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Sports lawyer holds the keys to success

Project Access award bestowed on Leigh Steinberg for his commitment to community service.

By Michael Miller
Daily Pilot

Leigh Steinberg, a renowned sports attorney and humanitarian, has been named the first recipient of Project Access' keys to success award, which honors business professionals for com-

munity service.

Project Access, a Newport Beach-based nonprofit organization that launched in 1999, created the award this year. The group recognized Steinberg for his efforts to encourage charity among professional athletes, along with his sponsorship of the Spirit Run, the Newport Beach Film Festival, the Leadership Institute for Teens and other events.

By establishing the keys to success award, executive director Lane Macy said, Project Access hoped to spotlight wealthy cor-



Leigh Steinberg

porate figures who gave out of their own pockets.

"Leigh has obviously been successful in business, and he was a pioneer in his industry," Macy

said. "He's instilled in the contracts he sets up that his athletes look into their own communities and give back, whether it's giving to a baseball field or signing footballs for charities to sell."

On Sept. 23, the group plans to present Steinberg with the award at a reception at the Island Hotel in Newport Beach. Steinberg said he was honored to be associated with Project Access, which assists low-income families and seniors with health, education and social services. Recently, Steinberg visited a poor neighborhood in Anaheim to watch

the nonprofit's volunteers at work.

"It's exciting to be able to help an organization that's making a dynamic difference in the lives of the working poor, young people and seniors," he said. "I had the opportunity to visit one of these apartment complexes and watch the after-school tutoring that Project Access does, and it was really heartwarming to see the impact it was having on these young students."

In addition to the keys to success award, Project Access is introducing the 180 Turnaround

Award, which honors groups and individuals with disadvantaged backgrounds who have given back to the community. The recipients this year, Elias and Nirvana Velasco and their two children, volunteer at the Warwick Square Family Resource Center in Santa Ana.

Steinberg, 57, was admitted to the California State Bar in 1974 and went on to become one of America's most famous sports agents. His clients over the years have included Los Angeles

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Dodgers first baseman Eric Karros, boxer Oscar de la Hoya, and football quarterbacks Steve Young and Troy Aikman. He served as a consultant to the 1996 Tom Cruise film "Jerry Maguire," in which Cruise plays a sports agent that many saw as closely modeled on Steinberg.

Along with his wife, Lucy, Steinberg was a founding sponsor of the Newport Beach Film Festival, and the two also oversee the Spirit Run, an annual race that raises funds for Newport Beach schools. In 2004, the Steinbergs co-founded the Leadership Institute, held every summer at Soka University, which features speakers and workshops encouraging high school students to become socially active.

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