



Oakland County Legal News

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SHORT TAKES

MOTION CALL CANCELLED

The Oakland County Circuit Court Civil/Criminal Division Motion Call has been cancelled for December 26, 2007 and January 2, 2008.

The first Motion Call of the new year will be January 9, 2008.

Attorney to speak at upcoming tax seminar

David Nykanen, shareholder of Steinhart, Pesick, & Cohen P.C. (SPC) is slated to speak on strategies for property tax assessment appeals at the Real Estate Investors Association of Oakland seminar on Thursday, January 10.

Due to the economic challenges facing Michigan, property tax assessments have become an important topic for investors and homeowners alike. Nykanen will be discussing appealing property tax assessments to your local board of review, including procedures and deadlines for filings up to and including the Michigan Tax Tribunal.

The seminar will be held at MSU-MEC, located at 811 West Square Lake Road, in Troy on Thursday, January 10; buffet dinner starts at 5:30 p.m., early bird session starts at 6:15 p.m., general membership meeting and guest speaker is from 7:15 to 9:30 p.m. Admission is free to members and \$20 for guests. To make reservations for dinner by Friday, January 4, visit www.reiaofaokland.com/dinner.html.

Nykanen is a shareholder with SPC. His practice areas include real estate transactions, zoning law, land use, property taxation, corporate and commercial litigation. He has more than 11 years' experience in these areas of the law.

Nykanen is a graduate of Wayne State University Law School (1995), and Oakland University, B.A. (1992).

Conflict management workshops offer tools for special ed parents

Conflict management workshops offered by Oakland Mediation Center will empower parents and faculty of special education students to manage conflict effectively. Two one-day workshops are scheduled at the Oakland Mediation Center in Bloomfield Hills. The events will take place on Wednesday, December 19, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Friday, January 25, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Oakland Mediation Center's workshops will demonstrate how to identify and resolve conflict triggers. Managing conflict effectively and immediately can diffuse the actions and reactions that lead to violent acts and crime.

Sponsored by a federal grant from the Michigan Department of Education, the workshops will include training materials, continental breakfast, lunch and a certificate of completion.

The cost is \$10 per person. Class size is limited. The workshops will be held at Oakland Mediation Center, 550 Hulet Drive, Suite 102, in Bloomfield Hills.

For more information and to register for one of the workshops, contact Susan Stirling, OMC training manager, at ssstirling@mediation-omc.org or (248) 338-4280 ext. 16.

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DEALING WITH DIVORCE— Attorney offers 'SMILE' tips in children's book

By TOM KIRVAN
Legal News

It's an interesting bit of math in the title of the soon-to-be-released children's book, "You and Me Make Three."

Fortunately, readers of the book will discover that the title more than adds up to an insightful and helpful look at the world of divorce through the eyes of those left in the wake.

The brainchild of Bloomfield Hills matrimonial attorney Richard Victor, the book is a collaborative effort of co-authors Wendy Lokken, Gwendy Mangiamela, Edna Cucksey Stephens, and illustrator Heather Drescher. Its central character is "B.B. the Bear," a "special friend" for kids to "talk to when divorce happens in their families." From the mouth of a bear come words that are meant to ease a child's transition into life in separate homes.

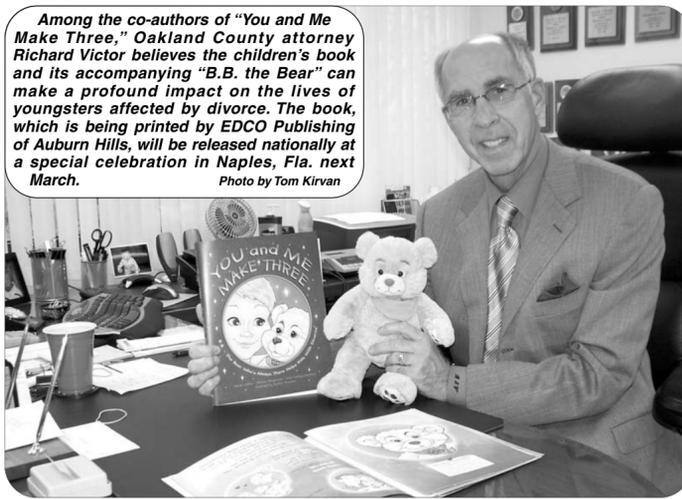
"Even though you may not all live in the same home, both your parents still love you just as they always have," B.B. says in the opening page of the beautifully illustrated book. "I will be a reminder of how much your Mom and Dad love you. When you take me to your Mom's . . . you and me make three. And when you take me to your Dad's . . . you and me make three too!"

The book, according to Victor, was inspired by Michael O'Dea and Mia Johnson, two youngsters "who want to help other kids cope with divorce," particularly the "hard times" that can fracture a family for years to come. On Victor's part, the book was written with a "SMILE" in mind.

SMILE is an acronym for "Start Making It Livable for Everyone," the program co-

Among the co-authors of "You and Me Make Three," Oakland County attorney Richard Victor believes the children's book and its accompanying "B.B. the Bear" can make a profound impact on the lives of youngsters affected by divorce. The book, which is being printed by EDCO Publishing of Auburn Hills, will be released nationally at a special celebration in Naples, Fla. next March.

Photo by Tom Kirvan



founded by Victor and Oakland County Circuit Court Judge Edward Sosnick. Now in its 17th year, the program has attained national and international stature, and is an educational series for divorcing parents with children under the age of 18. In Oakland County alone, more than 100,000 adults have attended SMILE programs since its inception, according to Victor. Five years ago, the program gained a foothold in Australia and now is offered by the government there, he indicated.

"The underlying theme of SMILE is to teach parents that the greatest gift they can give their children is the right to love the other parent," Victor says. "Parents learn that even though they may no longer be marriage partners, they will always be parent partners for their children."

B.B. is the cuddly protagonist in the book, which will be sold for \$19.95, while the bear is priced at \$15.95. They both will be for sale through national outlets such as Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, and Borders, but not until

the national book launch scheduled by the publisher for March 2008 in Naples, Fla. Pre-orders for the book and the bear can be placed locally by contacting the Victor Smile Foundation at (248) 646-7177 (www.victorsmilefoundation.org), EDCO Publishing at (248) 475-4678, or by going to www.BBseries.com. For all pre-orders, the book will be available by mid-December, although the bear will not be available until mid-January, according to Victor.

"Since I'm your best bear friend, you can whisper in my ear and tell me your biggest secrets," says B.B. in the opening chapter of the book. "You can talk to me about how you feel, tell me your silliest jokes and even toss me in the air. It's good to have a furry friend who is . . . always there!"

On each facing page of the book is "B.B.'s SMILE Tip for Parents," a carefully crafted message written by Victor. A sample tip:

"When children have regular routines, they are less likely to be overwhelmed by the changes separation brings," Victor says. "In addition to fun activities, both parents should establish 'normal' routines with chores, bedtime rules, standards for behavior, and regular meals to help children feel stable and secure."

The book offers a glimpse at the daily lives of kids—at home, at play, at school, and with relatives, especially their grandparents. It also addresses the need for parents to be "sensitive when introducing new boyfriends or girlfriends and their families to children," noting that "new relationships may contribute to their sense of insecurity and instability." It closes with the 10-point "Children's Bill of Rights" that underlines the SMILE program.

(See BOOK, Page Two)

A New Home— Legal Aid & Defender Association relocates offices to new building

By CHRISTINE L. MOBLEY
Legal News

Move it on down the road. Well, that's exactly what Legal Aid and Defender Association (LADA) did.

Effective December 1, 2007, LADA offices have moved to a building that they own located at 613 Abbott in Detroit—less than a mile away from their old location in the Penobscot Building.

"It's more than just a physical move," Roger Lennert, LADA director of Marketing and Development, said.

"It's a move that immediately creates efficiencies that will benefit our clients but over the long haul will also increase our capacity to deliver services."

According to Lennert, the new building offers several advantages including a law library and employees having more contact with each other, making it "more of a horizontal organization, both physically and sharing knowledge and information in one tighter contiguous environment."

Additionally, LADA offers a new Client Service Center that's located at 1240 Third St. in Detroit.

The Client Service Center offers clients more direct access to service than the Penobscot Building did, Lennert said.

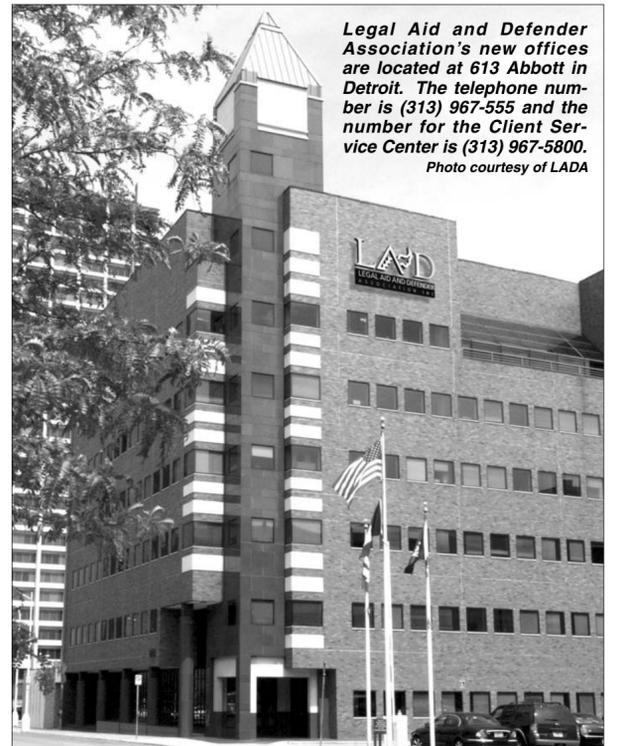
"Instead of working their way through the Penobscot Building lobby and finding us on four different floors, they can go to one door and somebody's meeting them right away, right off the street and we're able to serve them instantly."

"It's much more convenient for our walk-in clients."

The move also has economic benefits.

Just like anybody who owns a home or property, LADA—and potentially their clients—will benefit from the equity that will accumulate over time. Especially considering that LADA's rental costs at the Penobscot Building were in excess of one million dollars per year.

"Hopefully the benefits of (building equity) will result in us being able to provide more legal services to the community," Lennert stated.



Legal Aid and Defender Association's new offices are located at 613 Abbott in Detroit. The telephone number is (313) 967-555 and the number for the Client Service Center is (313) 967-5800.

Photo courtesy of LADA

Effective Motion Practice discussed

THE OAKLAND COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION (OCBA) Criminal Law Committee continued its Anatomy of a Criminal Case—Year IX brown bag lunch lecture series with a seminar on "Effective Motion Practice, A View from the Bench," on Tuesday, November 20, at the Oakland County Bar Center in Bloomfield Hills.

Presenting the workshop were (left to right) Oakland County Circuit Court Judge Nanci J. Grant and Bloomfield Hills attorney Jack Holmes.

Photo by John Meiu



Voter registration deadline nears for presidential primary election

Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land reminds residents that Monday, December 17, is the last day to register to vote in the Tuesday, January 15, presidential primary election.

"The primary is the first opportunity Michigan residents have to affect the election of a new president," said Land, the state's chief election officer. "If you are not yet registered to vote in Michigan, I encourage you to do so as soon as possible. Voter participation is the foundation of our democracy."

To register, people must be at least 18 years old by Election Day and be U.S. residents. They must also be residents of Michigan and of the city or township in which they wish to register.

Voters may register in person or by mail. The mail-in form is on the Department of State Web site at www.Michigan.gov/sos. First-time voters who register by mail must vote in person in their first election, unless they hand-deliver the application to their local clerk, are 60 years old or older, are disabled, or are overseas.

To check their registration status, voters may visit the Michigan Voter Information Center at www.Michigan.gov/vote. Residents will be able to find information on voting by absentee ballot, Michigan's voter identification requirement, using voting equipment and contacting their local clerk. They will also find a map to their local polling place.

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Catherine McClure discusses Supreme Court's ruling on presidential primary.

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OAKLAND COUNTY LEGAL NEWS CLASSIFIED AD RATES

(Now published on Tuesdays and Fridays.) DISPLAY RATES 1 week - \$14/column inch/day 2 weeks - \$13/column inch/day 3 weeks - \$12/column inch/day 4 weeks - \$11/column inch/day... INSTRUCTIONS: The deadline is 4:00 p.m. Monday for publication on Friday, and 4:00 p.m. Wednesday for publication on the following Tuesday.

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PRIMARY: Registration deadline nears

(Continued from page 1) When they arrive at the polls on Tuesday, January 15, voters will be asked which party's primary they wish to vote in and they will receive a ballot for that party. That ballot will also contain any special election issues. For voters who wish only to vote in the special election, they can ask for a ballot that does not include presidential candidates. This election replaces the regular February election for this year only. On the absentee voter application, voters are reminded that they must check a box to indicate which party's ballot they would like. Voters are again reminded of the identification requirement. They will be asked to present photo ID at the polls, such as a Michigan driver's license or identification card. Voters who don't have a Michigan driver's license or identification card can show the fol-

lowing forms of photo ID: • Driver's license or personal identification card issued by another state. • Federal or state government-issued photo identification. • U.S. passport. • Military identification card with photo. • Student identification with photo from a high school or an accredited institution of higher education, such as a college or university. • Tribal identification card with photo. Anyone who does not have an acceptable form of photo ID or is not carrying one can still vote. They will sign a brief form stating that they're not in possession of a photo ID. Their ballots will be included with all others and counted on Election Day. Additional information is available on the Department of State Web site at www.Michigan.gov/sos.

BOOK: Attorney offers tips to kids of divorce in new book

(Continued from page 1) Perhaps uppermost, according to Victor, is the "10th Amendment" to the Bill of Rights: "The right to experience regular and consistent contact with both parents and to be protected from parental disputes or disagreements." "The book really was designed with a dual purpose in mind," says Victor. "We wanted to create a book that would be useful for young children whose parents are divorced or are in the process of divorce. We also wanted to offer a book that would be an educational tool for parents, to give them a better understanding of how divorce looks through the eyes of children. It's important for them to put their own feelings aside and to begin to appreciate how the divorce has impacted their children. No child adjusts to divorce until the parents do." Victor began his legal career in 1975 after graduating from Detroit College of Law. Last year, he was named the Fellow of the Year by the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, and is a nationally recognized advocate for the rights of grandparents and

stepparents in divorce and custody cases. The audience he hopes to reach with the book includes family law attorneys, social workers, psychologists, and, of course, children and parents involved in the inherently difficult circumstances surrounding divorce. He has created a nonprofit organization that has applied for tax exempt status, as a 501 (c) (3) known as the Victor SMILE Foundation, which will receive 100 percent of the royalties he receives from the sale of the book. "The Foundation will provide support, through its programs and teachings, which will help families, otherwise in dysfunction, learn to cope with each other and how parents can both work together to help their children through this most difficult time in their lives," says Victor, who indicated that through his foundation he hopes the book will make its way into every library and school in the U.S. "This is not a money-making venture for me. It's all about education and hopefully making the lives of children affected by divorce much better."

THE VOICE OF SMALL BUSINESS BY TODD STOTTMLEYER

Alliance aims to push the debate

BY TODD STOTTMLEYER

Many people get frustrated by gridlock, whether it's traffic or political. Of the two, the political kind has far worse effects on our economy. So four leading organizations have decided to do something about it.

The National Federation of Independent Business, AARP, the Service Employees International Union and the Business Roundtable, a group of CEOs of leading American companies, have come together in a coalition called Divided We Fail.

Collectively, we represent the 25 million small businesses in this country, along with big business, consumers and labor groups - more than 53 million people, including employees and dependents. We seek to engage the American public, elected officials and the business community to find broad-based, bipartisan solutions to address what has become a national crisis, especially for America's job creators - health care and its impact on our nation's long-term economic competitiveness.

Healthy, growing small businesses are vital to our economy. They generate half of America's GDP, and create two-thirds of the net new jobs. So the business of small business is good. Yet, of the estimated 46 million Americans without health care, more than 27 million are small-business owners, employees or dependents of small businesses.

Less than half of small businesses can afford to offer a health-insurance plan as a benefit. Fewer, about 30 percent, can afford to offer retirement plans. This is simply not acceptable.

For 20 straight years, small businesses have said that health-care costs are their number one issue. But things haven't gotten any better. In fact, they're getting worse. We must find a way to fundamentally alter the forces driving costs, or our efforts will be for naught.

The time has come to address this problem in a real and lasting way. And no discussion of health care should take place without America's job creators at the table. We believe this coalition

will spur our nation's political leaders to start working together to take on the threats to America's health care and our overall economic competitiveness.

It's past time to address the challenges that small businesses face in obtaining affordable health care for themselves and their employees. We will do nothing less than commit every resource to fight for a health-care system that makes affordable, quality health care available to everyone.

If we truly want to provide coverage for all while protecting our economy, the real focus should be on small business' biggest concern - the cost of health insurance. Reduce costs, and we can increase coverage. We also need a national solution, not piecemeal, state-by-state attempts.

Our research shows that for small-business owners, the broad principles of the solution include:

• Increasing competition by breaking down the barriers that exist to selling insurance to small businesses, such as market pooling.

• Opening markets to provide a wide variety of choices of insurers and coverage plans.

• Providing complete transparency in the costs of treatments and the outcomes of those treatments so that we become better-educated consumers of health care and can make informed decisions.

• Making health insurance portable from job to job (which also would encourage more would-be entrepreneurs to follow their dreams and start a business without worrying about losing coverage).

Our goal is to widely share this information and bring the health-care debate to the ears of Congress and the President. Through Divided We Fail, as well as through our own grassroots mobilization and communication efforts, we will do everything in our power to guarantee that small-business owners - America's job creators, risk takers, community leaders - are heard loudly and clearly.

Todd Stottmleyer is president and CEO of the National Federation of Independent Business in Washington, D.C.

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Correction In the Friday, December 7, edition of the Oakland County Legal News, a photo outline on page 10A mistakenly identified Michael D. Eberth as Michael Berth. Michael D. Eberth of Nichols & Eberth P.C. in Dearborn spoke at the State Bar of Michigan seminar "Tips and Tools for a Successful Practice" on Wednesday, November 7, at the Oakland County Bar Association offices. The Oakland County Legal News apologizes for any confusion this may have caused.

Michigan Judgment Interest Rate 5.741%

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