M.C. Sungaila in the Orange County Business Journal: Volunteers Help Solo Litigants Navigate Court Maze

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Juan Rodriguez said he never imagined when he and his ex-girlfriend split up that eight years later he would still be in the throes of litigation over custody of their children. He wasn't sure where to turn for help when he decided to appeal fees paid to a therapist who was not court-appointed.

He was about to give up, he said, when he discovered the Civil Appellate Self-Help Clinic. The California Court of Appeal, the appellate section of the Orange County Bar Association, and the Public Law Center created the clinic to help litigants representing themselves manage the complexities of appellate law...

Trial courts were the first to set up self-help centers across the state, and appellate courts eventually followed suit. The appellate court in Los Angeles was the first to open a clinic in 2007, and San Diego opened its clinic in 2014.

Orange County's appellate court chose to borrow elements of both neighboring counties' approaches, combining a short seminar with 20 to 30 minutes of individual assistance, said clinic volunteer M.C. Sungaila, an appellate attorney with Costa Mesa-based Haynes & Boone. She was instrumental in getting the Orange County clinic started after gaining experience working at the appellate court in Los Angeles.

Excerpted from the *Orange County Business Journal*. To read the full article, click here (subscription required).

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