For the last couple of months or so, it seemed like a portion of the population on the Island of Oahu came down with a strange malaise, a kind of obsessive compulsive disorder-like fixation with the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation or APEC.

The malaise was slow to start, stories about planning, beautifying, securing. Then as the event drew nearer, more stories, blogs and overheard conversations about “relocation” efforts taken on by the city with the goal of moving entire communities of people; citizens brushed aside and hidden under the proverbial rug before the guests come. But as the last blocked H-1 entrance was opened, and the cars started rolling again, the APEC malaise had run its course. The blockades, motorcades, politicians, diplomats, dignitaries, even the antics of a local folk singer in a homemade protest shirt, singing a homemade protest song at a state dinner are already being sloughed off of our collective short term memory; nothing left but skimmed over Tweets and half watched YouTube videos.

I caught a little bit of the APEC bug. I admit I was curious, and I half-heartedly bought in to the hype. As an entrepreneur and business owner, I am always looking for new angles and listening for useful ideas.

When the opportunity to volunteer at the APEC Business Advisory Council’s Small/Medium Enterprises symposium arose, I thought this would be a good opportunity to see what all the hype was about.

From the start of the volunteer experience, I knew this one would be different. Before the event, the Law Student volunteers were asked to learn the frequently used acronyms and to familiarize ourselves with the names, bios and photos of all the panelists and presenters.

The Law Student volunteers were to be prepared.

We were also instructed on how to dress (Business Casual/Aloha Attire), what to call the dignitaries (Mr. /Ms. Speaker), and who to talk to (no congregating with law students).

The Law Student volunteers were to be professional.

It was the display preparedness mixed professionalism throughout the event that left me with a feeling of pride at the end of the day.

Throughout the day, as we were bustling along, getting materials ready, checking people in, managing the crowd, and running microphones to the participants of the symposium, I caught glimpses of the little things that made me proud to be with such a great crew of volunteers: charming conversations with participants, smiling in the face of rudeness, intelligent discourse over coffee and pastries. From my observations, it seemed like any participant who interacted with any of the Law Student volunteers walked away impressed.

WSRSL law students are pretty awesome….and WSRSL professors are pretty awesome as well.

In fact on this day the awesomeness award has to go to Professor Conway.
Up until the last panel, the discussions were passable; good, solid, speakers, but nothing riveting. There was no earth shattering revelations, no sharing of super-secret business tips of the very successful. There was talk of the clouds and compliance, opportunities and drawbacks. That was, of course until Professor Conway got up to talk.

Her presentation was thoughtful, honest, and non-commercial. She shared with the audience some important truths about Intellectual Property protection for Small and Medium businesses. But what got all of us Law Student volunteers stirring, and beaming with pride was that she had no apprehension about shining a light on certain practices regarding Intellectual Property that were promulgated by a certain giant internet search companies while the said giant internet search company’s General Counsel for Policy was seated right next to her. Mr. General Counsel for policy seemed to squirm in his seat as he fumbled around for his laptop and furiously typed away. He did all this squirming, fumbling and typing while still seated center stage in the middle of the panel discussion. The whole thing was very professional and polite; but it was clear Mr. General Counsel was not prepared. It wasn’t like Professor Conway pointed out that the Emperor had no clothes, it was more like she was the only one at the parade who actually looked closely at the Emperor and found that the clothes weren’t as fancy, luxurious or “free” as everyone thought they were.

So in the end, the Law Student volunteer experience cured me of my APEC malaise by reminding me of how lucky I am to be studying law at the William S Richardson School of Law, surrounded by stellar students and super-star professors.