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Decision Near on Low-Cost Mediation Service

LITIGATION: Proponents want funds to start service for firms and individuals.

Plans to launch a low-cost mediation service for Valley attorneys have entered the home stretch toward becoming reality.

Adam Grant, a partner at **Alpert Barr & Grant APLC** in Encino and president of the



LAW

Joel Russell

San Fernando Valley Bar Association, and **Myer Sankary**, a mediator with **ADR Services** in Century City, are spearheading the non-profit venture, which is named Valley Bar Mediation Center.

The center is designed to take the place of services previously offered by Los Angeles Superior

Court. The program reduced the caseload of the courts by handling more than 10,000 cases a year countywide, but a budget crunch killed it in 2013.

Sankary said there are two funding issues for the service: the hourly rate charged by mediators to sit down and negotiate settlements, and the administrative cost to run the program.

The center plans to work with mediators who will charge a reduced fee of about \$150 an hour to clients for the first three hours. While there are private alternative dispute companies in the market, their prices are on the order of \$400 to \$500 an hour.

"A lot of people can't afford that," Sankary said. "Also, we acknowledge that some are

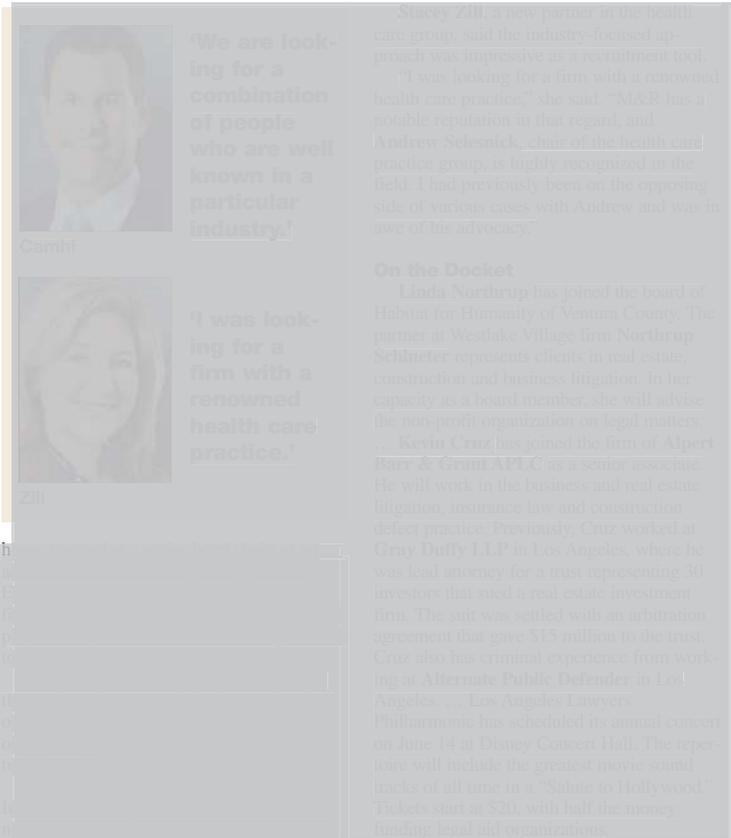
needy, so some mediators won't charge anything for the first three hours."

However, Sankary emphasized the service isn't limited to low-income clients. For example, the court system's mediation service was used extensively by insurance companies to settle routine auto accident or medical bill cases.

To pay for the new organization, Sankary is securing donations from foundations, Rotary Clubs and community organizations. The estimated annual budget of \$100,000 to \$150,000 will include the salary of an executive director, maintenance of a website where attorneys can find mediators and marketing expenses for the service.

The center will begin with the most popular types of mediation cases, such as insurance, landlord-tenant disputes, personal injury and employment law. It will not include family law, since the court still maintains a family mediation program.

The new center should be up and running by June. It will be housed at the offices of the San Fernando Valley Bar Association in Tarzana, with Sankary serving as unpaid president.



Industrial Ecology
 Richardson & Robinson LLP's growth
 strategy is to acquire top law firms with
 clients in the same industries as Enbridge
 businesses.
 "I thought strategic acquisitions would
 provide a 1.5x increase in 2014, possibly
 a double jump for its current value of about 75,
 but with only growth to an option either
 and Ron Camille, partner in charge of the
 company's media and marketing practices.
 "I can't say it's just a busy year because that's
 not what I mean," he said. "We are looking for a combination
 of people who are well known in a particular
 industry, rather than just a public name."
 For example, Camille might look for an in-

cludes include four health care attorneys, one
 in internet marketing, and three in commercial litigation.

Staff Writer Joel Russell can be reached at
 (818) 316-3124 or jrussell@sfbvj.com.