



## 2023 Joseph Drown Award Recipient The Family Violence Appellate Project

The Family Violence Appellate Project (FVAP) was founded in 2011 by Berkeley Law Professor Nancy Lemon and two of her students, Alex Scott and Sonya Passi. Along with Executive Director Erin Smith, these individuals built the first nonprofit in California dedicated to helping domestic violence survivors with civil legal appeals on a pro bono basis. FVAP's mission is to ensure the safety and well-being of survivors of domestic violence and their children by helping them obtain effective appellate representation, and to develop the domestic violence case law to better protect Californians. FVAP screens cases, and then partners with pro bono attorneys to provide free, high-quality legal representation to survivors, with a success rate of over 80% for its affirmative appeals (far above the California statewide average of 21%) and winning 93% of the appeals it defends. Through direct representation, participation in amicus briefs, and letters to request publication, FVAP has been responsible for the publication of over 50 domestic violence cases in California, each of which has helped to ensure the proper application of the DVPA and otherwise developed the law to protect DV survivors.

Ultimately, FVAP's goal is to break the intergenerational cycle of trauma and abuse. Children who experience the trauma of domestic violence are more likely to continue the cycle of abuse when they grow up. By making sure all kids have the chance to grow up in safe, healthy homes, FVAP is helping to build a better future for the next generation.

FVAP has also contributed to the education of family law attorneys, mental health professionals, and judicial officers by presenting annual four-hour Domestic Violence Institutes at AFCC-CA's annual state conferences for a number of years now. Their Institutes cover new cases published in California, statutory amendments, and social science studies relevant to domestic violence.

For all of these reasons, AFCC California is incredibly grateful to FVAP and honored to present it with the 2023 Joseph Drown Award for Outstanding Services to Children.

### **ABOUT THE JOSEPH DROWN AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICES TO CHILDREN**

*Joseph Drown was a Southern California businessman who became interested in AFCC's work in the early 1980's, after lengthy conversations with Jeanne Ames, the original and longtime historian of AFCC-CA. Joseph was impressed with the mission, vision, and values of this organization and expressed his wish that AFCC had been there to help him understand the experience for children and their needs during his divorce. Joseph donated generously to the AFCC-CA, which enabled the organization to educational programs and training institutes to court-connected personnel, community mental health professionals, family law attorneys, and researchers.*

*This award is presented to acknowledge persons or organizations that have made outstanding contributions to the betterment of children's welfare.*