

INLAND COUNTIES LEGAL SERVICES

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RIVERSIDE – After a lengthy and thorough application process, the Inland Counties Legal Services board of directors has selected Tessie Solorzano to serve as the new executive director of the legal aid nonprofit. She will replace outgoing director Darrell K. Moore, who served the organization for more than 19 years, the last five as executive director.

The board of directors narrowed the field from dozens of qualified candidates and found that Solorzano, the current deputy director of operations, was best suited to take on the role.

Solorzano first started at Inland Counties Legal Services as a paralegal with the Rancho Cucamonga branch office in 2011 and worked her way up to the deputy director of operations. Her commitment to the organization and exemplary service to the community were driving factors in her selection as the next executive director, Board President Marvin Powell, Jr. said.

“The impact that Tessie has already had on ICLS stood out to us during the executive director search,” Powell said. “From driving the organizations Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging initiatives to leading the transition to remote services during the pandemic, she has proven her ability to carry ICLS into the future and to expand and improve our legal service offerings for the neediest residents in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties.”

Solorzano herself grew up in the Inland Empire, where she saw friends and classmates facing evictions, struggling with food insecurity, and so much more. She said she couldn’t stand by idly watching these challenges and decided to commit herself to a life of service, attending law school, passing the bar, and immediately putting those skills to use at Inland Counties Legal Services.

Over the years, Solorzano has helped moved the needle on a variety of initiatives, including the automation of court documents, technology upgrades to improve the client and staff experience, and opening new offices to meet clients where they’re at.

“We’ve built up some incredible momentum at ICLS, both in terms of work culture and legal services, and as executive director, I plan to keep the ball rolling on the issues that matter most – diversity, equity and inclusion, closing the justice gap in the Inland Empire and beyond, and making sure our staff have the tools they need to assist as many residents as possible,” Solorzano said. “It is the honor of a lifetime to have been selected by the board, and I’m excited to get to work.”

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LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

Executive Office

1040 Iowa Ave., #106
Riverside, CA
92507-2106

Indio

P.O. Box 10650
Indio, CA
92202-2563

Ontario

3500 Porsche Way, #200
Ontario, CA
91764-4941

Riverside

1040 Iowa Ave., #109
Riverside, CA
92507-2106

Victorville

15428 Civic Center Drive, Ste 175
Victorville, CA
92392

Solorzano will officially take over as executive director on February 1, 2023 and Moore will remain with ICLS in a scaled back capacity to help make the transition process as smooth as possible. During his time as executive director, Moore impacted a number of programs at ICLS and helped get the program to where it is today.

With a warm sense of humor and a caring heart, Moore had all the qualities you look for in a leader, Solorzano said.

“Darrell was exactly the person ICLS needed over the last five years. He helped craft the culture of inclusion we have at ICLS today, brought out the best in our staff and focused on projects that would benefit the community, no matter how challenging or intensive they were,” Solorzano said. “We were lucky to have him with our organization for so long, and I am planning to build on the great work he has done.”

As someone who knows the organization and its needs well, Moore said he is proud to pass the torch to such an outstanding employee and person in Solorzano. The two have worked together at ICLS for more than a decade.

“When you work with someone for that long, you really get to know their strengths and see how they react during tough times. Tessie and I have been through it all, from challenging budget years to housing crises to a global pandemic,” Moore said. “Everyone at ICLS turns to Tessie, both when times are tough and when celebrations are in order. I think that’s exactly the type of person you want as a leader and as an executive director.”

Solorzano is taking over during an exciting time for ICLS, with a number of large grants and partnerships in the pipeline. She plans to focus on professional development for staff, community partnerships and outreach, pro bono initiatives, and efforts to make our services more accessible to residents in the community.

“Tessie is the best person to lead ICLS into this exciting period of our organization, especially as our community continues to face high costs of living, financial challenges, and the civil legal issues that come along with those problems,” board president Powell, Jr. said. “Our goal is to ensure that everyone has access to legal services, regardless of what they can afford, and we are excited to enter this next chapter with Tessie at the helm.”

