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L.A. Trial Lawyers' Charities is CAALA's endorsed charity

IMPLEMENTING DAVID BALL'S ADVICE ON HOW TO CHANGE THE IMAGE OF TRIAL ATTORNEYS

When I joined CAALA as Communications Director in 2004, the first thing I tried to understand was why the public perception of trial lawyers was so bad and what could be done about it. As you know firsthand, those two issues remain with us today, and are still the greatest challenges facing CAALA's attorney members.

One of the first things I read that addressed those two questions was the book "*David Ball on Damages*." Ball, of course, is the renowned jury consultant who has written and spoken extensively about how trial attorneys communicate with the public.

Ball devoted an entire chapter to explain what trial attorneys can do to change their public image. It was Chapter 11. I still have the hard copy of the book with the underlines, highlights and sticky notes attached.

Ball wrote that, "As much as one-third of the jury pool is poisoned. They believe that trial lawyers are dishonest; predatory; pathologically greedy; responsible for driving doctors, businesses and jobs out of the state; damaging to American businesses by placing them at a disadvantage with foreign competitors no one sues; and akin to a kind of domestic internal terrorist."

Sorry readers, but those words still ring true in the minds of many jurors and members of the public who do not support the work done by trial lawyers.

Let them see you are different

So, what can be done to change those negative images? Ball had an answer 17 years ago that is still true. He wrote, "You must let the public see that you are different from the indelible stereotype that many now have of your profession. Start doing things that help people in ways that do not profit you and find ways to let your community know about

them." Ball's advice included the suggestion that you should say you are part of an organization dedicated to helping people. When I read those words in 2004, I found them to be powerful, but they were recommendations that were easier written than accomplished. That was true until Bruce Traney and 35 Founding Friends created Los Angeles Trial Lawyers' Charities in 2006.

Traney and trial attorneys such as Mike Alder, David deRubertis, Arash Homampour, and Jill McDonnell believed that "if plaintiff attorneys joined together, they could make a real difference in Los Angeles." The group's slogan was "Justice in the Courtroom. Service in the Community."

In subsequent years attorneys like Pejman Ben-Cohen, Joe Barrett, Bob Simon, Minh Nguyen, Aimee Kirby, and Scott Corwin picked up the mantle of leadership and achieved accomplishments unimaginable in 2006. Most of LATLC's leaders are CAALA members, but LATLC and CAALA are distinctly separate non-profit entities. The only formal connection is that LATLC is CAALA's endorsed charity.

\$5 million to charitable causes

In the past ten years, LATLC has grown into a nationally recognized charitable organization. It has more than 3,000 supporters and partners with 106 non-profits. LATLC also provides youth-sports grants and college scholarships to needy young people throughout Southern California. In 2019, LATLC's supporters from throughout the legal community volunteered more than 2,000 hours at the various service projects presented by LATLC. What is most remarkable, however, is that since 2006, LATLC has given more than \$5 million dollars to the community in grants, gifts, and goods; all provided by an organization with "Trial Lawyers" in its name.

LATLC continues to grow and do more for people in need throughout Southern California. Recently, LATLC expanded to Orange County with the creation of OCTLC, the Orange County Trial Lawyers' Charities.

Growing by serving the community in a meaningful way is exactly what David Ball described when he wrote "do things that help people besides yourselves. Don't sell your services, don't even talk about them. This is your chance to give something back in a useful way."

The Summer Soiree, August 14

Once a year LATLC takes time from doing things for others to put on a fun-filled event that benefits LATLC's partner charities and celebrates LATLC's supporters. It is a party with a purpose that has become a "can't miss" event for members of the Los Angeles Legal Community.

This year's event is the inaugural LATLC "Summer Soiree," and it will be held at the Intercontinental Hotel DTLA on Saturday, August 14. It will be a night of great food, dancing, music, and fun like no other. The night includes an incredible silent auction and activities like silent disco, live-band karaoke, and Mystery Wine drawings. This is your chance to get dressed up and get back to normal with a great social night out with your friends and peers. And it is a night that brings special attention to the Partner Charities that receive support from LATLC.

If you are a trial lawyer, you know how important it is to change the public perception of your profession. Getting involved with LATLC is a way to bring about that change and attending the LATLC Summer Soiree is a great way to start. You can register to attend by visiting the LATLC website at www.latlc.org.

Slowly, but surely, the advice of David Ball is working. Getting involved with LATLC is fun, it is good for your soul, and it is good for your practice.