

Resources You Can Use

Wisconsin has a very active court-outreach program. Their site— www.courts.state.wi.us/media/vol_courts.html—has many ideas for volunteers in such areas as mediation, teen court, and court-appointed special advocates.

Guide to Educating the Public About the Courts is an ABA book filled with ideas and profiles of successful programs. Call 1-800-285-2221 to order and ask for product code 235-0025.

Judicial Outreach on a Shoestring, a more recent ABA book, offers a variety of doable programs and ideas. Call 1-800-285-2221 to order and ask for product code 523-0048.

Bar Association Outreach

Bar associations everywhere support public legal education. To get an idea of the range of activities for volunteers, and the resources available to volunteers, access

www.wsba.org (Web site of the Washington State Bar Association) for a huge range of activities and lessons for Law Week or every week.

www.nysba.org/lyc/LYC.html (Web site of New York State Bar Association Law, Youth, and Citizenship Program) for information about lawyers in the classroom, mock trial tournaments, and teacher training.

www.azbar.org/foundation/lre/lre.htm (Web site of Arizona Bar Foundation) for a wide range of lawyer volunteer activities.

www.pa-bar.org/specialprograms.shtml (Web site of the Pennsylvania Bar Foundation) for all kinds of school programs and lessons, including online registration for Law Day volunteers.

www.texasbar.com/pubint/lre for an introduction to the many Law-Related Education programs offered by the State Bar of Texas.

www.flrea.org, the Florida Law-Related Education Association site, which has information on building successful programs, curricula you can use, ongoing programs, and access to a thriving network of educators and lawyers.

www.isba.org/Sections/lawrelateded.html, for teacher-training materials and information about mock trials, Law Day lessons and activities, and help in teaching about the Illinois Constitution.

program profile

Ventura County's Court and Bar Collaboration

Ventura County, California, is home to a model collaboration between the Ventura County Superior Court and the Ventura County Bar Association (VCBA). Located just northwest of Los Angeles County, Ventura County includes affluent enclaves, retirement communities, and inland agricultural areas with large migrant worker populations. Together, the Superior Court and the VCBA have created numerous legal education programs designed to meet the needs of the County's diverse population. Through lawyer volunteerism and the support of other community partners, these programs are run at little cost to the Court and VCBA.



Staffed by Superior Court personnel and volunteer lawyers, the Ventura County Self-Help mobile unit brings free legal information to the people who need it most.

In 1999, the Superior Court's Self-Help Center received funding to purchase a mobile unit that could bring court personnel and volunteer lawyers to communities throughout the County. The unit travels an established circuit each week, including rural Santa Paula; the Salvation Army in Oxnard; Ventura's Ventura Avenue, which houses other services assisting marginalized individuals; and Thousand Oaks and Ojai, affluent communities whose poorer residents have few services addressed to their needs. Once a month, the unit also travels to Leisure Village, a local retirement community. In 2000, the mobile unit served over 1,200 persons.

Another collaborative effort is "Law Talk," a biweekly program featuring interviews with volunteer legal specialists that airs on local cable access channels throughout the County. "Law Talk" started as a series Superior Court-produced video programs. After being taken over by the VCBA, the series evolved into the current "Law Talk" format. Matthew P. Guasco, a mediator and appellate attorney who hosts "Law Talk," is pleasantly surprised by the program's success. "When we started, we thought of 'Law Talk' as a test concept. We had no idea that, two years and 36 programs later, we would be taping two programs every month and airing the program in every city in the County twice per week."

The VCBA continues to work closely with the court in developing new "Law Talk" programs. Adelphia, a nationwide media corporation that is the local cable television operator, donates its production facilities for taping "Law Talk" and also provides free copies of videotapes for each program that are distributed to the Superior Court's self-help centers and to County public libraries. Guasco attributes the success of the program to everyone involved. "The bar association, the lawyers who produce and appear on the program, the court, and Adelphia have really come together in the spirit of community volunteerism to create a program which educates and informs the public about the law. It's that energy, which has made 'Law Talk' a success."

Currently under development are five Spanish-language "Law Talk" programs, several of which will address such consumer-protection issues as landlord/tenant law, immigration services, and the distinction between lawyers and *notarios* (notary publics, who can perform legal services in Mexico). As Guasco notes, "So often, attorneys are the subject of criticism. 'Law Talk' shows the public that lawyers are willing to donate a great deal of their time to do something that helps the community."

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DIVISION FOR
**PUBLIC
EDUCATION**

American Bar Association

Division for Public Education
541 North Fairbanks Court
Chicago, IL 60611-3314
312.988.5737

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