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A New Spin on “Take Your Child to Work Day”: California Law Firm AlvaradoSmith Creates Event to Encourage Diversity in Legal Profession

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AlvaradoSmith, a minority-owned law firm located throughout California is devoted to promoting diversity in the legal profession. Over the years, the firm has worked hard to find ways to encourage diversity in law firms, trying to go a little further, do a little better. To manifest this commitment, [AlvaradoSmith](#) opened their doors to students from Los Angeles’ Southgate neighborhood in a non-traditional take on the “Take Your Child to Work Day” in April of this year. The goal of the event was to inspire students, some of whom are potential first-generation college students, to explore the legal profession as a career and to hopefully create the beginnings of a pipeline to create a more diverse culture in law firms.

Diversity in law is important. Beau James, who participated in the event and works in legal at Facebook, thinks diversity is crucial in ways that he lives every day. He agreed to participate in the event because of its unique twist on a classic--the emphasis on exposing underrepresented communities to the legal professions. He says, “Working in tech, I deal with a lot of novel issues--I can’t pick up a book or a magazine to figure out the issues I work with, and what helps us address these issues is a diversity of experience and a diversity of thought, it’s really important to have a rich community of attorneys to address these issues.”

To address diversity concerns in the legal world, AlvaradoSmith re-engineered the traditional “Take Your Child to Work Day.” to include students who were on a college-track but were missing examples. [Mary Michelena Monroe](#), Shareholder at AlvaradoSmith, says, “We had a take your child to work day before, but it was our employees and their kids, friends, but we really wanted to take it beyond that and not preach to the choir, but reach out to children or students who maybe don’t have a parent who is a lawyer, or anyone who has gone to college . . . we wanted to take it to the next level and see if we could really make a difference.”

Through firm connections with the city of South Gate, in Los Angeles, the firm was able to iron out the logistical issues and reach out to local high school students who were interested in learning about the legal profession. The agenda included conversations with legal professionals across a variety of industries, including well-known companies in exciting industries. The plan was to get conversations going so the students could learn from the experiences of the professionals before them. Monroe says, “We were trying to give them a vision of what high school to college to law school to law firm looks like, and we were trying to get them to see themselves in a law firm environment.”

The event was designed to give students practical advice, tools and connections to navigate the path to law school and beyond. The day’s agenda provided students with the opportunity to speak face to face with individuals who have walked the path they hope to walk, make connections and ask questions to prepare themselves. James participated in the career panel, and says he was excited to do so. He says, “Throughout my career there have been a lot of people who have pulled me aside, whispered in my ear, things you might have to deal with in the legal profession, things you might not have been exposed too, and it helped me out. So many



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people who took the time to do that, and it made a difference. The opportunity to pay it forward was really important.” Monroe echoes this sentiment, saying “ The goal was for it to be practical--here are some steps, here are people if you have problems, giving them the vision to go further.”

[Ruben A. Smith](#), the Managing Shareholder at AlvaradoSmith, echoes the excitement that came from that day. He has been working towards diversity in the legal profession for a long time, finding ways to help and encourage young attorneys to help them find their way. He says of the event, “it’s incredible to watch how a kids’ mind works. You start to see how, for some, they realize how they could be a lawyer.”

All around, the event left those who participated energized and enthused. After a day filled with questions, debate and back and forth, the participants all left with some solid takeaways and the adults who worked with them left enthused and excited. Monroe says, “It was so rewarding for us, and it was helpful for them--they got business cards, contacts, everybody involved wants these kids to move on and get to the next stage of their lives. They are just going to be awesome. It’s hopeful. In our wildest dreams, we could not have imagined how fabulous they would’ve worked. Full of hope, positive, and they are going to change the world.”

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