, a doctoral candidate at Griffith University in Australia. Odhiambo delivered an engaging talk on the difficulty of holding transnational corporations liable for the environmental damage that they cause in developing countries. His talk focused on how mining companies operating overseas often evade liability under international law and under the law of the Western nations in which they are incorporated.



From left, guest lecturer Peter Odhiambo, attendees and alumnae Kate Nooney (JD 98) and Jen Gadbow (98), and Professor Cliff Rechtschaffen.

GGU Environmental Law Program Again Ranks in USN&WR Top 20

The Environmental Law Program at Golden Gate University has again been ranked among the top 20 in the nation in the latest US News and World Report "Best Graduate Schools/Law Schools" Publication! This year our program moved up two notches, to 17--third be-

hind only Stanford Law School and Boalt Hall in California. Since 1994, when the School of Law started its Environmental Law Program and an in-house Environmental Law and Justice Clinic, its reputation and influence in the area of environmental legal education has continued to rise.

Auction Raises Nearly \$30,000 for Law Students in Summer Internships

At Golden Gate's annual Public Interest Law Foundation (PILF) Auction in March, members of the Golden Gate community raised nearly \$30,000 to support students working in unpaid positions with nonprofit and legal aid agencies the summer after their first year in law school. Completely organized and run by PILF students, the off-campus auction is one of the law school's most fun off-campus events, with lots of music, food, drinks—and great prizes, which this year ranged from Professor Bernie Segal's suspenders (signed!) to vacation homes out of state and were auctioned off by Professors Peter Keane and David Oppenheimer. If you missed the event but still wish to contribute to the cause, it's not too late—just contact Angela Dalfen at 415-369-5391 or adalfen@ggu.edu.



From left, Jim O'Neil (MBA 86), president of the GGU Alumni Association, talks with third-year law students Sara Markert and Guarav Datta at the PILF Auction.



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School of Law
536 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA
94105-2968

Golden Gate University School of Law is fully accredited by the American Bar Association (ABA). In December 2005 the ABA placed the School of Law on probation because of the low first-time bar passage rate of the school's JD program graduates.

African-American Judge and Litigator Speak at GGU BLSA Program



The Hon. Gordon Barranco and attorney Simona Farris (JD 93) spoke to students in February at an event sponsored by the GGU Black Law Students Association. In photo at right are BLSA Pres. Tehanita Jenkins (3L) and Farris.

In February the Black Law Students Association hosted a panel discussion featuring the Hon. Gordon Barranco of the Alameda County Superior Court and Simona Farris (JD 93), an Oakland-based attorney specializing in toxic tort litigation. The speakers offered tips on overcoming obstacles faced by people of color in the legal field and answered students' questions on achieving professional success.

Students Profiled in SF Bar Publications

A first-year and a third-year GGU law student are featured in current editions of the Bar Association of San Francisco's magazine and newsletter. Ian Mackey Newman, a 1L, is one of three individuals featured in "Thinking Outside the Box," an article in *San Francisco Attorney* magazine about Bay Area legal professionals with disabilities and the challenges they face—not least of them financial. Third-year student Erin Frazor, who was named Volunteer of the Month for her work with the Volunteer Legal Services Program (VLSP) Homeless Advocacy Project, is featured in an article in the April 2007 *BASF Bulletin* newsletter.

Student Receives Public Service Award



Third-year law student Kara Holzwarth has received a 2006 Outstanding Volunteer in Public Service Award from the Volunteer Legal Services Program (VLSP) of the Bar Association of San Francisco. Given to the top 10 percent of the VLSP's more than 1,600 annual volunteers, the awards were formally presented in March 2007.

Law Students from Across North America Convene at GGU for NASALSA Conference



From left, NASALSA copresidents Shailesh Sahay of Harvard Law School and Salil Bali of USF Law School chat with USF Associate Dean Jackie Ortega and GGU Professor and Dean Emeritus Peter Keane at the NASALSA Conference. At right, attendees at a panel on entertainment law.

In February, nearly 250 law students from over 35 law schools across the United States visited the GGU campus for the Ninth Annual Conference of the North American South Asian Law Students Association (NASALSA). Attorneys came from as far as Mumbai, New York City, and Washington, DC, to meet with and encourage the next generation of South Asian legal professionals. The conference was cosponsored by Golden Gate University, the University of San Francisco, and nearly 30 law firms, legal organizations, and businesses.

With the theme “Building a Bridge to Influ-

ence,” the three-day program explored how South Asians in the legal community can increase the influence of the South Asian community in North America. Students gained career tips from 50 practitioners on panels in intellectual property law, public interest law, entertainment law, and other areas. Special topics included women in the law, culture in the legal workplace, and outsourcing. The program included a welcome reception hosted by Bingham McCutchen, LLP and a keynote speech by Lovely A. Dhillon, executive director of the Law School Consortium Project.

GGU Is Calling You!



It's quick and easy to make your annual gift during the phone-a-thon. Your gift will be put to use immediately to help GGU fulfill its mission of providing students with the best possible practical education available.

Please take a moment to speak with the phone-a-thon callers to learn more about The Centennial Campaign for GGU, update your contact information, and share how you've put your GGU law degree to use.

To make your gift online, please visit www.ggu.edu/alumni/. If you would rather be contacted in writing, let the caller know and we will update our records and note your preference.

Thank you for your support of GGU!

Calendar of Events

April

4/5

Zamperini/Burchell Awards Reception, celebrating academic achievements in the LGBT community at Golden Gate University. GGU, Student Government Association Lounge, 5:15-6:45 pm. Contact Angela Dalfen, 415-369-5391, adalfen@ggu.edu.

4/6

"The Future of International Law," 17th Annual Fulbright Symposium on International Law, held concurrently with the 16th Annual Regional Meeting of the American Society of International Law. GGU, 9 am-5 pm, up to 6 MCLE credits available. Contact Jonathan Chu, 415-369-5387, jchu@ggu.edu.

4/9

Women's Law Association Student-Alumni Mixer. 5:30-7 pm, GGU, 6th floor atrium. Contact Susanne Aronowitz, 415-442-6627 or saronowitz@ggu.edu.

4/13

Black Law Students Association Annual Dinner, 6-9 pm, The Lombard Room, 424 Clay Street, SF; \$20 prepaid, \$35 at the door; contact Tehanita Jenkins at tjenkins@sbcglobal.net

4/16

Public Interest Law Program Reception, with keynote address by Greg Tanaka (JD 04) of APIL Legal Outreach; 5-6:30 pm, GGU, 6th floor atrium; contact Angela Dalfen at 415-369-5391 or adalfen@ggu.edu.

4/18

GGU Alumni Receptions in Southern California and Virginia:
Palm Springs, CA: 5-7 pm, The Park Palm Springs;
Richmond, VA: 11:30 am-2 pm, The Jefferson Hotel
Norfolk, VA: 5:30-7:30 pm, Norfolk Yacht & Country Club

For more information about these GGU alumni receptions, contact Lenore McDonald, 415-442-7824, lmcdonald@ggu.edu.

4/24

Silicon Valley Alumni Forum. Panelists will address key topics in high technology in this second annual forum. Reception begins at 5:30; panel begins at 6pm. Hewlett-Packard Auditorium, Palo Alto. For more information, Contact Lenore McDonald, 415-442-7824, lmcdonald@ggu.edu.

May

5/8

GGU Alumni Mixer: Virgin Megastore, third floor, 6-9 pm, no RSVP needed. For more information, contact Lenore McDonald, 415-442-7824, lmcdonald@ggu.edu.

5/10

School of Law Graduation Awards Ceremony and Reception, 7 pm, San Francisco War Memorial & Performing Arts Center, 401 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco. Contact Jesse Nussbaum, 415-442-6615, jnussbaum@ggu.edu.

5/11

School of Law Commencement. Nob Hill Masonic Auditorium, 2 pm, San Francisco. Contact Matthew Jenkins, 415-442-6541 or mjenkins@ggu.edu.

June

6/1

Swearing-In Ceremony for Bar Passers, GGU, 536 Mission Street, San Francisco.