

Spotlight on California SALDF Chapters: Working Together to Create the Annual California Symposium on Animal Law

On September 13th 2014, twelve California SALDF chapters came together to create the second annual [California Symposium on Animal Law](#) (Cal Sym). Cal Sym was initially the idea of Golden Gate University (GGU) alumni Rachel Brockl, who directed the first Cal Sym last year in March 2013. Both symposia were generously supported by [chapter project grants](#) from ALDF. This year's sold-out symposium was a huge success, with attendance increasing by 40% over the past year and reflecting the collaboration of the following SALDF chapters across California:

- Golden Gate University School of Law in San Francisco
- John F. Kennedy University College of Law in Pleasant Hill
- University of La Verne College of Law in Ontario
- Loyola Law School in Los Angeles
- Santa Clara University School of Law in Santa Clara
- Stanford Law School in Palo Alto
- UC Berkeley School of Law in Berkeley
- UC Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco
- UC Irvine School of Law in Irvine
- UCLA School of Law in Los Angeles
- University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law in Sacramento
- Whittier Law School in Costa Mesa

Coordinating this multi-chapter event took a herculean effort from its central coordinator, GGU SALDF, led by chapter officers Camille Glover Stough, Kelly Murray, and Sara Dudley. GGU SALDF began their work in early spring for the fall conference, with the primary task of inviting chapters to host their own panels. For other chapters interested in planning a regional event, Camille advises that “[t]he best way to get chapters involved is to contact them individually with a focus on how each chapter can benefit from participating. They don't always realize how many people you can meet, both peers and mentors, and the professional opportunities available to them from being part of a collaborative event.”

In early spring, GGU SALDF researched and contacted possible keynote speakers, who ultimately included Nathan Runkle, founder and executive director of Mercy for Animals, and award-winning journalist David Grimm, author of *Citizen Canine: Our Evolving Relationship with Cats and Dogs*, who also did a book reading at a special cocktail reception following the day's panels and closing remarks.

Participating chapters chose their own animal law topics and reached out to potential speakers with an invitation to be a part of their panel. ALDF staff who participated as guest panelists included Joyce Tischler (founder and general counsel), Matthew Liebman (senior attorney), Chris Berry (staff attorney), and Jeff Pierce (litigation fellow). Nicole Pallotta, ALDF's student programs coordinator, was also in attendance to network with SALDF members.

Also in the early spring, GGU SALDF promoted the event by building the event [website](#) and cross promoting with local animal advocacy groups. Camille updated the website throughout the summer to reflect the latest information, including panel and speaker information and registration details as they became available. She also reached out to the hosting chapter, Hastings SALDF, to obtain thorough facility information such as driving, parking, and public transit directions.

No amount of promotion is too much and one can never start too soon. Kelly Murray advises SALDF chapters putting on their own statewide symposium to start writing a weekly blog on the event website, or to partner with local bloggers interested in animal welfare or legal issues, to help raise awareness of the event and drive people to the event website. Sara Dudley also reached out to local nonprofit organizations, bar associations, and law firms to blast emails to their own networks regarding the event.

By June, weekly emails from Camille with a clear list of action items helped to keep chapters informed about what everyone needed to do to make the event succeed. A shared database within [PBworks.com](https://pbworks.com) enabled chapters to share speaker ideas and provide a broad and non-redundant range of topics, which eventually included horse protection, environmentalism, animal experimentation, careers in animal law, animals in entertainment, international law, farmed animals and the agriculture industry, and more. (Find the full range of topics and speakers, [here](#)). The database was also used to record meeting notes and progress on various aspects of the event, including hotel accommodations, catering options, and marketing efforts.

Once speakers had confirmed participation, they were asked to create a packet of information regarding their presentation for attendees who sought continuing legal education (CLE) credit, so that the event complied with California State Bar CEC requirements. CLE coordinator Sara Dudley began research in June to make sure participating chapters and their speakers had ample time to prepare those necessary materials.

Almost as important as securing speakers was finding a venue that would be convenient, attractive, and able to accommodate the expected crowd. Camille reached out to the Hastings SALDF chapter outgoing president Mary Vegher and incoming president Megan Miller, who both welcomed the opportunity to host the conference at their campus. Megan coordinated with Camille that June and July to secure the appropriate spaces, which included a main reception hall and classrooms for the panels. As the best spaces tend to fill up, Megan and Camille met with Hastings facilities coordinators two months ahead of time to secure a space with the necessary technical, spatial, and aesthetic requirements. As soon as the date was set, the team reached out to quality local hotels, seeking a courtesy block for conference participants. Kelly Murray

advises starting this process as early as possible, as a delay can mean restricted options, especially if the chosen weekend is a busy one with competing local events.

Also in June, catering coordinator Kelly Murray started researching potential sponsors, as well as caterers that could provide delicious vegan food and drinks for breakfast, lunch, and the post-panel reception. This involved calling numerous caterers and coordinating volunteers to help drive, drop, and load the goods on event day. [Cinnaholic](#) provided the event with a delicious discounted continental breakfast. Sweeta Khojman Catering provided a fantastic vegan Indian lunch that satisfied omnivores and herbivores alike. And the [Republic of V](#) Grocery Store supplied the reception with savory vegan appetizers.

Publicizing the event was also an important goal. In July, Camille and her team created fliers and promotional materials and distributed those to SALDF leaders at participating schools; they also posted fliers in local stores and restaurants, blasted emails to various animal-related groups, and circulated blurbs to school bulletins and student organizations. As more people began registering, Camille also responded to guest inquiries and started assembling the list of attendees.

Camille encouraged participating chapters to provide their speakers with a gift and provided a wrapped gift option for participating schools. During the summer, GGU SALDF also began securing non-profit groups to have information tables about other animal law issues between sessions, creating guest packet materials to distribute at the event, and finalizing all hotel, speaker, guest, and catering arrangements. In addition, Camille coordinated with Hastings SALDF officer Laura Hagen and the Hastings Media Services Department to train volunteers to respond to technical needs at each panel.

In August, Camille collaborated with participating SALDF chapters to recruit volunteers, increase event promotion, and to manage volunteers at the event itself. This included assigning volunteers to specific tasks such as preparing guest packets, checking in guests, guiding speakers to their rooms and introducing them to the audience, directing attendees, and helping to set up and break down meals and keep the space clean. Volunteers gained free admission to the entire event.

For those who worked the whole event, it was a full and exciting day. We arrived at seven in the morning. Tables, chairs, and the necessary media equipment had been set up the night before by the Hastings facilities team. We went to work putting out breakfast, setting up the registration table and guest packets, ensuring presentation rooms were properly equipped, and checking in guests. As the morning panels got underway, we set up lunch and oriented new volunteers. During the afternoon panels, we set up the reception in the historic Sky Room on the Hastings campus, where morning keynote speaker and author David Grimm was scheduled to read from his new book at a post-panel cocktail hour.

Thanks to incredible collaboration from each participating SALDF chapter and the persistent efforts of the GGU SALDF, the symposium was a huge success! The speakers brought incredible expertise and knowledge ranging across every area of animal law. The audience was excited and engaged, and we received excellent feedback from attendees. Finally, SALDF chapter members from different schools had the opportunity to meet one another, network, and share ideas. In short, the event provided a forum for professionals and students to learn, network, and be inspired to advocate for animal protection in California and beyond. For SALDF chapters interested in planning their own collaborative regional event, a more detailed timeline follows.

Planning Timeline (for September Symposium)

Spring 2014:

- Contact chapters for participation.
- Find keynote speakers for morning and lunch presentations.
- Build the event [website](#) and revise as needed.
- Start promoting the event, and continue to do so throughout the year.

June 2014:

- Begin coordinating speakers and topics with each chapter.
- Research catering options.
- Research how to offer CLE credits.
- Contact potential sponsors.
- Reserve and coordinate facility needs.
- Contact hotels as soon as the conference date is set.

July 2014:

- Market event with help of all chapters, including flyering in communities, blasting email lists, posting to school bulletins, bar associations, law firms, and more.
- Handle registration fees and information.

August - September 2014:

- Technical support and coordination.
- Finalization of catering needs.
- Finalizing speaker hotel needs.
- Finalizing speakers/topics and chapter needs and concerns.
- Finalization of sponsors and CLE requirements.
- Preparing all programs, attendee packets, and speaker gifts.
- Coordinate with non-profit organizations for tabling at event.

This student chapter spotlight was submitted by Megan Miller, SALDF regional representative for the San Francisco Bay Area and president of the UC Hastings SALDF.