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Los Angeles – Century City Associates Win Major Jury Verdict for Defrauded Alzheimer’s Sufferer

Los Angeles – Century City Litigation and Dispute Resolution associates **Tami Kameda Sims** and **Nicholas Gross**, under the supervision of Litigation and Dispute Resolution partner **Steve Cochran**, won a unanimous jury verdict for an 88-year-old widow suffering from Alzheimer’s and dementia. The defendants are the client’s neighbors (a husband and wife and their adult daughter) who took advantage of the widow once her health declined. Before trial, Tami and Nick obtained summary adjudication to recover the widow’s home, canceling a signed grant deed “gifting” the defendant husband a 50 percent ownership for no consideration. The trial included financial elder abuse claims against all three defendants, and conversion and constructive fraud claims against the defendant husband. Tami and Nick proved to the jury that defendants obtained checks from the client, used her bank account to pay their own personal bills, withdrew money from her account using her ATM card and pin code, and rented out her house for profit.

The unanimous jury found all of the defendants liable for elder abuse and awarded \$57,943 in compensatory damages—the total amount sought on behalf of the client. The jury also unanimously found that the defendant husband was liable for conversion and constructive fraud, and awarded \$95,000 in punitive damages against him.

Charlotte Office Forms Team to Assist Unaccompanied Minors From Central America

Katten’s Charlotte office has formed a team to assist unaccompanied minors in North Carolina attempting to resist deportation to Central American countries such as Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala—countries with some of the highest rates of violent crime in the world. These minors (mostly ages 10–17) have fled extremely dangerous situations, often involving physical abuse and threats to their lives, to arrive in the United States. In many cases, their caretakers back home are now deceased or have abandoned them, leaving them with little option other than to come to the United States to find family members who are here. Upon entry into the United States, the children are picked up by border patrol agents and subjected to removal proceedings. The unaccompanied minors are placed with local custodians (typically relatives) pending the outcomes of their cases. Under certain circumstances, if the local custodian obtains a state court order granting him or her custody of the child, the child can apply for special immigrant juvenile status, which allows the child to avoid being returned to a dangerous situation with no one to care for him or her. Katten attorneys assist these minors by representing the local custodians as they apply to get custody orders.

Katten’s team (consisting of Litigation and Dispute Resolution partner **Christopher Hicks**, Litigation and Dispute Resolution associates **Jeffrey Grady**, **Meghan Engle** and **Glenn Spittler**, Real Estate staff attorney **Gary Redwine**, Real Estate special counsel **Charles**

Pettigrew, and Real Estate associates **Art Howson** and **George Carter**) was the first such team formed at one of Charlotte’s large law firms. Consequently, the team is now serving as an example for other firms considering forming similar teams.

Chicago Attorneys Win Favorable Settlement for Woman Accused of Fraud

Chicago Intellectual Property staff attorney **Gene Endress**, under the supervision of Litigation and Dispute Resolution partner **Will Dorsey**, recently obtained a favorable settlement in his defense of a local woman in a lawsuit filed against her alleging breach of contract, violation of the Illinois Condominium Property Act and common law fraud. The case was referred by [The ARK](#), a Chicago social services agency. The claims stemmed from the short sale of the client’s condominium unit during a period of financial distress. Over the course of more than two years, Will and Gene drafted pleadings for the client, represented the client through oral and written discovery, and drafted briefing defending the client’s counterclaims from a motion to dismiss. Ultimately, Gene was able to negotiate a final settlement of the dispute and dismissal of all claims against the client. The terms of the settlement are confidential, but the client is very pleased with the result. She wrote to Gene: “I can’t believe that this terrible ordeal is finally over. . . . I want you to know that I can never thank you enough for helping me get through this. Your patience, kindness, professionalism, caring, and conscientious manner instilled confidence and calmness in me, knowing that you had everything under control.”



Washington, DC Special Counsel Advises Humanitarian Relief Organization Aiding Ebola-Stricken West Africa

Washington, DC Corporate special counsel **Robyn Mandel** advised [Airlink](#) in setting up an air bridge—or route—to deliver medical-relief supplies to Ebola-stricken countries in West Africa. Airlink is a rapid-response, humanitarian relief organization that links commercial airlines with nonprofits in order to get relief personnel and material aid to those in need around the world during disasters and crises. Due to the Ebola scare, commercial airlines ceased flying to West Africa so Airlink had to seek out a new arrangement with charter airlines. This involved having a charter broker/freight forwarder sign a contract for a charter flight with a charter airline. Additionally, Airlink and the charter broker entered into a side agreement to allocate risk among Airlink, the non-governmental organization shippers and the charter broker. Airlink and the charter airline also had to consider Federal Aviation Administration and Department of Transport rules, liability risk and reality. Robyn worked with Airlink to determine the appropriate level of insurance coverage needed and also helped Airlink draft a series of agreements in order to devise a structure that would allow it to conduct flights as part of the air bridge to West Africa.



New York Associate Raises Nearly \$1,000 for Cancer Research

In November, New York Commercial Finance associate **Ben Steinberg** participated in No Shave November and raised nearly \$1,000 for prostate and testicular cancer research. Additionally, the firm had a Jeans Day on November 14 and raised \$160 for the [American Cancer Society](#) in coordination with Ben’s efforts.



Los Angeles – Century City Attorneys Win Criminal Trial for Disabled Client

Los Angeles – Century City Litigation and Dispute Resolution associate **Viviana Boero Hedrick** and former associate Danielle Raymond, under the supervision of California Pro Bono Committee co-chair **Steve Cochran**, obtained a big win in a criminal trial for a disabled man with no history of criminal misconduct. The client was wrongfully accused of stalking, vandalism, violating a temporary restraining order and battery. What started as a simple neighbor dispute escalated quickly when the complainant attempted to obtain a civil restraining order against her disabled neighbor because he would “stare” at her, “smirk” at her and give her “dirty

looks” from his own property. After the civil restraining order was denied, the complainant continued to call the police until criminal charges were eventually brought against him. On August 19, 2014, after seven police interviews, the complainant brought up for the first time a battery that allegedly occurred six months earlier. The Los Angeles prosecutor then added a charge of battery, and the judge remanded the client to jail and set bail at \$75,000.

The government aggressively prosecuted the client and refused to offer a plea for less than 90 days in jail. With the client facing more three years in jail if tried and convicted, Viviana and Danielle took the case to trial. After a six-day trial, the jury found the client not guilty of the charges of stalking, vandalism and battery, leaving only a claim for violating a civil restraining order. For the latter charge, he was put on probation and didn’t have to serve any time.

Chicago Team Represents Y.O.U. in Receipt of Gifts to Establish New Service Facility



Chicago Real Estate partner **Mark Simon** and associate **Emily Thomas** along with partner **Philip Tortorich**, head of the Captive Insurance practice, and Trusts and Estates associate **Andrew McKay** successfully represented [Youth Organizations Umbrella, Inc.](#) (Y.O.U.) in the receipt of a gift of two pieces of real estate and cash from a generous donor. Y.O.U. is planning to utilize the donation for the construction of a new facility in Evanston, Illinois. Y.O.U. is a youth development agency that provides services and leadership to meet the emerging needs of young people and their families in the Evanston community.

Katten Wins Volunteer Service Award From International Trademark Association



Washington, DC Intellectual Property partner **Brian Winterfeldt**, head of Katten’s Internet practice, accepted the 2014 Volunteer Service Award for Pro Bono Services from the [International Trademark Association](#) (INTA) on November 11 on behalf of the Internet practice. The practice was nominated for its extensive and ongoing pro bono work for organizations such as [The Trevor Project](#), [United Cerebral Palsy](#), [dotHIV](#) and others. This is a unique honor for Katten, as INTA only grants one pro bono award to a law firm each year. INTA President Mei-lan Stark indicated that Katten was “head and shoulders” above any other applicants.

Charlotte Associate Wins Trial for Domestic Violence Victim

Charlotte Litigation and Dispute Resolution associate **Meghan Engle** represented a victim of domestic violence in a contested bench trial in which the victim was seeking a one-year protective order. Meghan worked with tough facts and overcame some issues raised by an effective cross examination of her victim, but she ultimately succeeded in securing a victory for her client. This was not only an important win for domestic violence victims, but was also Meghan’s first bench trial and witness examination.

Los Angeles – Century City Office Assists in Finalizing More Than 20 Adoptions for Low-Income Families



For [National Adoption Day](#) on November 22, Katten’s Los Angeles – Century City office—in association with [Public Counsel’s Adoption Project](#)—teamed up with Paramount-Viacom attorneys to assist low-income families in adopting more than 20 children. The attorneys, who



included Litigation and Dispute Resolution associates **Jessica Mickelsen**, **Brian Tanada** and **James Payer** and Real Estate associate **Wendi Sklaver**, worked with the families to obtain access to adoption-assistance benefits and other special services. The program also hosted the first-ever cookie table at the National Adoption Day in the Edelman Children’s Court, distributing 400 cookies to appreciative families and volunteers on a Saturday morning as they celebrated the finalized adoptions. Los Angeles – Century City Litigation and Dispute Resolution associate **James Payer** assisted as a family adopted 10-year-old foster son Anthony. James commented: “I’m in awe of what this family is doing and their devotion to Anthony. You have to have an open heart to welcome a child into your family.”

Washington, DC Attorneys Assist District of Columbia in Second Amendment Challenge

Washington, DC Litigation and Dispute Resolution partner **Howard Rubin** and associate **Daniel Lipton** provided assistance in preparing and filing an *amicus* brief in the third appeal to come to the US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit in *Heller v. District of Columbia*. The *amici* represented are the Major Cities Chiefs of Police Association, the US Conference of Mayors and the International Municipal Lawyers Association. The case involves a Second Amendment challenge to the District of Columbia's firearm-registration requirements, which were revised after the Supreme Court declared the district's handgun ban unconstitutional in 2008. The court ruled that the District of Columbia's registration requirements for long guns and handguns survived intermediate scrutiny. Plaintiffs have appealed that decision. Professor Lawrence Rosenthal of the Chapman University Fowler School of Law is the principal author of the *amicus* brief, which is being filed in support of the District of Columbia and affirmance.

Chicago Attorneys File Amicus Brief on Behalf of Gun-Safety Advocates



As part of the firm's continuing representation of the [Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence](#), a team of Katten attorneys recently filed a brief *amici curiae* on behalf of the Law Center, the City of Chicago and Cook County (Illinois) State's Attorney Anita M. Alvarez in the US Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. The case involves a Second Amendment challenge to an ordinance enacted by the City of Highland Park, Illinois, in the wake of the Newtown tragedy, that bans assault weapons and large-capacity ammunition magazines. The City of Chicago and Cook County have ordinances similar to the challenged Highland Park ordinance. Director of Pro Bono Services **Jonathan Baum** and Chicago Litigation and Dispute Resolution associate **Thomas Peabody** worked on the brief.

Los Angeles – Century City Associate Obtains Benefits for Adoptive Parent



Los Angeles – Century City Intellectual Property associate **Soyoung Jung**, through [Public Counsel's Adoption Project](#), represented Lydia Isabel Sanchez in the adoption of her niece and nephew, Adelina Sanchez and Jorge Galdamez. Soyoung helped the adoptive parent receive financial benefits for special-needs adoptee Jorge from the Department of Children and Family Services in the form of retroactive Foster Care and Adoption Assistance Program payments totaling \$22,134. At the conclusion of the representation, Rachel Stein from Public Counsel wrote to Los Angeles – Century City associates **Jessica Mickelsen** and **Brian Tanada**, chairs of the Katten-Public Counsel Pro Bono Adoption program:

Soyoung may have already mentioned this to you, but DCFS recently informed her that her request for Jorge's AAP rate to be increased to the D Rate was granted, and her request for about 2.5 years of retroactive foster care and AAP benefits at the D Rate was also granted. As you know, D Rate approval is always challenging to obtain, and it can be even more challenging to obtain retroactive D Rate benefits for a client. She did some great advocacy first through her written Inquiry and then through her subsequent communications with various ARAs at DCFS. I just wanted you to know what fantastic work she's done on this case.

Washington, DC Associate Honored With Amara Legal Center Leadership Award



Washington, DC Structured Finance and Securitization associate **Brandon Hadley** received the Outstanding Board of Directors Leadership Award from the [Amara Legal Center](#), which provides free legal services to domestic survivors of sex trafficking. Brandon was recognized for his service on the board of directors and for his pro bono work.

Derek Ladgenski Joins Regional Easter Seals Board of Directors

Chicago Commercial Finance partner **Derek Ladgenski** joined the board of directors at [Easter Seals DuPage and Fox Valley](#).



Austin Office Hosts Environmental Luncheon to Benefit Charities

On December 9, Katten's Austin office co-hosted and sponsored the annual Environmental Ladies Who Lunch event in Austin, Texas. This year, the luncheon was attended by more than 170 environmental practitioners, including attorneys from Katten's Austin and Houston offices. The event collected monetary donations and wish-list items for two nonprofit organizations: [My Healing Place](#), which employs therapy, education, training and consultation to assist children and adults who have experienced loss; and [GENaustin](#), whose mission is to support and guide girls through education, mentoring and leadership programs as they navigate the pressures of girlhood. Austin Environmental partner **Sara Burgin** and associate **Katie Bennett Hobson**, who serve on the Environmental Ladies Who Lunch hostess committee, organized the event.



Los Angeles – Downtown and Century City Attorneys and Staff Volunteer at Holiday Party for Vista Del Mar Child and Family Services

On December 8, the Los Angeles – Downtown and Century City offices held their third annual holiday party for 37 children at [Vista Del Mar Child and Family Services](#), a nonprofit agency that provides social, educational and behavioral health services to children and families throughout Southern California. Katten volunteers decorated the agency's gym with *Frozen*-themed décor and lighting, provided a taco bar and chocolate fountains, and filled the space with music from a live DJ. Partygoers enjoyed a photo booth and won Starbucks gift cards during games of bingo. Los Angeles – Century City partner **Stuart Richter**, co-head of the Class Action and Multidistrict Litigation practice, served as the event's Master of Ceremonies. Additionally, volunteer attorneys and staff paid for each child to receive a \$50 Target gift card.



Chicago Office Sponsors Holiday Book Drive for José de Diego Community Academy

The Chicago office donated nearly 800 books to as many students at [José de Diego Community Academy](#), which hosts the Katten Legal Clinic. Attorneys and staff purchased books from Barnes & Noble, and this year the firm reached its goal in just one week. Volunteers designed gift tags and wrapped the books, which students received just before their winter break.

New York Office Recognized for Donating to ThanksUSA

[ThanksUSA](#), an organization that provides scholarships to children and spouses of military personnel, recognized Katten's New York office in its annual newsletter. The firm donates unclaimed Yankees and Madison Square Garden tickets to the nonprofit, which in turn gives the tickets to military members through the USO in New York.



San Francisco Bay Area Office Donates Holiday Presents to Underserved Families

The San Francisco Bay Area office adopted three families for the holidays in conjunction with [Oakland Unified School District's Greenleaf Elementary School](#), which is located in an underserved area of East Oakland. Representatives of the office had a “wrapping event” for gifts they purchased and then delivered presents to the school administration along with Target gift cards to help the parents fund holiday meals for their families.