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New Focus Helps Center Raise Funds

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LOS ANGELES-The Inner City Law Center has more than doubled the amount of money the organization raised last year through its annual fundraising luncheon. "And last year was our biggest year ever," said executive director Adam Murray, who joined Inner City a little more than a year ago.

Already, \$260,000 has been generated in connection with this year's luncheon, which takes place today at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel.

The success in fundraising for this year's event has a lot to do with the organization's newly expanded mission. "It gave the fundraising a sharper focus," said board president Dan Woods of White & Case. "We were raising money for specific priorities we had established."

Topping the list of priorities the board identified earlier this year is the creation of a policy position. "We wanted the center to play a bigger role in helping to shape the community's

views on homelessness, for example," Woods said. "We identified a need for someone to speak for our other clients in shaping public policy in this town. "Our lawyers and advocates do a wonderful job focusing on the cases and clients in front of them. But they don't have the time to step back and look at the bigger picture." The new director of policy will give Inner City more influence on city and county policy decisions.

Murray said the organization also will expand its capacity to utilize pro bono resources in the community and will hire an additional person to work on homeless veteran issues.

The Inner City Law Center is the only legal nonprofit housed on Skid Row. The organization was formed in 1980 to address the needs of those living on the streets and in the area's missions and residency hotels. In the decades since its inception, the center has developed an expertise on slum housing and eviction, and shifted its focus to address those issues throughout the city.

But in the last few years, as gentrification swept the downtown area, the need for legal assistance on Skid Row grew. Rising property values and a controversial policing initiative created new types

of legal challenges. And Murray felt the organization was uniquely situated to address them.

"There aren't a lot of organizations dealing with the legal issues of Skid Row, and our physical presence on Skid Row is a huge asset," he said. "We don't want to lose the expertise and presence we have on slum housing issues, but we want to add to that."

The increase in funding, Murray said, will make that possible.

This year's luncheon will honor U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Harry Pregerson with the organization's Humanitarian Award. "He's a giant in the progressive legal community," Murray said. "Over the years, he's been involved in many of the issues that are important to our clients."

The organization's Katherine Krause Award, named after a former board member, will go to Toyota Motor Corp. for its work, through its foundation, with children and families in the inner city.

Woods said the board is energized by the proposed growth. He credits Murray with moving the organization in an exciting new direction at a critical time. "And he's only been here a year," Woods said.