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Office of the City Attorney's "Community Report Card" Wins National Award for Best Law Firm Publication

By John Russo

As many of you have heard me say in community meetings and speeches around town, in the Office of the City Attorney, we believe that you—the residents and business owners of Oakland—are really shareholders of the municipal corporation called the City of Oakland. And as shareholders, you are entitled to know how your taxpayer dollars are spent in the delivery of legal services.

Each September we publish *Law in Service of the Public—A Community Report Card* as a shareholders report on our financial performance, major legal initiatives and key cases resolved each fiscal year. It provides more detailed background and broader perspective about the cases and legal issues you read about in the paper. Although the big-ticket payouts make scintillating newspaper headlines, these cases represent only 1% of the total number of claims and lawsuits resolved each year.

Internally, the Community Report Card has become an effective management tool. By looking at five-year trends, we can measure our year-to-date performance in key management indices and correct course as necessary to achieve our annual financial performance goals.

Given the significance of this report to our internal and external communications efforts, we were honored when the prestigious national Burton Awards selected *Law in Service of the Public* to win second place for "Best Law Firm Publication." The awards ceremony, held at the magnificent Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., was attended by more than 250 guests including prominent senators, judges, the Chief Justice of the Texas Supreme Court, law students, and counsel from the nation's 500 largest law firms.

The award was presented by Bill Migneron, President of the Association of Legal Administrators, a 10,000-member association of law firm managers in the United States and 27 countries around the world. "The purpose of this award," he said, "was to select a communication piece that reflected the highest standards of professionalism. Content, presentation, writing, clarity and technique were considered."

The Burton Awards program is dedicated to refining and enriching legal writing. It rewards law firms and law students who use plain, modern language and avoid archaic, stilted legalese.

It is a tremendous honor for a municipal law firm like the Office of the City Attorney to be selected from a national pool of such high-caliber, private sector law firms. In receiving the award, our Legal Administration Manager Rosemarie Sanchez, said, “I would like to dedicate this special honor to the citizens of Oakland, whom we serve, and who are the real winners of this award.”

You can find *Law in Service of the Public—A Community Report Card* on our website at www.oaklandcityattorney.org. Watch for the next report card for fiscal year 2003-04 (just ended on June 30), which will be available in September.



Rosemarie Sanchez, our Legal Administration Manager, accepts the Burton Award from Bill Migneron, President of the Association of Legal Administrators, in the Great Hall of the Library of Congress.