



Newsletters of Spectrum Institute are published quarterly. The next newsletter will be released in April 2023.



## Annual Fundraising Drive

*Your donation will help us cover our basic operating expenses for 2023.*

In our last newsletter, we asked you to help us raise \$5,000 to cover the basic operating costs of the organization in 2023. So far, we have raised \$1,750.

Please make a donation today to help us gather the remaining \$3,250. Your support will enable us to continue the important work we are doing to protect disability rights, promote alternatives to guardianships and conservatorships, and enhance access to justice for adults with mental and developmental disabilities who are targeted by these liberty-infringing and asset-devouring proceedings.

Your contribution is tax deductible as allowed by federal law.



Thomas F. Coleman  
Executive Director

p.s. Donations may be made online with a credit card or by sending a check in the postal mail. [Click here](#) for details.

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## Spectrum Institute is Collaborating on a Project in Missouri

Research, Education, and Advocacy are the Key Components of Our Work

For the past several months, Spectrum Institute has been collaborating with Hulme Resources Inc. to promote alternatives to guardianship in Missouri and better access to justice in guardianship proceedings when they are initiated. Guardianships should be a last resort for adults with mental or developmental disabilities.

Our activities on this project have included:

- Studying supported decision-making laws and programs being used in other states to help advocates in Missouri construct a model for that state that incorporates the best of what has been tried in other states.
- Interviewing public officials in Missouri to obtain their views on how the guardianship system is working in that state. We interviewed a presiding judge of a probate court and a public administrator -- both in one of the largest counties in the state.
- Making records requests of judicial branch agencies to gather information on guardianship statistics, court management, and training programs.

- Researching hundreds of dockets in 10 courts throughout the state to identify patterns in the practices of judges and court-appointed attorneys in many of the 3,000 new guardianship cases initiated annually.
  - Reviewing dockets in three counties to identify disparities in practices related to the retention of the voting rights of adults who are placed into guardianships.
  - Publishing a [commentary](#) on problems associated with the manner in which legal services are provided to respondents in guardianship cases.
  - Analyzing a [report](#) on the practices of public administrators who serve as guardians for 11,000 of the 30,000 adults under guardianships throughout the state.
  - Sending a [communication](#) to the federal Department of Justice in connection with its investigation into guardianship practices in Missouri that may violate the Americans with Disabilities Act.
  - Developing a panel of [advisors](#) to make suggestions and provide feedback on project activities.
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## Outreach to Missouri Courts to Educate Judges, Attorneys, and Guardians on their ADA Duties

An [annotated bibliography](#) prepared by Spectrum Institute for the Alternatives to Guardianship Project was sent on December 1, 2022, to ADA Coordinators at the Supreme Court, State Courts Administrator, and circuit courts throughout the State of Missouri. A copy was also sent to The Missouri Bar.

The [bibliography](#) is titled "How the ADA Applies to Guardianship Proceedings: A Primer for Missouri's Judges, Attorneys, and Guardians." The [letter](#) transmitting the document invites bench officers, administrators, and court staff to review current policies and practices in adult guardianship proceedings through the lens of what

the Americans with Disabilities Act actually requires.

A [report](#) bearing the same title was sent to these judicial branch entities and employees on January 3, 2023. It contains 12 recommendations on how courts can fulfill their obligations and protect the rights of adults with mental or developmental disabilities in guardianship proceedings. An informational copy of the report was sent to the federal Department of Justice and to officials in the executive and legislative branches of government in Missouri.

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## Santa Clara Grand Jury Calls for Reforms in Conservatorship Legal Defense Services

The Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury issued a report on December 20, 2022, calling for reforms to the way in which legal defense services are provided to adults with mental or developmental disabilities in probate conservatorship cases in that county. The report contains 13 recommendations on how the Public Defender's Office can improve the quality of legal services in the 300 new petitions filed annually and for the 3,000 adults for whom that office is attorney of record in ongoing conservatorships.

To read or download the report, titled "Conservatorships: A Case for Zealous Advocacy," [click here](#).

The Santa Clara report comes in the wake of an earlier [report](#) on the same subject issued by the Alameda County Civil Grand Jury in June 2022.

Both of these grand juries opened their investigations in response to complaints from Spectrum Institute following the release of our [report](#) titled "Public Funding of Legal Services in Conservatorship

Proceedings."

To read our complaint to the Santa Clara Civil Grand Jury and its response, [click here](#).

We are impressed with the depth and scope of the grand jury's study, as well as the appropriateness of the recommendations in its well-written report.

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## Doctoral Dissertation Proposes Reforms in California's Limited Conservatorship System

***Board Member Barbara Imle to  
Receive a Ph.D. in Sociology***

Barbara Imle, member of the board of trustees of Spectrum Institute, submitted her doctoral [dissertation](#) on December 13, 2022. It is titled "'The Call is Coming from Inside the House: Tracing Experiences in the Institutionally-Centered Process of Establishing Limited Conservatorships in California.'" Imle is scheduled to receive a Ph.D. degree in Sociology from Portland State University in March 2023.

The dissertation's findings and recommendations are based on observations of 93 limited conservatorship proceedings, interviews of 16 individuals and professionals with experience in the conservatorship process or reform efforts, a survey of California's 21 regional centers, and a review of policy reports and professional articles published about the impact of conservatorships on adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD). Some 14 of those publications were produced by Spectrum Institute.

As the abstract explains: "This study reflects that the process is not individualized, and that people with IDD continue to be viewed as

incompetent and unworthy of the civil rights many American adults take for granted. By mapping out the complex process, this research highlights areas for potential change and provides recommendations to make the process more person-centered, and one that prioritizes disability rights over institutional goals."

The dissertation is a major contribution to the conservatorship reform movement and will be helpful to advocates as they enlist support from legislators, judges, and disability service agencies and professionals in promoting alternatives to conservatorships and the use of person-centered planning in the conservatorship evaluation process.

Congratulations Barbara on a job well done! You have earned the title of Dr. Imle. The members of the Board of Trustees of Spectrum Institute are proud of you.

Spectrum Institute has created a 20-page summary of the dissertation with key excerpts of background information, findings, and recommendations. To read or download the summary, [click here](#).

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## Networking at The Arc National Conference

Thomas F. Coleman attended the national conference of The Arc of the United States in Denver from November 10 - 12. Tom distributed a [handout](#) about issues being addressed by the Alternatives to Guardianship Project.

He attended a presentation on sexual self-advocacy by [Elevatus Training](#) which shared resources that will be helpful to the *Capacity to Love* project that will be launched in Missouri next year. He also attended a breakout session on supported decision-making sponsored by [The Tennessee Center for Decision-Making](#)

[Support](#) which is a well-developed program that could be adapted for use in Missouri. Tom spent time exchanging information with attendees such as Michael Cormier, founder of [3rd Circle Inc.](#) -- a nonprofit in Michigan providing a wide range of supports for people with disabilities in residential settings. He also enjoyed meeting and exchanging views with Shawn Kennemer, President of the [Bakersfield Arc](#) and newly appointed member of the [National Council on Disability](#). Tom's husband, Michael Vasquez, accompanied him to the conference, providing logistical and other support throughout. The trip was made possible by a generous donation from Richard W. Smith, Ph.D.

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## Birds of a Feather: Legal History Project

The [Birds of a Feather Project](#) had a series of successful activities during the month of October 2022. The project commemorated the 50th anniversary of the founding of the first gay law student association in the nation of which Thomas F. Coleman was the founding president, as well as the first forum on gay rights held by the American Bar Association. Coleman organized that event.

A Memory Book, authored by Coleman and released on October 1, told the stories of 125 LGBT law students and lawyers who openly advocated for justice and equal rights during the 1970s. The Memory Book, available in paperback on [Amazon.com](#), has received excellent [reviews](#). A pdf version of the 355-page book, which has

links to hundreds of historical reference materials, is available with a donation of \$15 to Spectrum Institute. After making a [donation](#), send us an [email](#) requesting the pdf version.

A webinar on the 1970s, held on October 12, was hosted by the Williams Institute at UCLA. Earlier in the year, Loyola Outlaws hosted a webinar focusing on legal breakthroughs made in [1972](#).

The Outlaw student organization at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles hosted a mixer for students, staff, and alumni to commemorate its own founding in 1972 and to honor Coleman and the Birds of a Feather Project. A [story](#) about the formation of Outlaws was published by the university's newspaper.

A series of [videos](#) of interviews of some of the living trailblazers from the 1970s were released on YouTube during the month of October.

Bay Area Reporter, a LGBT publication operating since the mid-1970s, published a [story](#) about Birds of a Feather to commemorate LGBT History Month.

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Please show your support for our work by making a donation. Since we are an IRS-approved 501(c)(3) charitable foundation, donations to Spectrum Institute are tax-deductible as allowed by federal law. Donors can designate a donation for a specific project or campaign. Otherwise they will be used for general organizational support.

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Email:

[tomcoleman@spectruminstitute.org](mailto:tomcoleman@spectruminstitute.org)

Website:

<https://spectruminstitute.org/>

