

FRIDAY, JUNE 16, 2017

Latham partner, nonprofit program help make adoptions happen

By Shane Nelson
Daily Journal Staff Writer

For finance attorney Kimberly A. Posin, there's no better time of year than Adoption Day at the Edmund D. Edelman Children's Court.

The Latham & Watkins LLP partner said the Monterey Park building can often be a heart-wrenching destination, one serving for much of the year as a backdrop to bitter custody disputes or dependency hearings involving child abuse and neglect. But on Adoption Days, quarterly dates on which the court hears only adoptions, Posin said the place transforms.

"Everybody is happy because everybody is being adopted," she explained. "The children are excited, and they're all dressed up in their Sunday finest. ... It's just such a wonderful feeling to see these kids getting a new shot at life."

Posin manages Latham's pro bono adoption project with the Alliance for Children's Rights, a nonprofit partnering with the Los Angeles Children's Court and the Department of Children and Family Services to expedite adoptions for foster children, who often come from low-income beginnings and have frequently been neglected or abused.

The Alliance adoption program started in 1998, under leadership from then presiding Juvenile Court Judge Michael Nash and guidance from Cynthia Billey, a longtime attorney and current director for the Alliance's foster

care adoptions program.

"At that time, there was this huge backlog of children waiting for adoption in foster care," Billey said of Los Angeles County. "There were probably 10,000 kids."

A lack of manpower was largely to blame, so the Alliance set out to enlist law firms willing to provide pro bono assistance to families trying to finalize adoptions. According to Billey, Latham was the first recruit.

"They jumped on from the getgo and finalized as many as 200 adoptions at a time during Adoption Days early on," she said.

Fast forward nearly two decades, and the Alliance has helped with more than 14,000 adoptions in Los Angeles County. Meanwhile, another 15 to 20 law firms have joined the effort, though Billey was quick to note Latham continues to handle the most cases.

Posin, who completed her first adoption for the Alliance as a 2001 summer associate at Latham, said each case requires anywhere from 10 to 20 hours, and work includes meeting with families, drafting and filing court documents and attending hearings. The paperwork alone can be a daunting undertaking for most adoptive families, according to Posin, who said the work is, however, typically "pretty easy" for any lawyer.

"Kim seems to motivate every single attorney that comes through Latham to want to do an adoption," Billey said, noting that Posin showed up to one Adoption



Courtesy of Latham & Watkins LLP

From top left, Jared Goldstein, former Latham & Watkins associate; Vicki Marmorstein, Latham & Watkins partner in Los Angeles and New York; Kimberly Posin, Latham & Watkins partner in Los Angeles; and Evie Gallardo, Latham & Watkins paralegal in Los Angeles with a family they helped on an Adoption Day.

Day 8½ months pregnant. "She really rallies and inspires people."

Latham completed its 1,000th adoption this spring, assisting Gabriela Luna and her husband to adopt their 9-year-old granddaughter, Mia, on an Adoption Day held May 5.

"It just felt like we could breathe again," Luna said of her sentiments once the adoption was final. "We were always on pins and needles, worrying about what would happen next. And just hearing you're now the parents and can freely protect her and take care of her without worrying she might be taken away, it was like a huge weight fell off our shoulders."

Luna said Mia spent more than three years in the foster care system, a time frame complicated by sporadic protests from the paternal father, who Luna said

verbally and physically abused her granddaughter. Deeply grateful, Luna admitted she'd begun to think the adoption process would never end before the Alliance and Latham became involved.

"30 days turned into six months and then another six months and then another," she said. "Every time we went to court, it was like they pulled the rug out from under our feet."

For Posin, it's stories like the Lunas' that make Latham's adoption program work so meaningful.

"It's one of the most rewarding experiences I've ever had," she said. "These children have nowhere else to turn, and without us helping them and their adoptive parents navigate through this process, they're going to get lost in the shuffle."