



## Lawyers Giving Back Member Profile

With a focus on community service, Bar Report's "Meet the Member" feature now profiles a member who has contributed to the community at large. In this issue we meet San Diego lawyer **David M. Balfour**

### What is your favorite quote?

"Only those who risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go."  
~ TS Elliot

**Favorite Book:** Recently it is Hernando de Soto's *The Mystery of Capital*, Greg Mortenson's *Three Cups of Tea*, and Muhammed Yunus' *Banker for the Poor*. Classic: F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

### My favorite thing about being an attorney is...

Having a client tell you that -- win or lose-- you got their story out in the way they wanted it to be told. Winning is nice, too!

### What types of community service initiatives are you currently involved with?

I am currently the President of the Board of Directors and an active volunteer with Genesis International Orphanage Foundation. Working together with our sister Mexican non-profit Genesis Diez, A.C., we seek to provide educationally enriching experiences for many of the 5000 children in Baja California, Mexico within orphanages (most of whom are there because the state took them away from abusive parents), children of migrant families

working in the fields, and for disabled children requiring special medical attention. Our main program pairs up U.S. teenagers with Mexican children one-on-one at weeklong camps. The personal attention and family-vacation style experiences allow the children to expand their horizons and dream big. One idea in the dream phase for Genesis is to help the Mexican government launch a program in Tijuana to move the kids from the streets where they sell gum and souvenirs, into school, where they can entertain ideas of brighter futures. More information on the program can be found at [www.giof.org](http://www.giof.org).

### What does community service mean to you?

Community service is about helping people, being a part of something larger than yourself, connecting with others to fulfill an unmet need, and in the process transforming your own life for the better. Community

service works best when people ask hard questions about how we can improve the experiences and opportunities of other people, and then strive to form creative solutions to overcome the obstacles faced.

### Why are you passionate about serving your community? I've been



**David M. Balfour**  
DiCaro, Coppo & Popcke  
Yale University, BA Economics 1996;  
UC Hastings College of the Law,  
JD 1999

### Areas of Practice:

- Healthcare Litigation,
- Medical Malpractice Defense,
- Professional License Defense

**Birthplace:** Honolulu, Hawaii.  
Raised in San Diego.

**Current Area of Residence:**  
Carmel Valley

blessed in how I was raised by my parents and in the opportunities afforded to me throughout my life. Community service is a way to pay it forward. Serving others, particularly those less fortunate, is a good way to stay grounded, to keep perspective, and to learn how to never take the richness in your life for granted. And if you're participating in something

you enjoy, the feeling of personal satisfaction is hard to beat.

### Who do you look to for inspiration in and out of the legal community?

Inside the legal community, my wife, Elizabeth, a partner at Sheppard, Mullin. She has helped many through the SDCBA Children at Risk

Committee as well as the Womens' Resource Fair, and she's now an SDCBA Director. She's a tough act to follow, and she pulls it off gracefully. Outside of the legal

community, the founder of Genesis, Greg Amstutz, and his wife Patti. With the way they've dedicated their lives to bettering the lives of the children, they're pretty much the Baja equivalent of Greg Mortenson. I admire them greatly.

### How would you encourage others to give back?

Find something you are passionate about and set

aside one day in the next 12 months to do something about it. I know from my volunteering with Genesis that one day spent with a child can transform his or her life -- I've witnessed it happen and seen the smiles on their faces!

### The best thing about participating in community service projects/giving back/doing pro bono work is...

We are trained as attorneys to identify issues and to craft solutions, and most of us started into the legal profession to help others. I like using the skills I've developed as an attorney to be a persuasive voice and problem solver to better people's lives. For example, this year Genesis started a program in partnership with the Mexican government to get migrant kids into school; the children are required to have an official birth certificate to enroll and most of the indigenous children, as well as their parents, do not. We're trying to figure out ways to streamline the current, lengthy legal process to obtain the birth certificates, so these kids can get into school.