

Divorce Book's Focus: It's the Money

By Rebecca Kuzins
Daily Journal Staff Writer

These days, family law attorney Stephanie Blum is as likely to turn up at a book signing at Borders as she is to appear in court.

Blum is hitting the publicity circuit to promote "Divorce and Finances," a 72-page paperback she wrote with financial consultant Marc Robinson.

The book, published in November, offers a user-friendly overview of the financial implications of divorce.

It describes the different state laws governing property division and advises estranged spouses how to negotiate a budget. It also contains information to help couples divide their debts and assets, determine spousal and child support and understand the tax consequences of divorce.

Blum, an associate at Los Angeles' Nachshin & Weston, says her book aims to help couples see past the emotional pain of divorce and more clearly grasp the related economic issues.

"Divorce can be a very difficult and trying time," she says. "Turning to a voluminous book can make it even more overwhelming. The format of this book, simply written with lots of illustrations, can guide people through the issues."

Blum's book is one of a series of paperbacks about personal finance published by Dorling Kindersley. Robinson, who edits the series, wrote one of the books, "Buying

the Best Home," with Joe Breckner, a Westside real estate agent and Blum's friend.

With some prodding from Breckner, Blum says Robinson "found his way to me" last April and asked if she would like to write a book about divorce and finance. She accepted his offer and spent the better part of last summer drafting the text.

Writing a book about divorce for a nationwide audience was not without its challenges.

Since divorce law differs in every state, Blum's book can only provide general guidelines about finances and marital dissolution. "I definitely tried to steer clear of making sweeping generalizations," she says. "I was cautious to say that each state is different."

However, the book contains tables summarizing property division procedures, child-support guidelines and alimony and spousal support factors in each of the 50 states and Washington, D.C.

"Divorce and Finances" retails at \$6.95. It is sold at bookstores nationwide and also can be ordered from Amazon.com.

As part of her publicity campaign, Blum has solicited positive comments for her book from family law judges, including former Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Stephen M. Lachs, now a family law mediator.

Lachs says the book contains valuable advice, but he advises that it is no substitute for an attorney.

"Before you see a lawyer, read this book," he adds. "It gives you an insight into some of the basic principles you'll be dealing with when you see your lawyer."

Blum agrees that her book is a good jumping-off point.

"It gives people enough familiarity with the issues so they can ask their lawyer the right questions," she says.

Blum, 33, knew she wanted to be an attorney when she was growing up in New York City.

"My sister reminded me that when I was 10, I walked around saying, 'I want to be a divorce lawyer,'" she says.

But she initially pursued a different goal. She received her bachelor's degree in hotel administration from Cornell University in 1987, and then worked for a wine importer in New York City.

She later rekindled her interest in the law and earned her degree from the University of Southern California Law Center in 1994. After a brief stint practicing labor law at Universal City's Ballard Rosenberg Golper & Savitt, she joined Nachshin & Weston, a Westside family law boutique, about four years ago.

Blum says she is currently in discussions with publishers to write a second book about family law.

"Hopefully, this will be the first of a series of books aimed at giving people sound advice in a very concise and easy-to-read format," she says.

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