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Giving Back: One Firm's Legacy of Serving the Community

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This summer, the Valley Community Legal Foundation sponsored an online auction as part of its first “No Jacket Required Virtual Gala.” The following article profiles winning bidder Steven Gubner and his firm, Brutzkus Gubner Rozansky Seror Weber LLP. We thank them for their generous donation to the VCLF and their ongoing commitment to community service.

Giving Back: One Firm's Legacy of Serving the Community

By Michael D. White



Photo by Ron Murray

IN THE JEWISH FAITH, IT'S CALLED TZEDAKAH, THE moral obligation to give aid, assistance and money to those in need and one that Steven Gubner takes to heart.

"My father is a blue-collar guy who worked six days a week," says Gubner, partner at the law firm of Brutzkus Gubner Rozansky Seror Weber LLP. "When I was growing up, I saw him participate in giving back, whether it was buying somebody on the street a lunch or a dinner, or writing a check to help a charity. Large or small, the amount didn't matter; he always tried. My father wasn't among the top ten donors to be certain, but he always made sure he found something he could do to help."

One of the largest law firms in the San Fernando Valley, Woodland Hills-based Brutzkus Gubner's 25 attorneys handle multi-billion dollar insolvency, bankruptcy, intellectual property, labor and employment and litigation matters for Fortune 500 and other clients in the apparel and fashion, finance, entertainment, new media, and real estate industries.

Gubner was counsel of record in the U.S. Supreme Court 2014 chapter 7 bankruptcy case, *Law v. Siegel*. Brutzkus has a heralded reputation in the garment industry, and Rozansky is considered to be next in line. Seror is one of the most respected chapter 7 trustees in California, and Weber works closely with Gubner on insolvency matters.

Most recently, the firm was recognized as a "Best Law Firm" by *U.S. News & World Report* in the practice areas



of bankruptcy and commercial litigation, recognition that is based entirely on peer review, while earlier this year, eleven of the firm's attorneys were selected by *Thomson Reuters* as *2016 Southern California Super Lawyers*.

As busy as the firm is, its lawyers and support staff alike devote considerable time and effort to community service and giving back. Gubner and his colleagues make

giving back a core value at the firm and support active involvement in dozens of community causes.

"The opportunity to serve the community helps younger associates," says Gubner, who has served for more than 18 years on the Board of Directors of United Cerebral Palsy. "I learned a long time ago to leave my bulldog lawyer hat at the door. I grew up seeing a lot of my colleagues and friends get divorced, have few friends, and have serious social problems because they couldn't turn off the aggressive nature that lawyers are sort of inbred with and taught to show as a sign of strength or ability." Brutzkus and others agree that it helps make better lawyers.

It's important for professionals, Gubner says, to have "multiple facets" to their personality. "It's not just about winning and losing...it's about understanding what motivates people to make certain decisions and certainly participating in a non-monetary result like a pro bono case or contributing to a good cause helps that."

For instance, the firm recently negotiated a multi-million dollar settlement on behalf of a local trustee and donated \$10,000 to the defendants' charity. In the Gospel Truth chapter 11 case, the firm donated all undistributed funds to United Cerebral Palsy.



In September, Brutzkus Gubner was lauded as the law firm with the largest level of participation in the Annual Justice Jog 5K Run/Walk in Century City for the second year in a row. Held in partnership with the Greater Los Angeles Association of Legal Administrators, the event raises funds to support the Court Appointed Special Advocates of Los Angeles (CASA), a non-profit organization that recruits, trains and manages court-appointed volunteers to assist foster children throughout the region. Apparel industry attorney Deborah Greaves serves on its Board of Directors.

Another event supported by the firm is the annual Food from the Bar campaign—one of the Los Angeles Food Bank’s largest events that raises funds from members of the legal community, enough for almost two million meals for those in need. In May, a group of Brutzkus Gubner attorneys, families and friends joined dozens of other law firms at the group’s annual Volunteer Day at its food bank in Vernon. The firm took the lead in sorting and packing almost 4.5 tons of bread items and helped contribute to a total of 7,300 meals for the community. The previous December, nearly 25 of the firm’s lawyers and staff formed an assembly line to pack more than 3,760 food packages for distribution among Los Angeles County’s needy schoolchildren and senior citizens.

One of the core elements in the firm’s value system is pro bono legal work, with the firm taking on as many

The firm’s attorneys and staff, says Gubner, have each “found something they can connect with” as individuals devote their time giving back to Providence Tarzana Medical Center, IBD Support Foundation, Fred Jordan Mission, and City of Hope, among others.

Partner Mark Brutzkus sits on the National Board of Trustees of National Jewish Health, the Board of deToledo High School, and is active in (and a former President of) the City of Hope’s Apparel Industries Group.

Partner David Seror teams with his wife to hold toy drives and collect Halloween candy for bed-ridden children at Providence Tarzana Medical Center, with more hours invested in aiding the homeless at the Fred Jordan Mission in Los Angeles.

Citing his family’s medical history and his father’s psychiatric profession, partner Nick Rozansky joined IBDSF’s Board of Directors and was honored at its 7th Annual Evening of Inspiration in 2014. Partner Corey Weber—a specialist in bankruptcy, business and commercial litigation—is serving a three-year term as a volunteer lawyer representative to the Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference, which is held “for the purpose of considering the business of the courts and advising means of improving the administration of justice within such circuit.”



as five pro bono cases a year. Particularly active in pro bono work is partner Jeffrey Kobulnick, who left Big Law to join the firm in 2012, bringing extensive experience in the areas of copyright and trademark infringement, unfair competition, false advertising, and Internet-related intellectual property issues. He also brought along a heartfelt commitment to providing pro bono



What engenders the commitment of so many to do so much for those in need, from dispossessed and bed-ridden children to Holocaust survivors and at-risk teens? Over the years, Steve Gubner has made a point of taking his three children along with him to help at charitable functions the firm has been involved in, including building a house with Habitat for Humanity or taking a day to bring a sense of normalcy to the abused and neglected children and adolescents at Casa Pacifica.

Several years ago, Gubner was standing in line at Kohl's Department Store with a cart full of clothes selected by one of the 100 at-risk youngsters participating in the Kohl's for Kids program.

legal assistance to "people who feel they have no other recourse."

Kobulnick currently serves as a coordinator for Bet Tzedek Legal Services' Holocaust Survivors Justice Network, which provides free, comprehensive legal assistance to Holocaust survivors seeking reparations from Germany for property expropriated during World War II. In 2009, his work was recognized with the national organization's Elyse S. Kline Pro Bono Lawyer of the Year Award.

"I'm looking for more ways to do pro bono work," says Kobulnick, who's been involved in volunteer work since his days as a law student at the Franklin Pierce Law Center, and has been honored multiple times with the Wiley W. Manuel Award from the State of California for distinguished pro bono legal services.

Kobulnick has also coordinated attorney participation in Lawyers for Literacy, an annual event that benefits "Everybody Wins! Los Angeles," a nonprofit literacy program helping children improve their reading skills and self-esteem. His work with that group earned him the Lynford Lardner Community Service Award in 2006.


In addition, Kobulnick has volunteered with a number of charitable organizations, most notably the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS), having founded and served twice as a captain of LLS Light the Night Walk teams to raise awareness and funds to cure blood cancer. In 2013, Kobulnick was a candidate for LLS's Man of the Year for his work on a campaign that raised over \$575,000 for LLS research in just ten weeks.

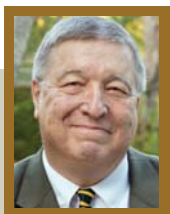


"We put up \$100 dollars for each kid, which Kohl's matched," he recalls. "In addition, they offered to cut the prices on everything in the store by 50 percent. The kids arrived on a bus, we met them, and then took them shopping. Kids being who they are, "the first thing they'd do is head for the ear buds, head phones and games, with their teachers steering them toward shoes and clothes and more practical stuff."

With a cart filled with shoes, clothing and other more practical stuff for two youngsters, Gubner told the kids that they could go back to the fun stuff if there was any money left over after they checked-out.

"We were in line to check out and my son said 'I'll be right back.' He went back to the headphone area, returned with a pair of headphones and said, 'Dad, I want to buy these for these kids with my own money. I want it to be my gift to them.'"

Tzedakah...by example. 



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