

Volunteer Spotlight – Eric V. Traut

By Jennifer L. Fiore



Since 2011, board member and attorney Eric V. Traut of the Traut Firm in Santa Ana has devoted his time and resources to the Orange County Bar Foundation (“OCBF”) and its programs to empower youth to make positive choices. As president in 2014, he was responsible for overseeing the Higher Education Mentoring Program and Project SELF (Summer Employment in Law Firms). Both programs promote higher education and professional work opportunities for low to middle income youth from Santa Ana, an underserved area of Southern California where students may otherwise face many more obstacles to their success.

The Higher Education Mentoring Program is a six-year program that provides low-income Latino students with academic, social and financial support in order to graduate from high school and succeed in college. Each junior or senior high school student is matched with a university student or young professional familiar with Latino culture and knows firsthand what it takes to succeed in an institution of higher learning. The students are given individual and group mentoring and needed skills through monthly workshops and guest speakers.

Over 175 students have completed the program to date. For the past three years, Eric has personally given a \$1,000 college scholarship to students to help them succeed. He plans to continue doing so.

Each year since 2011, Eric’s firm has been providing an eight-week paid internship to a Project SELF student. The goals of Project SELF include reducing the risk of juvenile delinquency by giving students the opportunity to be productive during the school break, giving access to potential career environments to which students might otherwise not be exposed, and providing

the support of positive adult mentors.

Eric is particularly proud of Project SELF participant, Graciela Castrejon. She worked in his office one summer and is now the firm’s file clerk. She will be the first one in her family to graduate from college.

Taking his commitment to the streets, Eric runs in the OC Marathon to raise funds for the OCBF. He has been one of the top three fundraisers for this event, averaging more than \$5,000 in donations each year from friends, family and clients.

Eric’s dedication is summed up well by OCBF Executor Director, Karen Ruan:

Eric Traut is a past board president and current OCBF board member. He gives generously with his time and money and

is highly supportive of the programs of the Orange County Bar Foundation. He actively participates in OCBF’s Project SELF and Higher Education Mentoring Programs, which affirms his commitment to helping young people pursue a higher education. He was instrumental in OCBF’s recent brand refresh efforts and continually brings new supporters to the Foundation. We are so fortunate to have Eric as a loyal friend and advocate. ■

If you would like to see someone featured in the Volunteer Spotlight column, please share information about his or her community service with Jennifer at Jfiore@maryalexanderlaw.com.



Michelle Atkins of the Traut Firm, Eric Traut president of the OC Bar Foundation, and Graciela Castrejon intern at Traut Firm and scholarship recipient.



Eric speaking to Project SELF students at 2015 recognition dinner.



Eric handing out scholarships to Higher Education Mentoring Program students at the graduation ceremony at Rancho Santiago Community College where students were honored for their two years of hard work in the program.