

LOS ANGELES

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Adam Murray, Inner City Law Center's Executive Director, was chosen by the Daily Journal as one of their "Top 20 Under 40".

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Once a month, Adam Murray leads a group of students, nonprofit services providers, professionals and politicians through the streets of Skid Row. The economically depressed pocket of Los Angeles might not make it onto the star maps handed out to tourists, but Murray, executive director of the Inner City Law Center, thinks it's important for everyone to know what goes on there.

"I've been involved with the center a long time, but I'd never walked the streets of Skid Row," said Dan Woods, a White & Case partner who chairs the center's board. "It raises awareness of what's going on on Skid Row, and it raises the visibility of the center. It's part of our effort to make more friends."

Making new friends is something Murray has embraced enthusiastically since he left Howrey to take over the helm at the Inner City Law Center, which provides legal services to people living in and around Skid Row.

Outreach was key to the success of the center's annual fundraising luncheon in 2008, which brought in more than \$268,000 double the amount raised the year before. Reaching out has also allowed Murray to develop overarching solutions that create permanent change, instead of helping clients case by case.

"One of our priorities was to do more work in the area of public policy," said Thomas A. Freiberg Jr., a former board president and partner at Mitchell Sil-

berberg & Knupp. "His idea was to try to work with the city council in areas where legislation is warranted to solve a problem."

Murray got his first opportunity when the foreclosure crisis trickled down to the tenants in rental buildings who routinely visit the center's eviction defense clinic

"We started seeing a whole lot of cases where renters were paying their rent, in some cases for decades, but the bank was coming in and kicking everyone out," Murray said. "One of the things we realized is that at the city and county level there was really a vacuum of voices on behalf of our clients." Murray said. "One of the things we realized is that at the city and county level there was really a vacuum of voices on behalf of our clients."

When banks take over foreclosed buildings covered by the city's rent control ordinance, it doesn't eliminate the protections that are afforded to its tenants. But banks, which are often out of state, were not aware of that fact. So instead of negotiating on behalf of each individual client, Murray worked with the city council to rewrite portions of the rent control ordinance.

The resulting modifications clarified the existing protections afforded to tenants in rent controlled buildings and essentially extended them to tenants in foreclosed buildings throughout the city until the crisis abates.

"This is what the center should be



doing, but really wasn't doing, before Adam took over," Woods said. "He has ideas about the bigger picture that it's more than just this slum housing case or that slum housing case and that it's addressing the problem of homelessness in our city."

Murray says that solving systematic problems, like the foreclosure crisis, in addition to helping individual clients, is why he went to law school in the first place.

"It's issues like this one that I get excited about and that I really enjoy working on," Murray said. "The fact that I get to spend my day thinking about these issues, talking about these issues ... it's really a privilege for me."

—AMANDA BECKER