



From the President
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AARONS WARD

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CAALA is one big family

IT'S ABOUT BEING THERE FOR EACH OTHER

Father's Day weekend just passed. My son flew home for his summer job training and still needed to drive back up to Santa Cruz to pack up his freshman dorm room and move out. He tried to convince me not to come, said he could do it all by himself, he did not need help. Kids...as though I'd miss that opportunity.

So, on Friday, I had the joy and privilege of driving with him to Santa Cruz. North on the 101, watching the ocean, looking at the beautiful California coast, pointing out horses and cows, taking turns at the wheel, and seeing him doze off in the passenger seat. I loved every minute. He stayed one last night in his dorm room and I stayed in a nearby hotel. Early Saturday morning I woke him up with bagels and coffee (much too early he protested).

We packed his room together. He was directing me and letting me know what needed to be kept, what to pack, what to trash, and loading up the car. And then, as we were just about done and walking back to his dorm room for one final check, he put his arm around my shoulder, gave me a gentle hug and said, "Thanks for coming to help me dad, I guess I really did need your help." That was the best. That small little bit of love and appreciation from my son – no longer a little one, but now a young man. It's why we do everything we do – for our children and our families. We just want to provide for them and for our kids to be healthy and happy. To watch them grow and amaze us. I'm so proud of him. It was an emotional weekend.

Remembering Jonathan Teller

Before leaving with my son on Friday, I attended the funeral of CAALA member Jonathan Teller, who passed away way too

young, after his two-plus-year battle with lung cancer. Jon was a mensch. Jon grew up as an attorney in CAALA, just like so many of us. He was part of our family. I like to think I was in trial with Jon last year – sort of. My law partner Shannon and I were in trial in San Bernardino and as we were wrapping up our case, Jon was starting his in a department down the hall. We got to walk in and out of court with him, sharing stories, talking about our clients, the judges, the jury, our cases. You wouldn't even know he was sick. This is what we heard time and again from his loved ones – Jon never complained, he just went to work fighting for his clients, fighting for justice, and, apparently, fighting for his life. His law partner, Bobby Saadian, said it best:

More than anything, Jon was a devoted family man. He spoke often, and with glowing pride, about his wife and children, who were the center of his world. His love for his family was deep, fierce, and unwavering.

At Wilshire Law Firm, Jon elevated all of us through his work, his values, and his fearless pursuit of justice. He was a mentor to so many, immeasurably patient, wise, and generous with his insight, especially in moments when the path forward wasn't clear. He believed in empowering the next generation of trial lawyers, and he did so not through ego, but by example. His legacy as a leader, teacher, and friend echoes in every corner of our firm and far beyond.

Now go back and where it says "family" and "Wilshire Law Firm" read it with "CAALA." Jon did all this and more for CAALA. He was a speaker, a mentor, a leader, and was always there to lend a helping hand. Hearing about his life from his rabbis, his wife, brothers, and friends

made me appreciate my weekend with my son.

All that time behind the wheel driving up and down the coast, also gave me time to contemplate and appreciate. Having just been at a CAALA family member funeral and seeing so many CAALA family members there, illustrated how amazing CAALA is. We are a community and family of lawyers. We are always there for each other. We freely share our resources, documents, information, and knowledge with each other. Cheering each other on in the courtroom and in life. More than that, CAALA members show up for each other like a good friend and family member. We are there to love and support each other – in life and in work. CAALA is always there for our members. For our family. I am not aware of any other legal community that has the heart of CAALA.

Cradle to grave

CAALA has seen other losses this year. 1999 CAALA President Russell Nordstrom and CAALA member Daniel Selarz also passed away this year. And our CAALA family also has had numerous babies born – including four from the CAALA Board of Governors – Sonya Ostovar (baby Sofia), Shannon Ward (baby Ronan), Brenda Wong (baby Lyla), and Griselda Rodriguez (baby Lorenzo). Congratulations to you and your families! I am sure there have been others and please share them with me (martin@aaronsward.com) and with our CAALA family on the CAALA Life list serve. Because one thing is true and constant though all these good times and tough times – our CAALA family has been, and always will be, there for each other.

