



Introducing SOLACE

A Member Benefit for Life's "What Ifs"

BY DICK GAST

While navigating life's bumpy road, we tend to ask ourselves a series of "what ifs." What if cancer strikes me or a loved one? What if my home or office burns down? What if I'm injured in a car accident? We may think we're prepared for these "what ifs," but we can never truly be prepared for everything. The road ahead is full of surprises.

That's why I'm proud to announce a new CBA member benefit: the SOLACE program. SOLACE, which stands for "Support of Lawyers/Legal Personnel—All Concern Encouraged," is a support network for the legal community. In Colorado, this community comprises judges, lawyers, paralegals, legal assistants, and court reporters, as well as anyone employed by a law firm, a court, or the CBA, and their family members. When someone in this community

experiences a potentially life-changing event—such as a death, catastrophic event, illness, injury, or other personal crisis—the individual, or a family member, can turn to SOLACE for compassionate support.

Assistance When It's Needed Most

SOLACE has been successfully implemented in more than 20 states and will be a wonderful benefit for the Colorado legal community. The program was founded in New Orleans by the Honorable Jay Zainey, a U.S. district court judge for the Eastern District of Louisiana, and Mark C. Suprenant, a New Orleans lawyer. In 2002, Suprenant's wife, also a New Orleans lawyer, fell ill. She went on to recover from her illness, but the experience led Suprenant to believe there were likely many others like him who could use a helping hand in difficult times.

SOLACE was born when he created a network of members in the legal community who could respond when someone in that same community needed assistance.

The beauty of SOLACE is that it does not require a large commitment from participants, while the benefit to the person in need is significant. The tagline "nothing too big, nothing too small" reminds SOLACE participants that when any legal community member is in need, whether the need is seemingly insurmountable or trivial, that member can contact SOLACE for assistance.

Here are just a few examples of SOLACE success stories from other states:

- A solo practitioner lost everything when her office was consumed by a fire. She contacted SOLACE seeking assistance on a Saturday and announced on the following Monday that all her computer and furniture needs had been met.
- A single mother paralegal was diagnosed with Stage IV cancer and wanted to take her children to Disney World while she still had the strength to travel. Within 24 hours, members of the SOLACE network had offered airline miles, vacation homes, and more.
- A lawyer was dealing with a serious illness and had to undergo brain surgery. In the midst of all that, her mortgage company began foreclosing its mortgage against her home. Several members of the SOLACE network stepped up to negotiate with the mortgage company and put a stop to the foreclosure.
- A legal aid lawyer had a stroke while carrying a caseload of 42 active cases. Lawyers from the SOLACE network collaborated to manage those cases to their conclusion.

How SOLACE Works

SOLACE is voluntary, simple, and straightforward. If you or someone in the Colorado legal community needs help, simply email SOLACE@cobar.org and describe the crisis and the needs. The email request will be reviewed by the CBA's SOLACE committee chair and/or committee members. Our fearless committee chair (and

energetic SOLACE program advocate) is LaMar Jost, a partner with Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell in Denver. LaMar will coordinate the review of requests and the responses. If the need fits within the program parameters, an email with the pertinent information will be sent to CBA members who have chosen to be part of the SOLACE listserv. Those wishing to help reply to the email and are then linked to the person in need.

All SOLACE requests are handled as discreetly as possible. The only parties who will know the identity of the person requesting help are the SOLACE coordinators and the individuals offering to help. Likewise, if you are helping out with a SOLACE request, the only parties who will know your identity are the SOLACE coordinators and the individual seeking help.

From time to time, CBA members will receive a request to sign up for the SOLACE email listserv through our bimonthly e-newsletter, C-Brief. The listserv will be used to send out notices about requests for assistance, with each request generating only one email. We know that your email inbox can fill up quickly, but rest assured, you can expect only one to two SOLACE emails per month. If you want to assist, the email will contain information on how to contact that person; if you cannot assist, there will be no further contact. You can unsubscribe from the SOLACE listserv at any time, and there is no cost to participate.


SOLACE does not solicit cash contributions but rather looks to tap into the legal community's network of contacts to deliver in-kind donations or non-monetary assistance, such as transportation, housing, or medical referrals. Other examples are gift cards, food/meals, blood donations, construction of a wheelchair ramp, assistance with transportation in a medical crisis, and so on. In the history of SOLACE, there has never been a request that did not receive a response.

Conclusion

Hopefully you will never need the services of SOLACE. However, if there comes a time when you do need help, the support of your Colorado legal community is only an email away. Other independent assistance programs available

to our members include the Colorado Lawyer Assistance Program (COLAP), Colorado Lawyers Helping Lawyers (CLHL), and the Waterman Fund.¹

I'm enthused about this new initiative and proud to see the CBA offering such a meaningful benefit to our members. Helping one another gives us the opportunity to make a lasting

difference and strengthen the ties that bind our legal community together. 

NOTE

1. For more information on these programs, visit www.cobar.org/For-Members/Confidential-Assistance-for-Lawyers.

COLORADO NUGGETS

Here it is January. In the Gast family, that means it's time to go skiing, regardless of whether or not we've been faithfully following a ski conditioning regimen. At this point in our lives, my wife, Bev, and I take an advisedly more cautious approach to skiing. Hoping to reverse our cautionary tendencies, our two sons, Charlie and Shaeffer, take great delight in luring us into the steepest, deepest powder stashes they can find.

The Gast family's skiing experience is a far cry from that of the early Colorado settlers. Forget about recreation—for the hardy miners working their claims in the Colorado high country during the late 1800s, skiing was a necessity. When snowfall was heavy, traveling the mountainous areas by wagon, train, or horse was out of the question. To the rescue came the Scandinavian miners, offering instruction on crafting skis and using them to travel through the mountain snow. Those skis proved to be mighty handy for getting around, be it heading to town for supplies, getting to school, or visiting friends in the next mining camp. And what about mail delivery? Well, the heroic mailmen of that era would strap on their 11-foot long boards, sling their 25-pound mailbags over their shoulders, and make their rounds from camp to camp, often traveling at night when the crusted snow made their deliveries a bit easier.

All that changed in the 20th century. With the advent of rope tows, T-bars, pomas, and chairlifts, ski areas began to spring up around the state. The 1930s saw the opening of Loveland and Monarch, and the ski industry gained even more momentum in the 1940s with the opening of Winter Park, Ski Cooper, A-Basin, and Aspen Mountain. We now have about 30 ski areas ("resorts" in modern day parlance) scattered around our fair state.

Where's the least likely place you'd expect to find a ski area in Colorado? How about in the prairie expanses of Weld County? A bit west of Greeley on a river bluff south of the Poudre River lies what used to be the Sharktooth ski area. (I won't throw in the "resort" word here.) Operating from 1971 to 1986, the area boasted the lowest elevation of any ski area ever operating in Colorado. Dust storms were as common as snow storms. Sharktooth had one rope tow, one run, and all of 150 feet vertical drop. As described by former owner Richard Perchlik, "The top five feet at Sharktooth are as steep as any run in Colorado." A lift ticket cost \$8 (\$6 for a child), hot cocoa was 25 cents, and if you needed to extend your day of skiing into the evening hours, Sharktooth even offered night skiing. While Sharktooth is now just a memory, it's a colorful slice of Colorado's skiing history.