



Judge Bryan Foster Tapped For Kaufman Campbell Award

by J' Amy Pacheco

Described as “an outstanding ambassador for the judiciary” and “richly deserving of this honor,” San Bernardino Judge Bryan F. Foster has been tapped to receive the Kaufman-Campbell Award from the San Bernardino County Bar Association May 18.

Named for former state Supreme Court Justice Marcus Kaufman and former Fourth District Court of Appeal Justice Joseph B. Campbell, the award honors jurists designated as having served on the bench with distinction and having made substantial contributions to the community as well as the practice of law.

Foster, who knew both Kaufman and Campbell, said being honored with their namesake award, “Takes my breath away.”

“I have never felt myself as something special,” he said. “I can’t believe people would suggest I would be in that classification. It’s amazing.”

Attorney Bill Weathers, who has known Foster for more than three decades, said Foster “was a superb trial lawyer who skillfully presented his cases, and I think those skills have helped him excel as a trial judge. He understands the practicalities of being a trial lawyer, and although he runs a tight ship, he also makes reasonable accommodations to the lawyers and parties.”

“Judge Foster is an outstanding ambassador for the judiciary and the legal community as a whole,” he observed. Weathers pointed out that Foster is active in continuing education, and has “created entertaining yet educational presentations for numerous bar associations and legal groups.”

“He’s also developed a unique PowerPoint program to educate prospective jurors on the voir dire and trial process,” Weathers added. “Judge Foster’s contributions to the legal community are significant and ongoing, and I can’t imagine a more deserving recipient of the prestigious Kaufman-Campbell Award.”

Attorney Jeffrey Raynes echoed those sentiments, saying Foster is “richly deserving of this honor.”

“He is universally respected by members of the bar for his accomplishments as a trial lawyer,” Raynes stated. “In that capacity, he was in the trenches and successfully so.”

“He took the lessons of lawyering to the bench,” Raynes continued. “He is punctual, unfailingly courteous, respectful and cooperative with counsel and most importantly, he is even-handed. He uses humor effectively and strategically. Lastly, it is my impression that the law and the power of the bench never interferes with his love of his family and the value of shared friendships.”

“Not flawless, he is an ardent SC Trojan,” he quipped.

Attorney David Driscoll was Foster’s partner before his appointment to the bench, and also has known Foster for more than 30 years.

“The law has always been his passion, particularly when it comes to factual analysis and getting to the heart of a dispute,” he said. “But aside from the technical aspects of legal analysis, Judge Foster has never lost sight of the human side of the equation that exists both as to the litigants and the jurors. He has always exhibited a special sensitivity to educating parties and jurors of the uniqueness and greatness of the American system of justice, sometimes to the point of giving them a history lesson dating all the way back to the Roman Empire.”

Driscoll observed of Foster that, “as an attorney and judge, it has been his goal to create an atmosphere where the court system is respected but not feared.”

“I am certain that Judge Foster has achieved these objectives during the course of his career and will continue to do so as long as he is on the bench,” he stated. “Judge Foster enjoys a deserved reputation for his civility and courtesies in and outside of the courtroom. The legal community is aware of his generosity with his time and his willingness to speak at seminars, awards ceremonies, legal association gatherings, etc. His excellence as a jurist has been well recognized in the legal community with awards from a variety of groups.”

Driscoll shared an anecdote that he said sums up Foster as a jurist as well as a “justifiable recipient of the Kaufman-Campbell Award.”

“One day while we were partners located in a large office building in downtown Riverside, a homeless woman suddenly appeared and situated herself on the ground outside the lobby door of the building, where she remained for most of the day,” he recalled. “The next day, I arrived early and discovered the homeless woman in Judge Foster’s office, sitting on a blanket and eating a sandwich in front of his desk. Judge Foster was seated at his desk busily reviewing a file as if there were nothing out of the ordinary. When I inquired, he told me she looked hungry and cold so he brought her into his office.”

“I asked him how long she was going to stay, and he simply replied, ‘as long as she needs to.’ Such empathy and compassion for persons in distress, whether it be persons in a legal dispute seeking justice or those in situations of dire humanitarian need, is at the core of Judge Foster and the reason he is an exemplary judge.”

Attorney Bill Shapiro described Foster as “a great selection.”

“I’ve known Judge Bryan Foster as a worthy adversary and trial lawyer; a model trial judge, a phenomenal husband and father and fortunately for me, as a great friend,” Shapiro said. “For over three decades, I’ve observed the traits that make up Bryan Foster.”

“He’s bright, dedicated, knowledgeable, sincere, humble, compassionate, stand-up, respectful, strong,

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thoughtful, punctual, realistic and humorous, while being a model of integrity, humility and civility,” Shapiro observed. “I could go on about Judge Foster; suffice to say this distinction is so fitting as he exemplifies the very qualities of Justice Kaufman and Judge/Justice Campbell, who again look down with great pride. Their rich tradition lives on.

“I join Judge Foster’s family, his fellow judges and justices and the members of our Bar in congratulating Judge Bryan Foster on this amazing and so richly deserved recognition.”

Judge Tara Reilly, who received the award in 2012, described Foster as “incredibly intelligent, big-hearted, and a steadfast supporter of the Rule of Law.”

“He makes his courtroom user-friendly, especially when it comes to providing an excellent working environment for jurors,” she opined. “He has an excellent sense of humor and always has a new, sometimes incredibly corny, joke at the ready for whoever will listen. He is a kind, fundamentally decent human being, an excellent jurist and colleague.”

A native of San Francisco, Foster was the first attorney in his family – and the first to attend college. He earned his undergraduate degree from the University of San Francisco, majoring in History, then decided to remain at the school to study law after realizing that “History companies weren’t hiring.”

After earning his law degree, he joined a private firm in the Bay Area that was of counsel to the San Francisco Housing Authority. In 1983, he relocated to the Inland Empire, where he remained in private practice until his appointment to the Superior Court bench by then-Gov. Gray Davis in 2003.

On the bench, he initially was appointed to Joshua Tree, where he “did a little bit of everything,” from a criminal calendar to traffic. He became the supervising judge in that court. He also handled Mental Health and Drug Court matters.

After Joshua Tree, he was assigned to the Central Courthouse, where he has had a civil courtroom for over five years.

Asked about his voir dire slideshow, Foster explained that a judge he met at a judicial conference sent him a copy of a PowerPoint tool he used in jury selection. Foster took “bits and pieces” of that presentation, and created one that explains the voir dire process using images and motion picture clips ranging from Thomas Jefferson to the donkey in the film “Shrek” calling, “Pick me! Pick me!”

“I know jury selection is dreary,” he said. “I wanted to make it so jurors wouldn’t feel intimidated; so they would open up to the attorneys. It gives them a sense that it’s not something to be afraid of. It’s important, and they should feel good about participating.”

Presiding Judge John Vander Feer, who received the Kaufman-Campbell Award in 2016, described Foster as, “Truly collegial.”

“I remember many years ago when Judge Bert Swift retired from the bench,” he recalled. “The retirement party was in the evening at a restaurant in Yucca Valley in the winter. I remember it was very cold and windy, and a storm was coming in. Judge Foster made the trip out there and shared some very kind memories and thoughts about Judge Swift. It really made Judge Swift feel special.”

He said Foster enjoys trying cases, and recalled that the jurist “took over a heavy trial calendar when he moved to a civil department in 2011.”

“And he has been trying one case after another since then,” he stated.

Last year’s Kaufman-Campbell recipient, Judge Raymond “Chip” Haight, said Foster has been “Willing to take on every assignment he has been given, and done an excellent job on all.

“He is also a frequent speaker at civil bar conferences and meetings,” Haight added. “Judge Foster has established a reputation as being hard-working and very knowledgeable on the law. He is a worthy recipient of the Kaufman-Campbell Award.”

Patricia Vega, who serves as Foster’s judicial assistant, said:

“He’s awesome. He deserves the award.”

Vega said one of Foster’s most notable traits is that he is “down-to-earth.”

“He makes people feel comfortable in his courtroom,” she explained. “New attorneys, people representing themselves – he has a way of making people feel comfortable in here. He’s not scary.”

“He takes his job seriously, but he knows how to make people comfortable” she added. “He lets them say what they want to say. It’s a big deal for people, but he gives everybody a chance.”

“He’s an awesome human being, who makes our jobs easy.”

The dinner honoring Judge Foster will be held May 18 at the National Orange Show in San Bernardino.

Past recipients of the Kaufman-Campbell Award include Judge Raymond Haight in 2017; John Vander Feer in 2016; Associate Justice Jeffrey King in 2015; Presiding Judge Marsha Slough, 2014; Judge Larry Allen, 2013; Judge Tara Reilly, 2012; Fourth District Court of Appeal Presiding Justice Manuel Ramirez, 2011; Judges James McGuire and J. Michael Welch, 2010; Margaret Powers, 2009; Michael Dest, 2008; Brian McCarville, 2007; A. Rex Victor, 2006; Christopher Warner, 2005; Bob Krug, 2004; Patrick Morris, 2003; Michael Smith, Jules Fleuret and Dennis Cole, 2002; LeRoy Simmons, Betty Richli and Joseph Johnston, 2001 and Rufus Yent, Frederick Mandabach and John Ingro in 2000.

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