

# THANKS FOR THE COMMUNITY

Malcolm A. Heinicke

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s I enter my final month as president of the Bar Association of San Francisco (BASF) and the Justice & Diversity Center (JDC), several people have (at least sometimes jokingly) commented that I must be relieved that this year is nearly over so I can get back to a normal schedule. The reality is that I already know I will miss this post dearly because it has been an honor and a pleasure to hold it. My involvement with the bar association has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my professional life.





*Get involved—it's good for you. Malcolm A. Heinicke at the outset of his term surrounded by fellow leaders of the legal community at the Annual Membership Luncheon. From left, BASF board member Lisa Mak, Adam Kaplan, Ann Nguyen, BASF board member Miriam Kim, 2018 President Malcolm A. Heinicke, and BASF board members Sebastian Kaplan and Charles Jung*

At the pro bono road shows that we have conducted throughout the city (see article on page 16), I have urged fellow members to engage in pro bono work through JDC, explaining how easy it is to put your skills to use in our ready-made opportunities. With just a few hours, you can make a difference in the life of a San Franciscan in need, and reward yourself in the process.

The same is true of getting involved in the programs and leadership of BASF/JDC: the opportunity for community is there for the taking, and the rewards are real.

I have been involved in BASF for nearly two decades, and while I am proud of the work I have done for the association, the simple reality is that it has done far more for me. Through my involvement in BASF, I have had the chance to meet a broad and diverse group of lawyers, corporate counsel and judges throughout our city, many of whom have become good friends.

I have worked with these people on a host of interesting legal issues, standing up for the rule of law, judicial independence, and other concepts so critical to our system. I have built a strong



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list of lawyer referrals in various areas, especially with lawyers at smaller firms and solo practices I simply would not have met otherwise. And, I have had fun doing it—BASF offered me a ready-made legal community in the best city in the world, and all I had to do was get involved.

Several years ago, when I first started serving on the BASF Board, we reviewed surveys that revealed that our most satisfied members sought and found in BASF a sense of community within the San Francisco legal profession. Let's face it—our jobs are challenging, stressful, and at times confrontational and even lonely. The care, collaboration, and camaraderie of the broader legal community is a wonderful antidote.

This opportunity is particularly meaningful for lawyers at smaller firms and the rapidly increasing ranks of in-house lawyers within our city. Up and down Market Street and to its south, there are numerous new in-house legal departments functioning as small and solo firms. We are all so geographically close, and BASF can bring us together. This is why one of the missions for this year was to involve these groups and show them the community we can offer.


Last year, the Barristers Club hosted a panel on work-life balance, and I explained my belief that just as it is important to schedule time for family and exercise, it is important to schedule time for community. There is always another brief to write or document to analyze, and if community time is not scheduled, it will be the first thing that's sacrificed. I can think of numerous times over the past year and the past decades where work could have easily supplanted a fantastic BASF event or opportunity, but because I had committed to and scheduled it, I was forced to find a way to make it happen. And every time, I was so glad I did. BASF and the various roles within it offer a way to schedule community time with minimal waste and maximum return. Just as JDC provides ready-made pro bono opportunities, BASF provides a ready-made community and all the benefits that come with that.

So, I suspect you are thinking, “OK, sounds good, but how do I make this work for me?” The answer is simple—get involved, find something that interests you, and work on it. Arrange a CLE, join a section, volunteer for a task force. Or just ask a board or staff member what you can do. I am confident you will be surprised to learn how very little time and effort it takes to become involved and how much you will get back in short order.

In closing, I would be remiss if I did not note my personal gratitude to my colleagues at Munger, Tolles & Olson (MTO). I have the pleasure of working at the best law firm in the world. I did not get involved with BASF over the objection

of colleagues. I got involved at the firm's direction, and frankly, with the expectation that all of us will engage in the larger world around us. When I became BASF president, my colleagues did not worry that the experience could affect my billings; they celebrated the moment and asked how they could help. I am lucky to have my own true community at my firm, and I want that feeling for all BASF members at the larger level.

I am so glad that I followed the lead of my role models at MTO and got involved. And, now, I would like to pass that same advice to others. Getting involved in the community does not take a lot of effort and BASF can make it really easy, but it does take a first step. Get started. Now. Twenty years from now you will be so glad you did, and then you can do as I will this month and turn over your leadership role (perhaps a little sadly) to the next member of your proudly built community.



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