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SPECIAL SECTION



Highlighting
PRO BONO
in New Mexico

“JAM FOR JUSTICE” ART SHOW

Showcases Creativity and Community in Support of Access to Justice

Equal Access to Justice (“EAJ”) launched its “Jam for Justice” art show on March 6 at FUSION | 708 in Albuquerque, bringing together members of New Mexico’s legal community for an evening that highlighted both artistic expression and a shared commitment to access to justice.



*“No Where to Run,”
by Cynthia Kolson*



*“Meadowlark Mornings,”
by Debora Ratliff*



*“Candy Colored Pueblo,”
by Don Vigil*



*“Wild Seeds #3,”
by Joseph Riggs*

The opening night was well-attended, with members of the legal community and artists gathering to view a diverse collection of artwork created by legal professionals. The exhibition, which ran from March 6 through March 29, offered a unique platform for members of the legal community to share creative work beyond the courtroom. “Jam for Justice” included a live music component on March 11, extending the event’s representation to those with musical talents.

A portion of the proceeds support Equal Access to Justice and their civil legal aid partners.

According to EAJ, the event serves as more than an exhibition; it creates space for connection within the profession. “Jam for Justice” creates a space where New Mexico’s legal community can connect in a different way - through creativity, music and shared experience,” the non-profit shared. “It strengthens relationships, encourages collaboration and reminds us of the human side of the work we do.”

Participating artists reflected on the relationship between their legal careers and creative pursuits. Debora Ratliff, a retired trial



*New Mexico artist and former State Bar of New Mexico
Paralegal Division Chair Meryl Sutton presents her artwork.*

lawyer, described storytelling as a common thread between both disciplines. “As a trial lawyer, my favorite moment in any new case was drafting the initial pleading: the chance to weave the facts into a compelling tale,” she said, adding that her artwork now carries “memories, experiences and feelings” layered into each piece.

For Cynthia Kolson, artistic and legal work share a foundation in observation and problem-solving. “My legal career required careful observations, analyzing issues and problem-solving,” she said. “In my studio, I approach a painting in a similar way but also relying on my intuition and visual expression.”

Don Vigil noted that while his legal work required structure, his artistic process allows for a different form of expression. “Rather than trying to reproduce what I see, I am more interested in conveying what I feel and messaging it to the viewer through my work,” he said.

For many artists, participation in “Jam for Justice” also reflects a continued commitment to service. Ratliff emphasized the importance of supporting legal aid efforts, noting that “legal aid organizations do essential work expanding access to justice...supporting them through my art and participation in “Jam for Justice” feels like a meaningful way to give back.”

EAJ highlighted that the exhibition helps make civil legal aid work more accessible and relatable to the broader community. “Art helps make the work more relatable, humanizing the issues New Mexicans face and inspiring people to take action,” the organization stated.

The artwork itself reflects New Mexico’s distinct landscape and culture, with many artists drawing inspiration from the state’s environment. Vigil, for example, pointed to the “mesas, arroyos, mountains, cacti and buttes” as recurring influences in his work.

Through events like “Jam for Justice”, the legal community is presented with an opportunity to engage in a different kind of dialogue that highlights creativity, perspective and shared purpose. As EAJ noted, the exhibition underscores “the depth, creativity and humanity of those who work in the legal field,” offering a broader view of the people behind the profession.

To learn more about EAJ and to get involved in next year’s “Jam for Justice,” please contact Heather Norfleet (heather@ej-nm.org). Visit www.eaj-nm.org/jam-for-justice for more details. ■

The composition of this article was supported by the use of artificial intelligence to assist in organizing source materials and synthesizing interview responses, followed by State Bar of New Mexico staff review.



New Mexico artist and legal community member Jonathan Miller presents his artwork.



New Mexico artist and legal community member Don Vigil presents his artwork.



Emma D'Angelico, an artist and law school student, and legal community member Brian Colón present Emma's artwork.