



THE
EAST PALO ALTO
COMMUNITY
LAW PROJECT

www.epaclp.org

UPDATE

December 2001

The Law Project Celebrates 17 Years of Service to the East Palo Alto Community

The Law Project celebrated 17 years of service to the East Palo Alto community at an "Alumni and Friends Brunch," held at Law Professor **Pam Karlan's** Stanford home on October 14, 2001. The brunch was a reunion for over 100 Law Project supporters, including many original founders: **Jim Steyer**, **Steven Dinkelspiel**, **Margaret (Peggy) Russell**, **John Preiskel**, **Eric and Nancy Wright**, **Barbara Babcock**, and **Hank Organ**.

"The Brunch was a really positive experience because it represented all of the generations of the committed leaders of the Law Project," said **Jim Steyer**, cofounder

of the Law Project. "We worked extremely hard to get the office off the ground, and to see all of these people come out today in support of this critically important program is wonderful."

Carlos Romero (the Law Project's Board Chairperson), **Peggy Stevenson** (Law Project Executive Director), **Norm Blears** (partner at **Heller Ehrman White & McAuliffe**), **Priya Haji** (East Palo Alto community activist), and **Jim Steyer** made brief remarks at the Brunch.

"It was an opportunity to reflect on the Law Project's successes over the years, and



Carlos Romero, Chairperson of the Law Project's Board of Directors, at the "Alumni and Friends Brunch."

to look to a future of new challenges and opportunities," says Law Project cofounder **Steven Dinkelspiel**. "I am very excited about the direction the Law Project is going today, and I look forward to working with the Project in its mission to teach students and to promote justice."

THE FOUNDERS' CIRCLE

At the October 14 Brunch, **Jim Steyer** announced the establishment of the Founders' Circle, a new advisory committee to the Law Project's Board of Directors, dedicated to enhancing the Law Project's fundraising efforts. Founders' Circle members include so far: **Paul Brest**, **LaDoris Cordell**, **Margaret (Peggy) Russell**, **Jim Steyer**, and **Steven Dinkelspiel**. For more information, contact **Jim Steyer** at jim@jpkids.com ■



Law Project alumni and friends gather at the October 14 brunch.

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Peter Bassett, *Development Associate*
Lupe Buenrostro, *Office Manager*
Katy Henrikson, *Project Attorney*
Shirley Hochhausen, *Supervising
Attorney*
Janice Kang, *Project Attorney*
Bill Koski, *Consulting Attorney*
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Katia Otts, *Receptionist, Intake
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A Message from the Director

December 2001

Dear Friends:

Twenty years ago, a small group of Stanford law students, committed to public service, had a dream to offer free legal services to low-income residents in the East Palo Alto area. Three years later, in 1984, that dream became a reality. The East Palo Alto Community Law Project was founded, providing vital legal assistance to the underserved community and invaluable legal training to law students interested in public interest law.

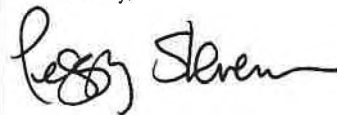
Seventeen years later, the dream continues. In 2001, the Law Project has provided advice, brief service, and representation to hundreds of clients who could not otherwise afford an attorney. Over 100 law students will work, volunteer, or take classes at the Law Project this year, enabling clients to understand and enforce their legal rights.

In stark contrast to the wealth of surrounding communities, Law Project clients have little money and yet desperately need legal services. East Palo Alto residents are often wrongly evicted from their homes, denied workers' compensation benefits, unfairly treated by employers, and forced to live in uninhabitable conditions. For many, the Law Project is their only access to the legal system and to justice.

This newsletter describes some of the Law Project's accomplishments over the past year, and some of the new directions and challenges it faces. To continue at this critical time, we need to overcome serious funding and physical space limitations. With your partnership we can do so.

May your holidays be full of love, and may the new year bring us all closer to peace and understanding, tolerance and justice.

Gratefully,



Margaret Stevenson, *Director*



Low-Wage Injured Workers' Project

Injured workers commonly are denied the medical and other benefits they are due following a workplace injury. Recently, the Law Project and other partners launched the Low-Wage Injured Workers' Project to address these problems. The group has met five times in the last two months to outline plans for policy, legislation, litigation, and public information campaigns to ensure low-wage injured workers' access to health care.

Attorney **Janice Kang** began work on the Low-Wage Injured Workers' Project in early November. Janice chose the Law Project as the site for a community fellowship from the Venture Law Group. Janice, who has a law degree from Northwestern and an undergraduate degree from Yale, also will help coordinate the workers' compensation advice clinics at the Law Project with consulting attorney, **Juliann Sum**.

Clinical law student **Sarah Lindemann** also works on the Low-Wage Injured Workers' Project. Sarah chose the Low-Wage Injured Workers' Project as the focus of her "Community Lawyering" seminar project. Sarah is helping to draft new workers' compensation legislation and is designing a community outreach

program to improve low-wage workers' access to advocacy for their claim

"The Law Project has offered me the opportunity to work with judges, litigators, and community practitioners who are at the forefront of workers' compensation policy," says Sarah. "My involvement in drafting legislation and crafting outreach programs and litigation strategies has taught me to think outside of my own experience and to apply the skills I learn at Stanford to help make society a better place. I love it!"

Employment Law Practice Addresses Community Need

Ellen Braff-Guajardo's 15 years of experience in employment and education law with California Rural Legal Assistance have proven valuable in her role as supervising attorney of the new employment law practice. Combined with the help of long-time Board member **Chris Ho** and Executive Director **Peggy Stevenson**, the Law Project recently launched a workers' rights advice clinic and began representing clients with employment issues.

In addition to the East Palo Alto Community Law Project, others participating in the Low-Wage Injured Workers Project task force include: **Asian Immigrant Women Advocates, Asian Law Caucus, California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, East San Jose Community Law Center, Santa Clara Center for Occupational Safety and Health, Worksafe**, and other individuals with administrative and litigation experience in the workers' compensation system. **Kazan, McClain, Edises, Simon & Abrams** has generously provided office space. ■

A poll conducted last year showed substantial student interest in employment law among Stanford Law School students. Law student **Jonathan Sanders** currently is working on four cases for clinical credit in the Law Project's employment practice. He is helping one client—a janitor—receive unpaid wages. Jonathan's client had worked for eight days, and despite his employer's promise twice to send a check, the employer has never paid. Jonathan has helped the client to file a claim with the Labor Commissioner for the unpaid wages plus penalties.

Jonathan enjoys the opportunity to "talk to real people and get real results rather than talking about abstract stuff in the classroom." He plans to work at the Law Project again next semester helping low-income clients resolve their legal problems. ■

For me, working at the Law Project was an opportunity to apply many hours of classroom learning to real-life problems experienced by our neighbors in East Palo Alto. The experience was amazing and tremendously valuable—I found myself working alongside incredible, tireless individuals, and also working within a hugely appreciative community.

—Ryan Lester, law student

STUDENT WORK AT THE LAW PROJECT...

Clinical class—For course credit, students enroll in the Community Lawyering class at Stanford Law School, taught by **Eric and Nancy Wright**. Students do clinical work and complete a related project of their choice.

Advice clinics—Students volunteer to interview and advise clients in specialized clinics staffed by Law Project and volunteer attorneys.

VAP program—Students volunteer to interview clients in a variety of legal areas. For clients whose legal issues can be handled by a volunteer attorney, students write memos regarding the facts and legal issues presented. (Other clients are referred or assisted, depending on the issue.)

Summer law clerks—A limited number of students receive stipends for their work at the Law Project over the summer.

Advice Clinics Launched at the Law Project

Many clients need only basic information to resolve legal matters on their own. Advice clinics in housing and employment law often can give clients that necessary information.

Under the supervision of experienced volunteer attorneys and Law Project staff, law students interview and advise low-income East Palo Alto area residents on issues of workers' rights, workers' com-



Clinical law student *Kristin Schnell* interviews a client with help from volunteer interpreter *Elena Conte*.

pensation, and housing law. More complex cases are referred to *pro bono* attorneys, appropriate agencies, or are retained by the Law Project. With support from the **Philanthropic Ventures Foundation**, students at advice clinics have seen over 100 clients since the advice clinics' inception in June.

First Steps Toward Immigration Work

The Law Project recently received seed money to plan a clinic in immigration law. With sufficient additional funding, immigration advice clinics in the next months will provide free individual assistance to low-income clients who have immigration-related questions or problems. Clinics also will screen for related problems such as violations of consumer law (particularly a problem in used car purchases) and *notario* fraud.

Attorney **Katy Henrikson** will help plan the immigration advice clinics at the Law



Clinical law student *Hollie Downs* and volunteer interpreter *Pilar Nicole Tidball* confer with clinic supervisor *Ellen Braff-Guajardo*.

The advice clinics "maximize benefit to the low-income community and focus training," says **Ellen Braff-Guajardo**, the Law Project's Deputy Director and Supervising Attorney in employment law. "The students are enormously effective and eager to help. The clients really appreciate the personal attention and assistance they receive."

Law Project housing attorney **Jeannie Merino** finds that the advice clinics "help clients feel like their cases are under their control. We help them file papers to go to small claims court or write letters to get their security deposit back. The housing practice traditionally is a busy practice at the Law Project; advice clinics provide a

Project. Katy, a former student at the East Palo Alto Community Law Project, has practiced immigration law since graduation from Stanford Law School in June 2000. Katy is fluent in Spanish.

"Many students are eager to work in this field," says Katy. "And there is enormous community need. We hope we can find support to launch this critically important program."

While Katy is laying the groundwork for an immigration advice clinic—including

great community service while students gain direct experience with many people and problems."

Law students at advice clinics are trained in interviewing techniques, professional responsibility, using an interpreter, and relevant law. By attending several clinics, students gain familiarity with a substantive area, enhancing their efficiency and knowledge.

A number of bilingual undergraduates have been helping to interpret for Law Project clients and their law student interviewers at the advice clinics. **Ellen Braff-Guajardo** has been in contact with organizations and professors to facilitate undergraduate participation in the Law Project's work. ■



Law student clinic volunteer *Liliana Coronado* interviews a client at an employment advice clinic.

plans to partner with the **Legal Aid Society of San Mateo County**—the Law Project will seek support to continue the program beyond a few months. With funding for attorney supervision, the clinic plans to teach students to provide brief services and representation to the area's immigrants. A particular focus will be on assuring that immigrants' civil liberties are respected and that their rights enforced. Anticipated changes in immigration laws make this work particularly timely and needed. ■

New Programs for the Law Project's Housing Practice

Security Deposit Program

The Law Project is assisting local residents to retrieve security deposits unlawfully held by landlords. Law students provide advice, help draft demand letters and conduct community education regarding when security deposits are due and how to retrieve them. This work is supported by a grant from **Gap Inc.**

While many landlords return security deposits as required by law, a number routinely keep them unlawfully. Without enforcement, this illegal practice continues.

Helping to staff the security deposit program is **Catherine Crump**, a first year law student at Stanford. With attorney supervision, Catherine has interviewed dozens of clients, negotiated settlement agreements with landlords, written demand letters and advised clients on their legal rights.

And this was all before she started law school: Catherine worked at the Law Project for over two years. As an undergraduate at Stanford, Catherine interned at the Law Project in an urban policy course taught by **Professor Luis Fraga**, researching the rising number of federal aid recipients who were facing eviction in East Palo Alto. When support for the security deposit clinic became available, Catherine was well-equipped to handle the work.



This year the Law Project honored **Lupe Buenrostro** for her 13 years of outstanding service to the Law Project and to the East Palo Alto community.

Children's Health in Housing Initiative

The Law Project plans to launch a Children's Health in Housing Initiative to improve the health of East Palo Alto children by eliminating hazards encountered in substandard housing. This project grows out of the Law Project's long-term work in housing and the numerous problems that families and children experience in living with mold, mildew, rats, cockroaches, lead poisoning, lack of heat, and similar conditions.

Substandard housing causes children to suffer asthma, allergies, permanent developmental effects, and other serious medical problems. The Law Project plans to work with health care providers to improve children's health by using the legal system to address substandard living conditions in East Palo Alto. In the future, the Law Project plans to create standards to regulate mold and mildew in residents' homes. These standards can be used as a prototype for other communities faced with similar issues, with a net improvement in child health and the elimination of some of the barriers to poverty.

One recent example of substandard living conditions causing illness occurred when

Law Project attorneys helped a tenant family in East Palo Alto. The roof leaked for years, but the landlord refused to fix it. Mold began to grow inside the house, causing the family's children to suffer asthma and other respiratory problems. Following unsuccessful attempts to resolve the problem, law students (under attorney supervision) helped the client sue the landlord. The case settled for \$11,000, and the family now lives in a new apartment.

Jeannie Merino, housing attorney at the Law Project and Stanford Law School Teaching Fellow, will teach an undergraduate course in the spring entitled "Implementing Policies for Affordable Housing." One focus will be on how substandard housing affects children's health. Students who choose to intern at the Law Project as part of the class will work on the Children's Health in Housing Initiative. Students will do intakes for clients with habitability problems, research health issues, develop community education materials on the link between health and housing, develop referral systems between the Law Project and community and public health workers, and develop self-help materials for tenants in small claims court. ■

JUMPING RIGHT IN

Within two weeks of starting her clinical program at the Law Project this semester, law student **Kristin Schnell** found herself in front of a Housing Authority hearing officer, arguing on behalf of her client. With help from Law Project housing attorney **Jeannie Merino**, Kristin researched public housing law, drafted a brief, prepared for and presented oral argument at the hearing. Following Kristin's argument, the Housing Authority conceded and provided a public housing transfer voucher to Kristin's client.

"It was a great experience and a wonderful opportunity to explain the facts of the case, present the law, and argue on behalf of my client in a formal setting," says Kristin. "Arguing facts and law in front of the real people who would be affected as a result of the hearing officer's decision made me appreciate the challenges of the practice of law in a way a classroom discussion in no way could."

90 Law Students Participate in This Year's VAP Program

For 16 law students each week, the law takes on a name and a face through the Volunteer Attorney Program (VAP) at the Law Project. That's when they interview low-income clients needing their help.

Launched in 1985 by co-founders **Norm Blears of Heller Ehrman White & McAuliffe**, **Ian Feinberg of Gray Cary**, and **Derek Daley of Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati**, VAP enlists the help of volunteer law students and lawyers to bring *pro bono* legal services to the East Palo Alto low-income community.

In VAP, law students, supervised by Law Project attorneys **Shirley Hochhausen**

and **Peggy Stevenson**, screen cases for referral to attorneys or elsewhere. Approximately 90 Stanford law students have signed up this year to participate as interviewers or interpreters. VAP students, most of whom are in their first year of law school, interview two or three clients per semester, under Law Project attorney supervision. Following the interviews, students either provide brief service, or draft a memo and set an appointment with a VAP attorney from a participating law firm.

"It is very rewarding to work on behalf of people who need legal representation who otherwise could not afford it," says **Jeremiah Frei-Pearson**, a second-year law

student and VAP co-coordinator. "The VAP program gives many first year law students the opportunity to use their classroom legal skills in the real world, helping real people."

Participating VAP firms include: **Brobeck, Phleger & Harrison LLP**; **Cooley Godward LLP**; **Fenwick & West LLP**; **Gray Cary Ware & Freidenrich**; **Heller Ehrman White & McAuliffe LLP**; **Morrison & Foerster LLP**; **Ritchey Fisher Whitman & Klein**; and **Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati**. ■

The Law Project Welcomes New Skadden Fellow

Alexander Thier is the new Skadden fellow and staff attorney at the East Palo Community Law Project. Alex graduated from Stanford Law School in May 2001 and recently passed the California bar exam. Alex's work will focus on ensuring that communities in the mid-peninsula region fulfill their state obligations to plan for the construction of affordable housing. Alex will work with community groups and with municipalities to identify problem areas and to seek to resolve them.

Alex is temporarily on leave from the Law Project in order to coordinate a series of policy meetings on post-conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan. Alex worked for the United Nations in Afghanistan from 1993-1996, and worked on Afghanistan and regional policy as an intern at the National Security Council in 1998. He has published several articles about Afghanistan and US foreign policy, including "Afghanistan: Minority Rights and Autonomy in a Multi-ethnic Failed State" in the *Stanford Journal of International Law*. ■

EPACLP's Community Economic Development Unit: Building a Stronger Community

The Law Project's Community Economic Development practice (CED) offers students interested in transactional work the opportunity to assist community groups in the East Palo Alto area. Students work on several projects, some of which are outlined below.

Predatory Lending

Predatory lending is a fast-growing local practice in which high fees, exorbitant costs, and other unscrupulous lending practices are used to strip the equity from homes owned by elderly and low-income residents of the East Palo Alto area. These loans often result in the loss of the borrower's home.

The Law Project, in collaboration with the local **Community Development Corporation, EPA CAN DO, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Fannie Mae**, and the **FDIC**, is working to develop a model program to educate communities, provide pre-mortgage counseling and legal assistance to victims of predatory lending. Law students will receive training in predatory lending issues, interview clients, do factual and legal research, and determine whether to provide advice or to refer the client to a panel of expert attorneys.

Redevelopment

The CED unit has helped residents receive relocation benefits owed as a result of the city's redevelopment plans. The \$29-million Home Depot shopping complex, with its \$1.5 million annual tax revenues and jobs, displaced approximately 800 residents. In one case, a Law Project client had been living in a one-bedroom apartment with her husband and four children. She came to the Law Project when the redevelopment agency refused to pay her the entire amount of relocation benefits due. After more than two years of

advocacy, the client is now living in a new three-bedroom house in East Palo Alto.

The CED recently provided relocation education seminars for the 54 families who may be relocated from the proposed IKEA site in East Palo Alto.

V.A. Hospital Outreach

The CED unit has developed legal education seminars for the patients of the Veteran's Administration Hospital located in east Menlo Park. "Eighty percent of the patients there have no income," says **Shirley Hochhausen**, supervising attorney of the CED program. "The several hundred veterans who reside at the hospital have had major disruptions in their lives and for many reasons are outside the mainstream of our society." Many V.A. patients are estranged from their families, homeless, or in the criminal justice system.

Shirley and law students **Ramey Barnett** and **Skyler Lawrence** are involved in an outreach program to ease the veterans' reintegration into the workforce by providing advice, legal assistance, and community education. "We have set up a series of community education seminars on topics the veterans identified as useful," states Shirley.

Following the seminars, income-eligible veterans will have the opportunity to meet one-on-one with law students to discuss their legal problems. The seminars take place in the evenings at the V.A. Hospital.

Recently Ramey spoke to approximately 30 veterans regarding correcting problems with drivers' licenses. "I was surprised at how much they appreciated what I told them," said Ramey. "All I did was collect and organize information for them. They seemed to find that really helpful."

Childcare Initiative

Many residents of East Palo Alto derive some or all of their income from babysitting. Recently residents and a community business incubator asked the Law Project to assist babysitters in developing childcare businesses.

With sufficient funding, the CED unit will work with clients and community groups to assist with licensing as childcare providers, creating business structures, drafting commercial leases, reviewing zoning and licensing requirements, and similar work.



Law student **Ramey Barnett** interviews a client at the V.A. Hospital in East Menlo Park.

The Law Project helped me with my benefits which I would not have gotten without their help. I am now living in a new apartment and my family is in a stable and secure place.

—Yolanda Ortega, Law Project client

BUILD is Built!

A new program that teaches East Palo Alto youth entrepreneurial skills and helps incubate the businesses they develop has met with outstanding success. BUILD (Businesses United in Investing, Lending, and Development) began as the idea of **Suzanne McKechnie Klahr '99** during a two-year fellowship at the Law Project sponsored by **Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom**. BUILD works with low-income youth from East Palo Alto and eastern Menlo Park to help them gain professional and interpersonal skills through developing and growing

successful businesses in a youth business incubator.

In September 2001, upon completion of her two-year fellowship at the Law Project, Suzanne successfully launched BUILD as an independent nonprofit organization. Today BUILD has 5 staff members, 7 volunteer attorneys, 20 business mentors, 4 venture capital advisors, and 35 high school student participants. BUILD is located in Menlo Park near the Law Project. (www.planetbuild.org) ■

EAST PALO ALTO: A CITY IN TRANSITION

1990 census	
Hispanic	36.3%
Caucasian	12%
African American	41.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	9.2%
2000 census	
Hispanic	58.7%
Caucasian	6.5%
African American	22.5%
Asian/Pacific Islander	9.6%

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Daniel Zaheer
Brad Zeff

VOLUNTEER ATTORNEYS

In addition to the VAP program, many attorneys assist the Law Project in a variety of ways: co-counseling, advising students, and supervising clinics.

Maureen Alger
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Susan Bardet
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Steven Vernon
Maria Willett
Robert Wyman

CLINICAL LAW STUDENTS

Law students can enroll for course credit in clinical work that involves representing clients in court, at hearings, and in other proceedings. Summer students perform similar work for a stipend.

Leonard Aragon
Ramey Barnett
Tamra Boyd
Gigi Capuyan
Jennifer Catherine
Michael Chu
Eugene Clark-Herrera
Peter Cruz
Keith Cunningham

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ADVICE CLINIC VOLUNTEERS

Stanford University undergraduates and staff, Stanford law students, and community members can volunteer at the Law Project's advice clinics. Volunteers assist with client intake, interviewing, and interpreting.

Hallie Aaron
Gabe Camarillo
Helen Chen
Lisa Chen
Elena Conte
David Cooper
Liliana Coronado
Catherine Crump
Lindsey Duca
Erica Farmer
Rosa Gonzalez
Lydia Lopez
Ximena Martinez
Erin O'Connell
Monica Shelton
Sharon Terman
Pilar Nicole Tidball
Sue Traub
Nancy Villareal
Hillary Weis
Kelly Wells
Daniel Zaheer

STUDENT STEERING COMMITTEE

Stanford Law School's Student Steering Committee serves as a liaison between the Law Project and the law school.

Amy Ash, *Programs Coordinator*
Jasmine Guillory, *Law Project Board Representative*
Jeremiah Frei-Pearson, *Student VAP Co-Coordinator*
Ana Rosado, *Student VAP Co-Coordinator*
Sue Traub, *Law Project Board Representative*
Jowcol Vina, *VAP Interpreter Coordinator*
Hillary Weis, *Law Project Staff Liaison*

COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS

Bay Area Legal Aid
California Rural Legal Assistance
Disability Rights and Education Defense Fund
Haas Center for Public Service, Stanford University
La Raza Centro Legal
Legal Aid Society of San Francisco's Employment Law Center
Legal Aid Society of San Mateo County
Multicultural Education, Training, and Advocacy, Inc.
One East Palo Alto
Sagy Law Associate
Stanford Law School, Public Interest Program

The East Palo Alto Community Law Project's continued success in serving low-income communities and in training future lawyers depends on the ongoing commitment of friends like you. The Law Project's clients, students, and staff thank you for your support!

If we inadvertently left you out or made mistakes, please let us know so that we can properly recognize all who assist the Law Project in its critically important work.

The Law Project did a great job with my case. They were there for me from day one. They were understanding, they listened to me, they made me feel comfortable throughout the process, and they went to court with me. It is unusual for poor people to get good help. There are great people at the Law Project and I would recommend them to anyone.

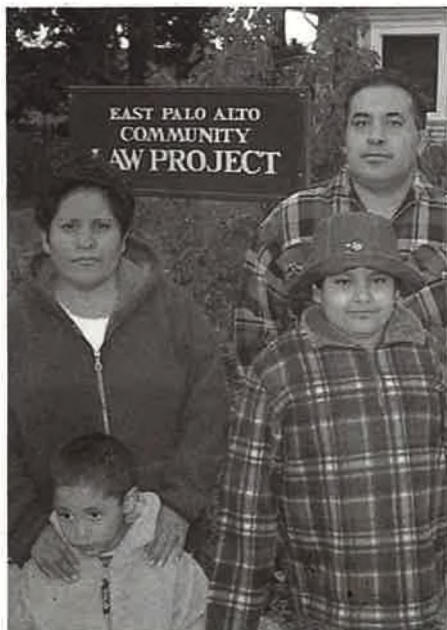
—Lisa Joseph, Law Project client

East Palo Alto Community Law Project
1395 Bay Road
East Palo Alto, CA 94303



Elizabeth Jackson
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The Law Project Needs Your Help



Your Support Enables The Law Project to:

- Provide high-quality free legal services to hundreds of low-income East Palo Alto area residents.
- Educate law students to promote justice.
- Assist low-wage injured workers with access to health care.
- Protect the legal rights of tenant families.
- Keep families out of slum housing and ensure their children are free from unhealthy living conditions.
- Build a stronger community, improve the quality of life, and increase the self-sufficiency of people in need.

If you would like to make a gift to the Law Project, please use the enclosed donation envelope.

If you have any questions about our programs, or would like more information on how to include the East Palo Alto Community Law Project in your year-end giving, please contact Development Associate Peter Bassett at (650) 725-7008 or pbassett@law.stanford.edu.

Thank you.