



**NEWS RELEASE**  
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## **Small Business Law Center Opens at Thomas Jefferson School of Law**

*Supports Community Entrepreneurship with Free Legal Assistance*

SAN DIEGO –Start-up businesses and budding entrepreneurs are getting a boost from the Small Business Law Center (SBLC) at Thomas Jefferson School of Law. The clinic provides pro bono legal assistance to micro-entrepreneurs, small businesses and non-profit organizations that do not have the means to hire an attorney to advise them.

Clients of the Small Business Law Center receive legal assistance from TJSL students with transactional issues such as forming entities, drafting, negotiating and reviewing contracts, and getting through the regulatory process. Students are guided during representation by a licensed California attorney but students have primary responsibility for their cases. While the SBLC provides a wide variety of legal assistance, its services do not include court representation or litigation, generally.

The SBLC director is TJSL Professor Luz Herrera, who has a wealth of experience working in legal clinics and is a co-founder of Community Lawyers, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing legal service delivery in underserved communities. She has received several awards honoring her efforts on behalf of these communities in the Los Angeles area.

“We are excited to provide much needed legal assistance to the underserved population of micro-businesses and nonprofits in San Diego County,” said Professor Herrera. “They are the bedrock of our community and Thomas Jefferson students are thrilled to have a role in supporting community entrepreneurship.”

The Art & Entertainment Law Project, which provides free legal services for low-income artists, actors, dancers, writers, musicians, filmmakers, and related non-profit organizations, is an important component of the SBLC. The director of this part of the clinic is Professor Jeff Slattery, who brings his experience representing artists and entertainers to the SBLC. Professor Slattery has taught substantive courses in copyright, moral rights, publicity rights, trademark, employment, contract and business law to artists, musicians, authors and filmmakers.

Legal assistance provided by SBLC provides includes:

- Copyright & Trademark Registration
- Contract review and negotiation
- Business formation
- Nonprofit tax exemption
- Permitting and licensing
- Limited employment issues
- Commercial Leasing
- Trade Secrets

### **Small Business Legal Center Client Profiles:**

Below are some of the SBLC's clients. They will be present at the Wednesday open house, or available at a later time for stories about the clinic.

**Erin Pennell** is the founder of a non-profit organization called Art FORM, located in San Diego's Normal Heights. Form stands for **F**ound **O**bjects **R**ecycled **M**aterials.

According to Pennell, Art Form provides arts education to schools and the community for low cost/no cost using recycled materials, making them accessible for projects and helping students discover creative re-use as an art form that promotes ingenuity and problem solving.

Pennell sought out TJSJ's Small Business Law Center for help getting non-profit status for Art Form.

"I had been trying to get the nonprofit filing paper work off the ground for years, but was always held back by it being complicated, and it was becoming more clear I needed legal help and guidance," Pennell says.

"The clinic provided exactly what I needed to move my nonprofit forward," Pennell says. "Their consistent and timely work helped me make great strides in moving forward and to actually be able to begin operating the nonprofit—they helped an idea and dream I have had for some time come into fruition."

**Melissa Rautenberg** describes herself as an "aspiring entrepreneur." She is a student at San Diego City College, and learned about the Small Business Law Center through her participation in Students for Free Enterprise (SIFE). SIFE describes itself as "an international non-profit organization that works with leaders in business and higher education to mobilize university students to make a difference in their communities while developing the skills to become socially responsible business leaders."

Rautenberg's business is called Social Vines Media and it's a social media consulting firm that brings a personal touch to the art of branding and customer service for companies that use social media to promote and brand themselves.

The SBLC helped Rautenberg form her business entity, draft contracts and register for trademarks. "The information is great – I never would have been able to do this on my own," she says. "Where else can you get an opportunity like this?"

**William Metivet** was one of the SBLC's first clients. He is a professional photographer who needed legal advice about creating the contracts and releases he needs for his work.

Before he sought SBLC's legal assistance, Metivet was working mostly on oral agreements and handshakes. He knew he needed legal protection, and the law students he worked with made sure he got the proper legal documents to do just that.

"I'm really happy," Metivet says of the services he received at SBLC. "It's fantastic."

