



From the President
Clare Lucich
 HICKS LAW FIRM



Saturday night lights

CELEBRATING LEADERSHIP, SERVICE, AND OUR SHARED COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE

Last month, under the glow of Saturday Night Lights, OCTLA hosted its annual Installation and Judicial Awards Program – an evening dedicated to celebrating leadership, service, and our shared commitment to justice. This year’s event honored the Honorable Maria Hernandez for her extraordinary dedication to public service and her leadership within Orange County Superior Court, the third-largest court in California and the sixth largest in the nation.

Judge Hernandez’s career reflects an unwavering commitment to fairness, integrity, and access to justice. Her leadership has helped guide one of the busiest court systems in the country through times of significant challenge and change, while maintaining public trust in our judicial system. We are grateful for her service and for the example she continues to set.

This year’s program embraced a spirited football theme, due to my love of football including my LA Rams passion. Guests arrived dressed in their favorite team colors, sporting team hats and game-day swag, all adding to the festive atmosphere – Game Day Glam at its best. With the backdrop of the wildcard round playoffs the night was off to an exciting start.

The evening opened with an incredible performance by world-class entertainer, magician, and mentalist Rmax Goodwin. His engaging and interactive performance left our Orange County group amazed and provided the perfect kickoff to a night focused on connection, inspiration, and vision. From there, the program transitioned into a celebration of the organization’s successes over the past year, as well as a candid acknowledgment of the challenges ahead and the focus required to meet them.

One of the most meaningful moments of the night was the presentation of a check for \$285,000 to NEGU – an incredible charity dedicated to bringing joy and hope to children battling cancer.

Each year, the OCTLA Board selects a charitable organization to serve as the

focus of our annual fundraising efforts, including proceeds from our auction at the Top Gun Gala. These efforts show who we are as a community. Over the past five years alone, OCTLA has raised nearly \$1.3 million for charitable causes – including children, their families, and the homeless. Reflecting on this work helped shape my mission for the year ahead: *using our voice, to make a difference*. This includes using our collective voice to protect access to our justice system, support our judiciary, and fight for the people who depend on both.

Our charitable partnerships over the years reflect our group’s commitment to protecting the vulnerable and giving a voice to the voiceless. In addition to NEGU, we have proudly partnered with Operation Helping Hands, founded by Kim Valentine, which serves homeless youth throughout Orange County. We have also supported CASA OC, A Walk on Water, and A Quarter Blue – organizations that address critical needs ranging from foster youth advocacy to trauma recovery for survivors of sexual abuse.

A snapshot of our recent fundraising efforts illustrates the depth of this commitment:

- 2021 – A Walk on Water: \$210,000
- 2022 – Operation Helping Hands: \$300,674
- 2023 – CASA OC: \$251,476
- 2024 – A Quarter Blue: \$240,000
- 2025 – NEGU: \$285,000.

In 2024, OCTLA partnered with A Quarter Blue, an organization that provides trauma recovery centers for victims of sexual abuse. This work is especially critical in light of increasing threats to access to justice – particularly justice for survivors of sexual assault.

Fighting the Uber Initiative

As an organization, we are currently facing one of the most significant challenges to access to justice our community has seen: the deceptive ballot initiative seeking to limit access to the courts for automobile accident victims.

In response, OCTLA has united to fight back. Our members have come together

to raise substantial funds. While large corporations continue to challenge the rights of injured individuals, I am proud of how many of our members have stepped up when it matters most. This is a critical fight for those who are harmed and rely on our justice system to obtain accountability and fairness.

Recognizing outstanding leadership

Our annual installation and awards program also provided an opportunity to recognize the outstanding contributions of several individuals within our organization. We were honored to celebrate outgoing president Aaron Hicks for his exceptional leadership and mentorship. His dedication has left a lasting impact on OCTLA and its members. We also presented the Presidential Legacy Award to Keith More in recognition of his remarkable service and instrumental role in advancing our charitable fundraising efforts.

In addition, we recognized Geraldine Ly as Member of the Year for her steadfast commitment to OCTLA and its mission, and Alain Kinaly as Board Member of the Year for his leadership and dedication overseeing our education committee throughout the year. These award recipients embody what we stand for as an organization and group of trial attorneys.

Part of using our collective voice to make a meaningful difference is working with our charitable arm, OCTLC and its founders, including Michelle West. They provide outreach to over 60 charities in Orange County, supporting organizations doing vital work throughout the community. We are grateful to have them as a partner; it was awesome to see many of their founders at our installation event and we look forward to continuing to collaborate with them to amplify our impact and support those in need.

It was truly a night to remember – and a strong start to the year ahead. I look forward to seeing everyone at our events to come this year! ♦