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KRISTA WHITELY CASTELLARIN

CEO

EGO: Entertainment and Growth Opportunities

I was born walking fast, talking fast, and thinking fast in a small town,” Krista Whitely Castellarin once said. And she shows no evidence of wanting to slow her pace in 2014.

Castellarin is convinced that the New Year is going to be a great one. “We are looking at at least doubling the volume of our business at EGO.”

She is also looking forward to continued growth of her popular Mean Girls blog. “I grew my blog in less than six months to 12,000 followers in 2013. That’s a big accomplishment.”

She is unabashedly excited to be working with the Hero School, she says, a program that has taken more than 30,000 homeless people off the streets in Las Vegas and gotten them back to work. “I sit on the board with that, and we are really excited. We’ve got some huge events coming up in 2014 that I think are going to be great for the community.

Founder Tiger Todd’s Hero School model leverages social learning, authentic experts and strategic exercises to re-engage children, teens and adults all in real-time.

The year ahead will also see Castellarin expand her entrepreneurial endeavors when she brings Mytell Records – a unique music community that covers all musical genres and is led by Grammy Foundation board member Capriccio Scates – to town.

“That is my big project,” she notes. “Mytell Records is amazing. It’s run by a good friend of mine (Scates) out of Atlanta. Mytell has an incredible vision to bring almost a Motown feel to Las Vegas, and really helped transform the music scene here. We are really excited about that because I think it will be a huge thing for growing new musicians and helping existing musicians here really take it to the next level.”

Castellarin says she loves the music scene here in Las Vegas, but that more is needed. “I would just love more opportunities for our artists here to take it to the next level as far as being more mainstream, and really bringing that skill set to a bigger platform. What we are able to do with Mytell is bring those artists’ talents to the world, to help them to really develop those talents.”

— By Howard Riell



CYNTHIA ALEXANDER

Partner

Law firm of Snell & Wilmer

Of the roughly 20,000 prisoners in the Nevada state prison system, 3 to 6 percent are estimated to be wrongful convictions. Cynthia Alexander knows these statistics all too well, and she will spend a fair amount of time and energy in 2014 making sure the rest of us know them too.

For years, many stories about wrongful convictions being overturned with the help of DNA testing pulled at Alexander’s heartstrings. But about five years ago she, herself, had the opportunity to bring hope to those facing wrongful convictions. The Rocky Mountain Innocence Center, founded in 2000 to correct and prevent the conviction of innocent people in Nevada, Utah and Wyoming, was in need of someone to take on a leadership role in Nevada.

“It (the RMIC) was set up to cover our state, but it really wasn’t operating. ... I had to do more,” she said.

Alexander forged partnerships with UNLV’s Boyd School of Law that would bring law students into the mix to research cases, then sought attorneys willing to take on pro bono work. In addition, she was part of

a team that helped pass a uniform state law that requires DNA testing in situations where evidence is available.

Now, the RMIC has filed three petitions for exonerations and another two should be filed this year. Alexander was the president of RMIC last year and will continue in that role in 2014.

“What’s driving me in 2014 is to really continue this work,” she added.

About 60 percent of RMIC’s cases are from Nevada, but only 12.5 percent of its funding comes from the Silver State. Besides increasing awareness of the program this year, Alexander’s goal is to increase in-state funding sources.

Another part of RMIC’s mission is to work with police agencies to inform them of best practices and technologies that can help prevent wrongful convictions.

“It’s not that the departments don’t want to implement best practices, but it’s not always easy and cost effective to do so,” she said. “A lot of times we’ll put police departments in touch with each other to help them learn more.”

— By Brian Sodoma

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