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Contacts: Tirien Steinbach
(510) 548 – 4040
tsteinbach@ebclc.org

Holly Baldwin
(510) 682-8683
berkeleylawfoundation@yahoo.com

Back to Its Roots: the East Bay Community Law Center Partners with the Berkeley Law Foundation for a Joint Fellowship

New In-House EBCLC Fellowship Will Plant Seeds for Next Crop of Advocates and Legal Educators

To celebrate 25 years of justice through education and advocacy, the East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC) is partnering with its original seed funder, the Berkeley Law Foundation, to create an in-house, two-year joint fellowship for a UC Berkeley Law graduate to develop a program at EBCLC.

Each year, the Berkeley Law Foundation (BLF) awards one or two one-year grants to support public interest fellowships. However, this year, in celebration of EBCLC's 25th Anniversary, BLF is targeting its seed funding to support the first year of a permanent fellowship housed at EBCLC. In 2014, BLF will resume its traditional fellowship program.

"BLF took a leap of faith with our proposal twenty five years ago," recounts Brad Adams, who received a BLF grant to help EBCLC open its doors in 1988. "Whereas BLF normally granted funding to students working at established organizations, BLF decided that the Berkeley Community Law Center (BCLC) – as it was called then – was a crucial element that had been lacking at a world-class law school like Boalt Hall." He concludes, "Without it, BCLC would not have been possible. BLF took a chance at a time when no one else would."

In 2002, EBCLC's current Executive Director, Tirien Steinbach (Berkeley Law '99) received a second BLF grant to cultivate a new program focused on the intersection of criminal and civil law for marginalized members of the East Bay. EBCLC's flourishing Clean Slate practice is now being replicated in counties across the state.

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Of the joint fellowship, Steinbach remarks, “BLF fostered my commitment to public interest throughout law school and helped launch my career as a social justice lawyer at EBCLC. It is fabulous to partner with BLF again to support homegrown public interest lawyers and leaders.”

For BLF, partnering with EBCLC on the 25th Anniversary fellowship is an exciting opportunity to strengthen the deeply rooted connection between two organizations with common history and missions. “Both BLF and EBCLC were started by Berkeley Law students committed to social justice, and offer law students a chance to use their legal skills to increase legal access and empower marginalized communities,” says Holly Baldwin, BLF Board President, “It’s great for BLF and EBCLC to unite once again and celebrate our shared roots.”

The 25th Anniversary joint fellowship marks a celebration of EBCLC’s continued cultivation of justice. As it becomes self-sustained – independent from scarce resources, the fellowship is bound to become the fertile ground upon which the next generation of legal advocates and educators grows and flourishes.

The Request for Proposals is available [here](#).

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The East Bay Community Law Center provides free legal services to eligible East Bay clients. Since its founding in 1988 by law students at UC Berkeley's Boalt Hall School of Law, EBCLC has become the largest provider of free legal services in the East Bay. To learn more about EBCLC, go to www.ebclc.org. The Berkeley Law Foundation funds public interest law through summer grants for current Boalt students and year-long grants for law graduates and new attorneys from around the country. BLF’s grants enable the recipients to work on innovative and critical projects that provide desperately needed legal services to communities all around the nation. To learn more about BLF, go to www.berkeleylawfoundation.org.