

California Young Lawyers Association 2004 Jack Berman Award

of Achievement for Distinguished Service to the Profession and the Public



Margaret H. Adams

Margaret H. Adams is a volunteer attorney for San Diego Volunteer Lawyers Program's (SDVLP) project to provide Special Education advocacy on behalf of low-income children. In 2003, she was instrumental in helping SDVLP staff implement a new project funded by the County of San Diego Health and Human Services agency to provide Special Education Advocacy to Juvenile Court Dependents. Her work included individual representation on behalf of juvenile dependents and other children, and developing training for foster parents on how to advocate for their foster children in Special Education cases.

In 2003, Ms. Adams worked on a total of seven individual pro bono cases. All seven cases involved assisting families in Special Education litigation. In one case, Ms. Adams spent over 100 hours helping an 11th grade student who had learning disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, depression, and behavior problems, to obtain a higher level of educational services. This boy was reading at the second grade level and his situation had deteriorated to the point that his mother had removed him from school and requested a due process hearing. Ms. Adams agreed to represent the family at the due process hearing and conducted extensive trial preparation, including adding claims for compensatory education for the school's past failure to provide adequate services. The case settled at the pre-trial conference level when the school district agreed to provide all of the relief requested. The child was successfully placed at a non-public school where he receives a very high level of educational services.

In addition to her casework, Ms. Adams assisted SDVLP staff in implementing a new grant from the County of San Diego to provide Special Education services including legal clinics, for Foster Youth (children who are dependents of the Juvenile Court due to abuse or neglect.) In March of 2003, Ms. Adams developed a presentation outline, and provided one of the first legal clinic presentations to a group of foster parents. She has continued to provide presentations and to provide advice and support to staff and volunteer attorneys who need help in their Special Education cases.

Ms. Adams became interested in Special Education law while advocating for her daughter who has special needs. While attending law school and awaiting her bar results, she worked as a volunteer for the San Diego Volunteer Lawyers Program's Special Education project, and also provided volunteer services for the Public Defenders' Juvenile Dependency unit. Since she became an attorney and opened her own Special Education law practice in June 2002, she has generously continued to donate hundreds of hours a year advocating for Special Education services for children in low-income families.

Ms. Adams received a B.A. and a M.B.A. from Southern Methodist University and her J.D., *Magna Cum Laude*, from University of San Diego School of Law in May 2001. Upon graduation Ms. Adams was made a member of the Order of the Coif.

The California Young Lawyers Association and The State Bar of California salutes Margaret H. Adams for her outstanding contribution to the legal profession and to the public.

In 1992 California Young Lawyers Association established the Award of Achievement for Distinguished Service to the Profession and the Public to recognize the public service of a new or young lawyer. In 1994, CYLA Board of Directors renamed the award in memory of Jack Berman, who demonstrated outstanding service to the profession and the public by providing substantial pro bono legal assistance. Mr. Berman tragically died in the July 1, 1993 101 California Street shooting.