

INDUSTRY WATCH**Liner Lawyers Fund Scholarships for Foster Children**

By Susan McRae

This holiday season, the Los Angeles and San Francisco offices of Liner Yankelevitz Sunshine & Regenstreif have planned something extra special.

Instead of donating to charities, which the firm traditionally has done, the lawyers this year decided to launch a scholarship fund for foster kids.

"We wanted to see if we could make a difference in someone's life, even if it's only one person," partner Stuart Liner says. "This way, we'll be able to see the rewards firsthand, and, hopefully, we'll be able to create an incentive for others to do it on a grander scale."

Like its past charity campaigns, the firm will foot the bill for the scholarships, Liner says.

The lawyers inaugurated the campaign the week of Dec. 13, sending out 5,000 teaser e-mails to clients, colleagues and friends of the firm. The mysterious message said only, "In 23 days, you will change someone's life." They followed it up several days later with a contest on the firm's Web site.

Working with Los Angeles County's Department of Children and Family Services, the firm invited three girls, all 17, living in foster homes, to submit essays about themselves and why they wanted to go to college. The firm has posted the bios on its Web site, along with video interviews of the candidates.

Participants have been asked to vote for the contestant of their choice. The winner will receive a full scholarship; the two runners-up will get \$5,000 partial scholarships. All contestants will get mentoring from the firm's partners and be



Photo by Hugh Williams

Name partners, from left, Mitchell Regenstreif, Randall Sunshine, Steven Yankelevitz and Stuart Liner prepare for their firm's holiday launching of a scholarship fund for foster children. "We wanted to see if we could make a difference in someone's life," Liner says.

offered summer internships.

In addition, voters will be given the option of contributing toward the runners-up, either with words of encouragement in e-mails or through additional financial contributions.

The contest will run through Friday, when the winner will be announced. But Liner doesn't want the drive to stop there. He's hoping the firm's commitment will encourage other law firms, businesses and community organizations to get involved to create a broader net to fund even more scholarships.

"We're hoping, if we get the kind of response we anticipate, to roll out a larger

program next year," Liner says.

Last year, the firm's Los Angeles and San Francisco offices launched a charity drive on its Web site with a 1970s pong game set in a retro vinyl living room, complete with a lava lamp.

Clients and colleagues were invited to play for the charity of their choice. Each time they played, the firm donated \$1 to that charity.

Liner says the firm got 78,000 hits in 31/2 weeks and donated \$100,000 to various charities.

"We don't know if we'll meet the same response this year, but our goal is to reach as many people as possible," Liner says.