

PRESS RELEASE

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SHARTSIS FRIESE FUNDS FELLOWSHIP AT BAY AREA LEGAL AID TO HELP END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Three-year fellowship will help hundreds of
San Mateo County residents escape domestic violence.

San Mateo, CA – Survivors of domestic violence will have greater access to legal services in San Mateo County thanks to the Shartsis Friese Public Interest Fellowship.

Shartsis Friese LLP is pleased and honored to announce that the firm has selected Bay Area Legal Aid as the recipient organization for the second three-year Shartsis Friese Public Interest Fellowship. Established by the firm in 2004, the Shartsis Friese Public Interest Fellowship was founded to help serve those members of the Bay Area community who cannot afford needed legal services. The Fellowship funds a staff attorney position at a local legal services organization each year for a three-year term. Each staff attorney, or Shartsis Friese Fellow, provides direct legal services to Bay Area residents in need of legal assistance. “We are very happy to have this opportunity to partner with Bay Area Legal Aid to assist in their critical, ongoing work in our community,” said Geoffrey Haynes, Shartsis Friese LLP partner and chair of the firm’s Fellowship Committee.

The three-year Shartsis Friese Public Interest Fellowship awarded to Bay Area Legal Aid provides for an additional full-time advocate to work in San Mateo County helping families that have fallen victim to domestic violence escape their abusers and create safe, stable lives for themselves and their children.

“We know that access to quality legal assistance is a key factor in helping families escape abusive situations. Due to limited resources, no legal services provider in the region can meet the demand for services. However, thanks to Shartsis Friese more families will get the help they need.” Ramón Arias, Executive Director of Bay Area Legal Aid.

Christina Varner will serve as the first year fellow. Varner received her undergraduate degree from the University of California, Santa Cruz in women's studies and communication. In 2007, she received her J.D. from New College of California, School of Law. Varner is fluent in both English and Spanish and has worked in immigration, family and housing law for over eight years.

Varner will work with two BayLegal family law attorneys in San Mateo County providing legal representation to domestic violence survivors. Varner will take a holistic approach to helping families escape domestic violence by providing a full range of legal services designed to stabilize each family; including assistance with restraining orders, divorces, access to affordable housing, and related immigration issues.

Varner served as a legal intern in 2005 at BayLegal's San Mateo County office. During that time she assisted domestic violence survivors with restraining order applications as well as with immigration matters under the Violence Against Women Act.

About BayLegal: BayLegal is a recognized leader in advocating for victims of domestic violence. BayLegal provides legal assistance in obtaining restraining orders, divorces, and safe custody and visitation orders. In 2006, BayLegal assisted more than 3,697 families throughout the Bay Area on domestic violence matters.

Founded in San Francisco in 1975, Shartsis Friese LLP has over 50 lawyers. The firm has extensive trial and business litigation experience and a complex transactional practice focused on investment advisers, corporate finance, mergers and acquisitions, securities, tax, venture capital, intellectual property and real estate. Shartsis Friese is proud to have been listed among the Top Corporate Philanthropists in the Greater Bay Area by San Francisco Business Times in the 2006 Corporate Philanthropy section.

For more information on the Shartsis Friese Public Interest Fellowship, please contact Jerel McCrary, Bay Area Legal Aid, at (510) 250-5224, or Amy L. Hesperheide, Shartsis Friese LLP, at (415) 421-6500.