

Pro Bono News

Winter Edition Vol. 25 No. 1

Happy New Year!

Gloria Herron Arthur*, Esq., Director, Department of Pro Bono Affairs, New York State Bar Association



Herron Arthur*

As we begin the New Year we would like to thank our colleagues in the legal services and pro bono communities for contributing so many inspiring articles about the wonder-

ful work done by your organizations, law firm partners, and the pro bono volunteers. We look forward to continuing our collaborations with each of you during the New Year!

This first issue of 2015 includes news of many outstanding legal victories and spotlights some of the pro bono volunteers who have made access to justice a reality for some of New York's

low-income and most vulnerable residents. Legal Services NYC, together with the law firm of Winston & Strawn, expanded employment opportunities for honorably discharged veterans struggling with mental disabilities by making them eligible to apply for and receive special vending licenses.

Kudos also to The Legal Aid Society, The Sylvia Rivera Law Project and Willkie Farr & Gallagher for their successful efforts to expand Medicaid coverage to include medically necessary treatments for gender dysphoria, a medical condition recognized by physicians, and includes hormone therapy and sex reassignment.

Volunteers of Legal Services joined forces with the Association of Pro Bono Counsel to host its second Small Business Legal Academy. More than 100 pro bono volunteers from twenty-four

law firms met with small business owners and non-profits from all five boroughs to provide free legal consultations and workshops on legal and financial issues for entrepreneurs.

Individual pro bono volunteers recognized in this issue hail from around the state, volunteering with a myriad number of organizations such as, the Erie County Bar Association's Volunteer Lawyers Project, New York Legal Assistance Group, the Attorney Emeritus Program, Nassau Suffolk Law Services and LawHelpNY.

Volunteers provided legal representation in a diverse range of matters, including: immigration, asylum, mortgage foreclosure, evictions, debtor creditor cases, matrimonial, unemployment insurance benefits, and human trafficking.

Enjoy the issue!

Major Victory for the Transgender Community

Karen Fisher Gutheil*, Supervising Attorney, Pro Bono Practice, The Legal Aid Society

Under a regulation proposed on December 16, 2014 by the New York State Department of Health, transgender healthcare would be covered by Medicaid in New York for the first time. The proposed amendment was issued in response to *Cruz v. Zucker*, 14 Civ. 4456 (JSR), a class action lawsuit filed by The Legal Aid Society, The Sylvia Rivera Law Project ("SLRP"), and Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP ("Willkie Farr") on behalf of Medicaid-eligible transgender individuals who have been diagnosed

continued on page 3



The Legal Aid Society: Rebecca Novick, Judith Goldiner, Belkys Garcia, Kimberly Forte; Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP: Mary Eaton, Partner and Megan Hogan, former Associate; Not pictured but also honored: Sumani Lanka, The Legal Aid Society, Civil Law Reform Unit

Inside:

- An Innovative Time 7
- First Time Volunteer Eagerly Awaits Next Case 11
- Highlighting Excellence: Story of an Attorney Emeritus 9
- Happy New Year! 1
- LawHelpNY Offers a Unique Pro Bono Opportunity to Law Students Aiding Low Income and Vulnerable New Yorkers 10
- Legal Aid Honors Firms and Individuals with its Annual Pro Bono Publico Awards 18
- Legal Services Community Annual Meeting Calendar 17
- Legal Services NYC and Winston & Strawn Achieve Victory for Disabled Veterans 3
- Major Victory for the Transgender Community 1
- Michael Massmann Helps Low-income New Yorkers Obtain Debt Relief 2
- NYLAG Mobile Legal Help Center Volunteer Charles Daitz Brings Free Legal Advice to Clients 2
- Recognizing Excellence in Pro Bono Service 4
- Second Small Business Legal Academy Held in Brooklyn 14
- Suffolk Attorneys Answer the Call to Service 7
- Upcoming Events 15
- When Language is a Barrier to Justice 17
- 2014 Pro Bono Newsletter Contributors 12

The Pro Bono Newsletter is available online at www.nysba.org/ProBonoNews

A single asterisk* next to a name indicates the individual is a member of NYSBA. A double asterisk** indicates a law student member of the Association.

Views expressed in published articles are those of the authors alone and are not to be attributed to the Pro Bono Newsletter, its editors, or the New York State Bar Association, unless expressly so stated.

Article authors are responsible for the correctness of all information, citations and quotations. Articles may be edited for clarity and length.

Editor: Gloria Herron Arthur, Esq.
Assistant Editor: Dannielle Hille

Michael Massmann* Helps Low-income New Yorkers Obtain Debt Relief

Alison Sclater, Esq., Director of Pro Bono, New York Legal Assistance Group

NYLAG's Consumer Protection Project has benefited greatly from the assistance of Michael Massmann, who initially served as a summer intern during law school, and has continued to make a difference as a volunteer attorney since he graduated. Michael assists the Volunteer Lawyer for a Day Consumer Credit Project in the Bronx and Queens county civil courts, a program of the New York Courts' Access to Justice Program, which provides representation for consumer-defendants—99% of whom would otherwise appear pro se. He has successfully argued motions to

vacate default judgments based on faulty service, challenged the validity of plaintiffs' claims, and helped negotiate favorable settlements for clients. Through his work with NYLAG, Michael has helped hundreds of New York families navigate the stressful court experience and obtain debt relief. He is an extremely compassionate advocate, and has a remarkable knack for explaining difficult legal concepts in a way clients can easily understand. Michael is a very thoughtful and conscientious attorney dedicated to defending consumers' rights and providing access to justice for all litigants.

NYLAG Mobile Legal Help Center Volunteer Charles Daitz Brings Free Legal Advice to Clients

Alison Sclater, Esq., Director of Pro Bono, New York Legal Assistance Group

Dedicated NYLAG Mobile Legal Help Center (MLHC) volunteer Charles Daitz has traveled throughout the five boroughs of New York City to help some of NYLAG's neediest clients. Charles is cheerful and compassionate, instantly putting his clients at ease and creating a productive work environment in which he conducts effective intakes. Greeting every MLHC client with a smile, Charles lends a sympathetic ear and provides a safe space for clients to tell him their stories. Charles is not only willing to go the extra mile, but he is also always willing to help out where and when he is needed most. Charles gives 100% of himself when volunteering and has been a tremendous asset to the MLHC.



www.twitter.com/nysba

Stay up-to-date on the latest news from the Association

Major Victory for the Transgender Community (Continued from page 1)

with gender dysphoria and whose expenses were not reimbursable under the current regulation.

The existing regulation prohibits Medicaid assistance “for care, services, drugs, or supplies rendered for the purpose of gender reassignment (also known as transsexual surgery) or any care, services, drugs, or supplies intended to promote such treatment.” 18 NYCRR 505.2(I). Under the proposed amendment, Medicaid would cover medically necessary treatments for gender dysphoria, a medical condition recognized by physicians worldwide, and includes hormone therapy and sex reassignment surgery.

“We appreciate the New York State Department of Health’s change in position which will allow this care to be available. We acknowledge that this

plan is still less than perfect in that it limits gender affirming healthcare for young transgender Medicaid recipients. We would like to see more medically necessary treatments included in coverage. We hope that the guidance given to health insurance companies contracted with Medicaid will ensure that patients will have access to all care as recommended by their doctors,” says Kimberly Forte*, Supervising Attorney of The Legal Aid Society’s LGBT Law and Policy Initiative.

This change in the State’s position to provide this healthcare comes after years of advocacy by the transgender communities of New York. Over the past several years, community members, advocates, doctors and allies have demanded that the State provide this care through direct actions, town hall forums, peti-

tions, public comments and advocacy with the Medicaid redesign team.

“Gender-affirming care has a powerful impact on the lives of transgender people. Medical experts across the nation agree that these treatments are safe, effective, and improve quality of life. So many low income people could not obtain this care because their insurance wouldn’t cover it. This new regulation will change lives,” says Elana Redfield, SRLP Staff Attorney.

SRLP honored The Legal Aid Society and Willkie Farr with its Attorneys and Advocates Award for filing *Cruz v Zucker*. Willkie partner Mary Eaton* and former associate Megan Hogan were honored along with Rebecca Novick, Judith Goldiner, Belkys Garcia, Kim Forte and Sumani Lanka from the Legal Aid Society.

Legal Services NYC and Winston & Strawn Achieve Victory for Disabled Veterans

Adam J. Heintz*, Director of Pro Bono Services, Legal Services NYC

Legal Services NYC’s (LSNYC) Veterans Justice Project and Winston & Strawn LLP filed suit last year to make veterans with service-connected mental disabilities eligible for special vendor licenses. Previously such licenses were available only to veterans with physical disabilities. NYC’s Department of Consumer Affairs recently agreed to settle the case.

New York City has long issued special vending licenses based on a New York State statute defining the eligible recipient pool as “honorably discharged members of the armed forces of the United States who are physically disabled as a result of [their service].” Veterans who suffer from PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury) and other similar ailments have, by contrast, been excluded. Consequently, scores of veterans who suffer from mental disabilities and who have been declared disabled by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs have been precluded from obtaining special vending licenses.

The plaintiff in the lawsuit, Kamal Nasser, was honorably discharged from the military and has been diagnosed as disabled by the Veterans Administration. He applied for a special vendor license to better support his wife and four children. Because of this settlement, he will now be afforded the opportunity to significantly improve his family’s financial position and more fully reintegrate into civil society.

“I am happy with the settlement,” said Mr. Nasser, “and glad that future veterans with mental disabilities will have the same opportunities that I now have.”

Winston & Strawn partners John Schreiber and Matthew DiRisio, together with associates Andrew Robbins and Alexandra Kushner*, worked alongside LSNYC on the matter, which Winston undertook on a pro bono basis. Said Mr. DiRisio, “Winston is honored to have been able to contribute to such an important cause. The result of this settlement is deeply gratifying on both personal and professional levels.”

“We are very excited that the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs has settled *Nasser v. DCA* by awarding Mr. Nasser the special vending license for disabled veterans that he deserves and by recognizing that veterans who suffer from mental disabilities should be treated the same as veterans with physical disabilities,” said Staff Attorney Peter Kempner* of LSNYC’s Brooklyn Program. “The statute at issue in this case was written during a time when many disabling mental health issues were not commonly recognized. This settlement brings the statute into the 21st century. Veterans who suffer from the hidden scars of war will no longer be treated as any less deserving when it comes to pursuing their entrepreneurial spirit in New York City.”

LSNYC has the nation’s largest veterans justice program, serving nearly 1,000 low-income veterans every year, across all practice areas. Pro bono partnerships like this one allow us to expand the reach and impact of our services.

Recognizing Excellence in Pro Bono Service

Gayle T. Murphy,* Esq., Pro Bono Coordinator, Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project



VLP's Law Firm Commitment Award- Andreozzi, Bluestein, Weber, Brown, LLP; Gregory Stewart (VLP Supervising Attorney); Justin Andreozzi; Heather Schmidt; Michael Tedesco, Esq.; Hon. Paula Feroletto*, 8th Judicial District Administrative Judge; Laurie Styka Bloom, President of the Bar Association of Erie County

On November 14, 2014, the Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP) and Legal Services for the Elderly, Disabled, or Disadvantaged of WNY, Inc. (LSED), honored their valued volunteers and law firm supporters at an Awards Reception which immediately preceded the 7th Annual Champions for Justice Bash. Laurie Styka Bloom*, Esq., President of the Bar Association of Erie County and Honorary Chair of this year's event, in her opening remarks, recognized the award winners' contributions toward making the ideal of access to justice a reality.

The 2014 VLP award recipients include:

Attorney-of-the-Morning (Landlord-Tenant) Award

Brandon Wrazen*, a young attorney admitted in January 2014, served as our Attorney of the Morning 20 times and represented 65 low income clients fac-

ing eviction this year. He quickly developed expertise in this area of law, and was a valued volunteer, often available to assist on a moment's notice.

Unemployment Insurance Benefits Award

Christopher Szczygiel*, now a staff attorney at LSED, dedicated countless hours to VLP's Unemployment Insurance Benefits program. In 2014 Christopher worked on more than twelve unemployment hearings and appeals, donating upwards of 118 hours of volunteer service. Chris' dedication, willingness to handle difficult cases and clients, and his enthusiasm to learn this area of practice contributed to the success of the 2014 UI benefits program.

Immigration Award

Lisa A. Coppola* handled an asylum application on behalf of an Eritrean family. She and a colleague spent over 250 hours representing this family

before the Immigration Court in Buffalo after their release from detention and won asylum for this deserving family. She also generously donated time from her busy business litigation practice to train other volunteer attorneys on litigation skills at this year's VLP CLE, "Handling a Removal Case in Immigration Court."

Divorce Award

Bryan G. Brockway* has been a valued VLP volunteer since 1990 (which is as far back as our database goes). Since 1990, Brian has taken over 40 cases and logged 335 pro bono hours, which does not include the 3 cases he is currently working on. Since 2002, his work has focused on divorces, specifically divorce defendants. Brian is always willing to take on our most difficult cases, including out of state defendants, those coming to us at the eleventh hour, and those who are confused and overwhelmed by the legal process.

continued on page 5

Recognizing Excellence in Pro Bono Service (Continued from page 4)

Family Law Award

Jamie L. Codjov* began volunteering at VLP in September 2013 as one of our first Family Court Help Desk pro bono attorneys, and continues to volunteer once a month at the Help Desk. During this time Jamie assisted and advised 50 pro se litigants at the Help Desk. Jamie also provides full representation in two divorce cases and one non-parent custody case. The custody case involved representing a grandmother against two parents who had abandoned their children and whose whereabouts were unknown. Legal custody was important because one of the children required surgery. Due to Jamie's diligent efforts, the grandmother obtained temporary custody, was able to arrange for her grandchild's surgery, and will soon be awarded permanent custody.

Solo Practitioner Award

Joshua E. Dubs* is a solo practitioner who has provided over 200 hours of pro bono legal services over the past 5 years. More than just providing quantity, Josh can always be counted on to provide quality, compassionate representation for our clients. This past year, he has worked on 7 name changes, 2 tort defendants, and 1 last minute will. Josh is a frequent volunteer at the Attorney-of-the-Morning Program. He was awarded the prestigious NYSBA President's Pro Bono Service Award for the Eighth Judicial District in recognition of the valued pro bono service he has provided to VLP clients.

Litigation Award

Jennifer A. Shah* is an Associate at Phillips Lytle LLP. She successfully handled a VLP case that was difficult legally, emotionally and logistically. The client was a severely disabled 75 year old woman with extreme multiple chemical sensitivity that prevented her from leaving her specially equipped home and required extensive precautions before anyone could enter her home. The client has a lengthy history with VLP. Her most recent legal chal-

lenge involved being a defendant in a complicated contract case. Jennifer willingly accepted the VLP referral. She skillfully defended the client without being able to meet her face to face, discussed documents with the client even though printed papers could not be sent to the client, and conducted discovery with a client who could not leave her home or have visitors. After 80 hours of

Law Firm Pro Bono Coordinator Award

Joshua Feinstein continues Hodgson Russ LLP's long standing commitment to pro bono legal assistance in our community as the firm's Pro Bono Partner. He encourages Hodgson Russ' attorneys and staff to support VLP with their time, skills



*Hon. Hugh B. Scott accepting his award from Robert Elardo**

diligent and challenging pro bono work, Jennifer obtained a stipulated dismissal of the case. Jennifer continues to assist the client with another on-going case.

Not for Profit Groups Award

Anthony D. Mancinelli* is a partner at Harter, Secrest & Emery, LLP. When the NY Not for Profit Revitalization Act was recently passed, Tony (a member of VLP's Board of Directors), not only immediately advised VLP of the new requirements, he provided pro bono representation to VLP and 2 other not-for-profit groups needing specialized assistance in complying with the changes in the law. Tony also helped VLP plan and produce an event at which 24 not-for-profits heard a presentation on the new law and then met individually with one of 18 volunteer attorneys who assisted them with updating their By-Laws and policies.

and passion. He is a champion of VLP's pro bono initiatives. He leads by example. He represents his firm on the 8th Judicial District Pro Bono Committee and Large Law Firm Subcommittee. He oversees the firm's participation in the Attorney-of-the-Morning Program. He is a valued pro bono attorney at VLP's Pro Se Assistance Program in Federal Court. He provides firm support to the National Green and Healthy Homes Initiative. He is an active participant on the Say Yes Buffalo Legal Task Force, and will be coordinating firm support for the upcoming Say Yes Buffalo legal clinic initiative. Josh demonstrates strong pro bono leadership not only within his firm, but in the legal community as a whole.

continued on page 6

Recognizing Excellence in Pro Bono Service (Continued from page 5)

Federal Court

Jodyann Galvin, a partner at Hodgson Russ LLP and the President of the WDNY Chapter of the Federal Bar Association, was one of the first people that Chief Judge William Skretny approached to assist in developing the WDNY Pro Se Assistance Program (PSAP). She assisted in developing and implementing a CLE program to introduce this limited scope legal assistance program to federal court attorneys. She volunteers her time and skills at the PSAP and mentors law student volunteers. Because of Jodyann's involvement, the PSAP has an impressive (and growing) roster of 35 skilled federal court litigators, many of whom are new VLP volunteers, who provide an invaluable service to the Court and the community.

Law Firm Commitment Award

Andreozzi, Bluestein, Weber, Brown LLP has offered to help VLP immigrant clients who are victims of a massive fraud by a tax preparation firm, many of whom are now being audited and "on the hook" for wrongfully obtained refunds. Attorney Michael J. Tedesco*, who was already providing pro bono legal

assistance in several tax cases, indicated that his firm wanted to play a bigger role in helping out their community. Randall P. Andreozzi*, Esq., attended a VLP sponsored outreach event at a local Burmese Community Center, to provide legal advice and assistance to the victims. He was assisted by Justin Andreozzi* and Heather L. Schmidt, law school graduates awaiting admission to the bar. The firm has taken on full pro bono representation of 11 clients before the IRS this calendar year. Without the significant participation of Andreozzi, Bluestein, Weber, Brown LLP, VLP would not have had the sufficient resources to assist the large numbers of victims of this fraud who have come to VLP for help.

Judicial Award

Hon Hugh B. Scott, US Magistrate Judge, a busy Federal Magistrate in the WDNY has an impressive resume of community involvement. He is a long-time friend of VLP, dating back to his days as the Assistant Attorney General in Charge of the Buffalo Regional Office of the New York State Attorney General's Office and later as a Buffalo City Court Judge. Most recently, Magistrate Judge Scott accepted an invitation

to serve as the Co-Chair of the Say Yes Buffalo Legal Task Force. In this role, Judge Scott has been instrumental in guiding the development of the Say Yes legal clinic initiative. He is dedicated to helping close the access to justice gap and making a difference for vulnerable people facing the loss of life's basic necessities who cannot afford an attorney. Magistrate Judge Scott is always the first to ask "What else can I do to help?"

VLP also recognized the important tax-deductible financial donations by law firms. These donations help VLP continue its very successful, high quality free civil legal services to low income people. Plaques were presented to:

VLP Benefactor Law Firms (At least \$10,000)

Hodgson Russ LLP
Phillips Lytle LLP

VLP Partner Law Firms (At least \$5,000)

Cellino & Barnes P.C.
Damon Morey LLP
Jaekle, Fleischmann & Mugel LLP

A Pro Bono Opportunities Guide For Lawyers in New York State Online!



Looking to volunteer? This easy-to-use guide will help you find the right opportunity. You can search by county, by subject area, and by population served. A collaborative project of the New York City Bar Justice Center, the New York State Bar Association and Volunteers of Legal Service.

powered by **probono.net**

You can find the Opportunities Guide on the Pro Bono Net Web site at www.probono.net, through the New York State Bar Association Web site at www.nysba.org/pbnet, through the New York City Bar Justice Center's Web site at www.nycbar.org, and through the Volunteers of Legal Service Web site at www.volsprobono.org.



NEW YORK
STATE BAR
ASSOCIATION



Suffolk Attorneys Answer the Call to Service

Maria Dosso*, Esq., Director of Communications & Volunteer Services, Nassau Suffolk Law Services

We are proud of our attorneys in Suffolk County who have demonstrated their active commitment to pro bono in the true spirit of volunteerism. In gratitude for the dedication they have shown, the Suffolk County Bar Association (SCBA) (Hauppauge, N.Y.), in collaboration with Nassau Suffolk Law Services' Pro Bono Project (Islandia, N.Y.) and the Suffolk County Bar Pro Bono Foundation hosted a Pro Bono Recognition Luncheon on Thursday October 23, 2014 during National Pro Bono Week.



continued on page 8 Suffolk County Pro Bono Attorneys

An Innovative Time

Cheyenne James, Esq., Pro Bono Innovator, Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York



Cheyenne James

The Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York (LASNNY) has a new addition to their pro bono program staff. The Pro Bono Innovator position is funded by a sub-grant under the Pro Bono Innovations (PBI) Fund from the Legal Services Corporation. The grant to Legal Assistance of Western New York targets increased recruitment and use of volunteer law students and Attorneys Emeritus. I am extremely excited to step into this new position and I hope to expand and complement LASNNY's already established pro bono program. My goal is to significantly increase the use of Attorneys Emeri-

tus and law students as volunteers to best meet our client's needs.

Over the past couple of months I have learned about the numerous Private Attorney Involvement (PAI) programs currently in place at LASNNY. I am confident I have much more to learn, but all of my colleagues have been extremely helpful and I cannot thank them enough. I have observed several of our PAI programs in operation such as the, Attorney-for-the Day program in housing court, the Veterans' Advice Clinic, the Assigned Counsel Program and numerous Pro Se Divorce Clinics. Additionally, I have had the pleasure of meeting fellow pro bono service providers in the Capital Region: the Albany County Bar Association, The Legal Project, Prisoners Legal Services, the New York State Bar Association and Albany Law School. I also have had the opportunity to speak at local bar events to spread the word about the Attorney Emeritus initiative.

The PBI grant enables LASNNY to expand its volunteer recruitment efforts to tap into underused volunteer sources, both law students and Attorneys Emeritus. The Attorney Emeritus

Program (AEP) targets attorneys, retired or active, over the age of 55 with at least 10 years' experience to volunteer their time serving the low-income population. Attorneys Emeritus are welcome to participate in any of our current PAI programs or accept general referrals in a wide variety of law. In addition, the PBI grant focuses on utilizing students who are looking to fulfill their mandatory pro bono hours and instill the importance of pro bono work as they transition from student to attorney.

Prior to my position as Pro Bono Innovator, I clerked at a local general practice firm and volunteered with Prisoners Legal services. I have also volunteered as a program organizer to raise awareness and assist victims of domestic violence. During these experiences I realized the positive impact the legal system had on clients' lives and the difference an attorney could make. I am confident that my experience at LASNNY will be equally gratifying. I hope in my position as Pro Bono Innovator I will be able to increase the services available to our clients and create gratifying experiences for attorneys and students alike.

Suffolk Attorneys Answer the Call to Service (Continued from page 7)

Attorneys who completed a pro bono case during the last 12 months were invited to the event to salute their generous donation of time and expertise. The Chair of the Suffolk County Pro Bono Foundation, Patricia Meisenheimer*, presided over the program and presented the awards to the honorees along with Barry Smolowitz* who co-administers the Pro Bono Foreclosure Settlement Project. It was an honor to have in attendance the Honorable C. Randall Hinrichs*, District Administrative Judge for Suffolk County, who addressed the honorees and commended them on their dedica-

tion to pro bono representation of disabled and low income litigants in Suffolk County. Judge Hinrichs also expressed the judiciary's great appreciation for the critical role that pro bono attorneys play in providing access to justice. William Ferris*, SCBA President, thanked the honorees for their commitment and emphasized SCBA's tremendous pride in our pro bono attorneys' dedicated service. The Suffolk Pro Bono Project staff, Ellen Krakow and Maria Dosso, commended the volunteers for their willingness to provide full pro bono representation, especially in matrimonial and bankrupt-

cy cases, as well as the ongoing commitment of the Foreclosure Settlement Project volunteers. The Suffolk Pro Bono Project staff also attributed the success of the pro bono mission to the staunch support and strong partnership SCBA president Bill Ferris created with SCBA Executive Director Jane LaCova and the leadership of Patricia Meisenheimer, Chair of the Pro Bono Foundation. Pro bono service is alive and well in Suffolk County and we are proud to honor those who give so much of themselves to our neighbors in need. Congratulations to all the honorees!

Are you feeling overwhelmed?

The New York State Bar Association's Lawyer Assistance Program can help.

We understand the competition, constant stress, and high expectations you face as a lawyer, judge or law student. Sometimes the most difficult trials happen outside the court. Unmanaged stress can lead to problems such as substance abuse and depression.

NYSBA's LAP offers free, confidential help. All LAP services are confidential and protected under section 499 of the Judiciary Law.

Call 1.800.255.0569

NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION
LAWYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



Highlighting Excellence: Story of an Attorney Emeritus

Matthew Q. English IV, AmeriCorps VISTA Member and Attorney Emeritus Coordinator, Feerick Center for Social Justice, Fordham University



Douglas Kramer

In 2010, New York Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman established the Attorney Emeritus Program to help the over 2 million New Yorkers who must navigate the courts without the assistance of counsel every year. Douglas Kramer is one of the now almost 100 Emeritus active volunteers who provide pro bono counsel and help address the access to justice problem many New Yorkers face.

According to the Executive Director of the Worker Justice Center, Lewis Papenfuse, Attorney Emeritus Program volunteer Douglas Kramer has been an invaluable resource due to his special expertise in human trafficking and his vast knowledge on a range of practice issues.

The Worker Justice Center, with offices in Kingston, Rochester and Albany New York, was formed in 1981 as the Farm Worker Legal Services of New York, Inc. (FLSNY). Its mission was to represent migrant and seasonal farm workers on

general employment issues that included wage theft, domestic and workplace violence and human trafficking. In 2011, FLSNY merged with the Workers' Rights Law Center and expanded their focus to other low wage workers as well. Mr. Papenfuse, who has been with the program since 1993, believes that the Attorney Emeritus Program is a "great resource that enhances services without the economic costs... especially for organizations that have young attorneys." Having just received a continuation grant from the U.S Department of Justice, Office of Victims of Crime on human trafficking, Mr. Papenfuse is excited to have Douglas Kramer on his team as a leader.

Mr. Kramer, now retired, practiced criminal law as an Assistant United States Attorney in the Eastern District of New York for five years before founding the law firm of Baden Kramer Huffman & Brodsky PC. Kramer now utilizes his experience to help the Worker Justice Center educate new anti-trafficking practitioners about this area of law and other strategic litigation. In this way, he provides pro bono clients with the assistance they need in trying times while simultaneously affording attorneys invaluable hands-on experience in a new field. Mr. Kramer will also be taking his pro bono commitment to another level in the future by mentoring law students, giving the next generation of lawyers the opportunity to become more involved with the delivery of pro bono services. As he says, "the Attorney Emeritus Program offers a great platform for senior attorneys, active and retired, to fulfill their professional and moral obligations to provide legal services to vulnerable populations. As one who did pro bono work abroad for

many years I was happy to find that I could continue donating my legal services here in New York."

Mr. Kramer became involved with the legal issues of human trafficking in 2007, years after he retired in 2000. In 2001 he decided to do a two-year service tour with the Peace Corps in Bulgaria with his wife. This trip later became a five-year service experience as he signed up for a second tour of duty in the Philippines. Thereafter he volunteered with the ABA's Rule of Law Initiative (ROLI) in Azerbaijan assisting in training criminal defense lawyers. While in Baku, Mr. Kramer started to educate himself about human trafficking and continued to gain experience within this area of the law volunteering in Mongolia, Solomon Islands, Uganda, and Indonesia, facilitating workshops, training investigators and prosecutors and helping to implement structures to help at-risk persons.

Mr. Kramer stated that he applied early on to become a part of the Attorney Emeritus Program, but that it took a while for him to take more initiative to find the right volunteer opportunity. He urges other potential volunteers to apply and take as much initiative as possible once sent information. Steps are sometimes required for attorneys to evaluate pro bono opportunities and to obtain the training that may be needed. "Too often people think that if they take the initial step to volunteer that is all they have to do." Attorneys who are fifty-five years or older, whether active or retired, have ten years of work experience, and are in good standing are encouraged to change their registration status to Emeritus or apply online at: www.nycourts.gov/attorneys/volunteer/emmeritus.

LawHelpNY Offers a Unique Pro Bono Opportunity to Law Students Aiding Low Income and Vulnerable New Yorkers

Leah Margulies, Project Director and Kristin Gallagher*, LiveHelp Coordinator, LawHelpNY

When New York State Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman announced the 50 hour pro bono requirement for admission to the New York state bar, he identified public service as a core value of the legal profession. He stated, "The new generation of lawyers must understand that they must embrace the core values of our profession before they can be admitted to the bar in New York state. It is my hope that from this experience they will be hooked for life on serving others."

The volunteer positions with LawHelpNY's LiveHelp program help to further Judge Lippman's vision of inculcating pro bono work into lawyers' practice while providing a unique opportunity for law students to fulfill their 50 hour requirement for admission to the bar. LiveHelp began developing partnership with law schools when it launched in 2010 with Touro Law Center and Columbia Law School because of their existing pro bono requirement.

Thousands of unrepresented New Yorkers come to LawHelpNY (www.LawHelpNY.org) looking for help with legal problems that require either a court or administrative hearing appearance. They often feel overwhelmed and frightened about what will happen. LiveHelp provides a simple, straightforward way to help people in crisis, so the service is popular both with those in need of help and those providing the help.

Once a visitor to LawHelpNY clicks on the LiveHelp button, they are connected with a trained volunteer who can point them towards resources written in plain language about their legal problem, provide them with a wide range of self-help materials for pro se court appearances, and/or help them identify

several free legal aid organizations for representation or in-depth advice. Volunteers give legal information only, not case-specific advice, and are supervised and trained by LawHelpNY staff attorneys. Many times, visitors don't understand the nature of their legal problem, so online chat can help clarify basic legal issues and volunteers are particularly trained for this kind of "issue spotting."

This semester, 30 law student and law school graduate volunteers from 11 different law schools provided hundreds of low-income New Yorkers with legal information and resources through the LiveHelp Program. Law students who volunteer with LiveHelp do not necessarily come with a background in public service, and this volunteer position may be their first experience with pro bono legal services. We asked volunteers to describe what was most important to them about their LiveHelp service, and below is a sampling of comments. One student from Columbia Law School wrote,

Something that I didn't realize prior to volunteering with LiveHelp is . . . that I had spent time thinking about the availability of legal help, but never really gave much thought about access to legal help. I thought that LiveHelp is a simple way of working to correct that problem, and I hope that I was able to point some people in the right direction in terms of getting legal help. Through LiveHelp, I was able to learn about some of the resources that are available to people that I hadn't known about before. Finally, I think that LiveHelp experience was valuable to me in that I was able to improve my communication skills, and every week I worked on trying to be more helpful and effective.

Because many LiveHelp volunteers may be preparing for a career in private practice, they may not have knowledge of public interest law prior to volunteering, and the experience provides them with an overview of the laws that affect low-income New Yorkers. For example, a volunteer from Syracuse University College of Law wrote,

LiveHelp was an experience that not only provided me with knowledge of relevant law but rewarded [me] by providing an opportunity to reach out and help the community...I found it to be an experience that furthered my education and reinforced my decision to attend law school and become a lawyer.

A volunteer from Pace Law School reported a similar experience with LiveHelp:

My experience volunteering for LiveHelp has been a tremendously rewarding and valuable one. It was a pleasure to be able to help so many people with their diverse set of questions and concerns. In addition, while helping people find a solution to their issues, I was able to learn as well. As a law student, this experience was really interesting and helpful because it exposed me to such a diverse and vast range of legal issues that no law school course could possibly cover over a semester.

LiveHelp is a great service that helps many people with a variety of issues. I have helped people dealing with issues in housing, family law, employment/worker's rights, bankruptcy, Hurricane Sandy relief, and public benefits. This is important to me as it has exposed me to many different areas of the law and educated me on areas of the law I was unfamiliar with. This is an invaluable educational and real life experience as a law student aspiring to be an attorney.

continued on page 11

LawHelpNY Offers a Unique Pro Bono Opportunity to Law Students Aiding Low Income and Vulnerable New Yorkers (Continued from page 10)

Another Columbia Law Student had this to say about LawHelpNY:

... [N]ot only do I believe that we have an impact on the visitors to LawHelpNY, but they have an impact on us. It has been a privilege and an honor to chat with them. Witnessing their struggle and their efforts to prosper in the face of adversity is something to be admired. It is truly humbling and outstanding to see that even when dealing with such complicated matters, they still have the nicest words

for us volunteers, and constantly give us their warmth and respect.

LiveHelp provides volunteers with a hands-on experience providing legal information and resources to low-income New Yorkers, in keeping with Justice Lippman's vision of making pro bono service an integral part of all attorneys' practice. Volunteers are required to learn about the full range of legal issues that challenge the essentials of life for low income New Yorkers—eviction and the threat of homelessness, access to public bene-

fits, divorce and custody issues, workers' rights and much more. Once a student becomes a member of the bar, their LiveHelp experience will have provided them with basic knowledge about the kinds of legal challenges facing poor New Yorkers. And once in practice, they will be better prepared to accept as clients vulnerable New Yorkers in need of their pro bono services. If you are interested in volunteering with LiveHelp, you may contact Kristin Gallagher at kgallagher@nylawhelp.org.

First Time Volunteer Eagerly Awaits Next Case

Gayle T. Murphy*, Esq., Pro Bono Coordinator, Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project



Left to right: Lisa Coppola, Esq., VLP's Immigration Award Recipient; Sophie Feal, Esq., Supervising Attorney of VLP's Immigration Project; Hon. Paula Feroletto*, J.S.C., Administrative Judge, NYS Supreme Court 8th Judicial District; and Laurie Styka Bloom, Esq., President of the Bar Association of Erie County

Lisa A. Coppola*, Esq., received the 2014 ECBA Volunteer Lawyers Project, Inc. (VLP) Immigration Attorney Award at VLP's Awards Ceremony on November 14, 2014. Ms. Coppola is a skilled litigator and law firm owner for 25 years. At the time she accepted her first pro bono Immigration case from VLP, Ms. Coppola was a partner at Rupp, Baase, Pfalzgraf, Cunningham & Coppola LLC. While volunteers have many reasons for getting involved in pro bono legal services, Lisa's are personal. Her two children are immigrants. Lisa wanted to volunteer at VLP to help other immigrants. Because Lisa does not have experience in Immigration Law, she attended VLP's annual Immigration Law CLE, and agreed to represent a VLP client in a removal case.

Lisa was asked to handle an asylum application on behalf of an Eritrean family who found itself in removal proceedings after fleeing their country and landing in a U.S. detention center in Berks, PA. The clients included a husband, wife (who did not know she was newly pregnant with a third child when she made her application), and two young daughters (aged 2 and 3). They feared persecution in their native country for two reasons: their Christian

continued on page 13

2014 Pro Bono Newsletter Contributors

The New York Bar Association and the Department of Pro Bono Affairs would like to thank all who contributed articles to the Pro Bono Newsletter. Your continued support is what has made the newsletter a success. We are privileged to share your pro bono accomplishments with our colleagues in the legal services and pro bono communities. We look forward to working with each of you, and many others in 2015.

- Christine Nyamekye Appah, Esq., Staff Attorney, The Legal Aid Society
- Natalie Birch-Higgins, Immigration Program Legal Services Coordinator, The Legal Project
- Carol Bockner, Director, Pro Bono Initiatives, City Bar Justice Center
- Emily Bormann, Pro Bono Administrator, Pro Bono Practice, The Legal Aid Society
- Jennifer K. Brown, Esq., Senior Pro Bono Counsel, Morrison & Foerster
- Barbara Camacho, Esq., Fragomen Fellow, City Bar Justice Center
- Lydia Allen Caylor*, Esq., Burgett & Robbins LLP
- Amy L. Christensen*, Esq., Deputy Director, Legal Assistance of Western New York, Inc.
- Kristie Cinelli, Former PAI Director, Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York
- Kevin J. Curnin, Esq., Partner and Director of the Public Service Project, Stroock & Stroock & Lavan, LLP
- Mariya Deryugina, Esq., Former Associate, Crowell & Morning LLP
- Maria Dosso*, Esq., Director of Communications & Volunteer Service, Nassau Suffolk Law Services
- Cynthia Feathers*, Esq., Director, NYSBA Pro Bono Appeals Program
- Adam Friedl, Esq., Pro Bono Net
- Lisa A. Frisch*, Esq., Executive Director, The Legal Project
- Sheila A. Gaddis*, Esq., Executive Director, Volunteer Legal Services Project
- Marian Genio*, Esq., Pro Bono Director, Legal Services of the Hudson Valley
- Charlie Giudice, Esq. Staff Attorney, Queens Volunteer Lawyers Project, Inc.
- Kelly Glenn, Housing Paralegal & Development Coordinator, Community Development Project, Urban Justice Center
- Molly Haley, Development Associate, Pro Bono Net
- Adam J. Heintz*, Esq., Director, Pro Bono Services, Legal Services NYC
- April Herms, Director of Development and Administration, Community Development Project, Urban Justice Center
- Jacob “Jake” Hertz, Esq., Program & Communications Associate, Pro Bono Net
- Samantha Howell*, Esq., Pro Bono & Outreach Coordinator, Prisoners’ Legal Services
- Harlene Katzman, Esq., Pro Bono Counsel Director, Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP
- Ellen R. Krakow, Esq., Coordinator, Suffolk County Pro Bono Project, Nassau/Suffolk Law Services
- Bill Lienhard*, Esq., Executive Director, Volunteers of Legal Services
- Edwina Frances Martin*, Esq., Chair 2014 NYSBA Legal Assistance Partnership Conference
- Katie McConnell, AEP Coordinator, Feerick Center for Social Justice, Fordham Law School
- Lillian Moy*, Esq., Executive Director, Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York
- Gayle T. Murphy*, Esq., Pro Bono Coordinator, Erie County Bar Association, Volunteer Lawyers Project, Inc.
- Yulia Neyman, Esq., Associate, White & Case LLP
- Isedua Oribhabor, Project Coordinator, PELF, City Bar Justice Center
- Marjorie J. Peerce*, Esq., Partner, Ballard Spahr Stillman & Friedman LLP
- Hollis Pfitsch, Esq., Staff Attorney, Employment Law Unit, The Legal Aid Society
- Erica Nichole “Nic” Rangel*, Esq. Former Post Graduate Pro Bono Fellow, Albany Law School
- Eden Rohrer, Esq., Partner, Crowell & Morning LLP
- Arlene Sanders*, Esq., Pro Bono Managing Attorney, Legal Aid Society of Mid-NY, Inc.
- Louis Sartori, Esq., Director, Pro Bono Practice, The Legal Aid Society
- Alison Sclater, Esq., Director, Pro Bono & Volunteer Department, New York Legal Assistance Group
- Michele Sleight*, Esq., PAI Director, Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York
- Patricia Sturm*, Esq., Sandy Volunteer Expansion Coordinator, VISTA Attorney, Touro Law Center
- Valerie Zurblis, Director of Marketing & PR, Nassau County Bar Association



DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO SHARE...

- Have you worked on or do you know of a special Pro Bono project?
- Has a pro bono case made a difference in the lives of others?
- Has an individual attorney or firm gone above and beyond to provide pro bono assistance?

We invite you to submit articles showcasing excellence in pro bono service for upcoming editions of the Pro Bono Newsletter. Guidelines for article submission and important dates are available at www.nysba.org/pbdates

First Time Volunteer Eagerly Awaits Next Case (Continued from page 11)

faith and their refusal to participate in their country's unjust and brutal forced "national service."

To put together a winning strategy, Lisa and her associate, Ryan Lema*, had many meetings with this family to learn about and understand the details of the family's case. Although the language barrier presented many challenges, ultimately the family's friends translated and helped the legal team identify the essential elements of their successful case. As a litigator intent on winning, Lisa had to ask her clients many delicate questions. Ultimately, Lisa uncovered a critical element to the case that had not been originally presented as a basis for asylum, female genital mutilation.

Lisa was concerned that this fact had never been disclosed. She was told that her client did not consider being a victim of female genital mutilation to be "persecution" because every single woman in her village was subject to this practice. If the family was deported, the husband and wife would be imprisoned and relatives in Eritrea would care for the couple's young daughters. Like their mother, the two girls would be forced to endure female genital mutilation. Lisa was struck by how passionate the father was about the practice and his need to protect his daughters from being victimized.

Another compelling aspect of this case for Lisa was the fact that this family had a third child who was born in

the United States. If the family was not granted asylum and had to return to their native land, it would be the functional equivalent of the US government supporting the removal of a US infant citizen. Although Lisa knew that this argument could not be made in court, it fueled her advocacy efforts.

As a seasoned litigator, Lisa prepared the evidence to make her record, and prepared her clients to testify about highly private and personal details. She convincingly conveyed the facts and emotion necessary to prove her clients' grounds for asylum. She was able to provide the necessary objective proof that her client was mutilated, and ultimately obtained her opponent's consent to the relief requested.

Despite the agreement, the parties were required to participate in a two-day hearing over the course of six weeks. Lisa's skills as a tough, no-nonsense litigator enabled her to tell her clients the news that they were waiting to hear, that they won their case.

Lisa describes her lead client as "an incredibly courageous woman whose testimony, baring her soul, resulted in saving her family. This woman literally climbed mountains to escape from her birth country." She was touched by her clients' bravery, quiet grace, gratitude and gentleness. Lisa said this family is "the very definition of immigrants seeking the American dream."

Lisa's work did not stop at the courtroom door. Lisa drew others into the process of assisting this family. Five days before their hearing, the family's apartment burned down, a tragic unforeseen event. Lisa and her paralegal coordinated the assistance efforts. Lisa said that helping the family at this very time of need was nothing amazing. It was simply "the right thing to do."

Following their victory, the family invited Lisa and her team to a traditional Eritrean luncheon. Lisa was touched by how this family thanked them in "such a profound way." To this day Lisa stays in touch with this family.

Together, Lisa Coppola and Ryan Lema spent over 250 hours representing this family. In addition, Lisa generously donated her time from her busy business litigation practice to train other volunteers on litigation skills at this year's VLP CLE, "Handling a Removal Case in Immigration Court."

Looking back Lisa describes her involvement as a VLP pro bono attorney as the following, "It all comes back to meaningful work and the opportunity to live one's integrity by advocating for deserving people who faced their misfortune with nothing but courage, fortitude and gentle tenacity." Lisa said that one of the highlights of her career was to do this work. "I literally cannot wait for my next case."

Thank you Lisa Coppola for your dedicated volunteer service!

Second Small Business Legal Academy Held in Brooklyn

Benjamin Cox, Microenterprise Project Coordinator, Volunteers of Legal Service



Over 100 entrepreneurs attended the free legal clinic at the Small Business Legal Academy in Brooklyn, NY

On November 19th, 2014, Volunteers of Legal Service (VOLS) joined the Association of Pro Bono Counsel (APBCo) and ten additional organizations to host New York City's second annual Small Business Legal Academy (SBLA) at the Brooklyn Law School in Brooklyn, NY. Approximately 130 entrepreneurs attended the event, which included free legal consultations and three workshops on legal and financing issues for entrepreneurs. Additionally, sixteen different service providers were in attendance to help the entrepreneurs arrange for ongoing support after the event ended.

The event provided an opportunity for more than 100 volunteer attorneys from twenty-four different law firms to meet with small business owners and non-profit leaders from all five boroughs of the city. An additional forty-five volunteers from sixteen different firms and legal services organizations helped to staff

SBLA, demonstrating the sheer size of the event and highlighting the collaborative efforts that helped to make it such a success.

Ann Bailen Fisher*, a partner at Sullivan & Cromwell LLP, was one of the hundred-plus attorneys that provided consultations to SBLA participants. Describing her participation in the event Ann said, "I very much enjoyed the opportunity to participate in the SBLA. It was a very well organized event, successfully targeted at promoting small businesses in the City. I was very impressed by the entrepreneurs with whom I spoke. Each of them had a creative and realistic goal and needed guidance in identifying their next steps and finding the resources to help them follow through and achieve that goal. Each of them had a dream, and it was exciting for me to be able to participate in an event dedicated to providing them with the guidance and assistance they need and deserve."

On the other side of the consultation table sat entrepreneurs like Derrick DeFlorimonte, Founder of Queens South Volunteer Ambulance Corps, Inc., a startup nonprofit organization that seeks to provide the South Queens community with reliable access to life-saving ambulatory services. Derrick spent several hours at SBLA, attending workshops, meeting with attorneys, and building relationships with different service providers. He left the event having received expert legal advice which he will use to continue to grow his new organization.

VOLS was a core member of SBLA's planning team, and we could not have asked for a better outcome. Benjamin Cox, Coordinator of VOLS' Microenterprise Project, was particularly pleased with the event.

"It was a pleasure working with APBCo and all of the organizations

continued on page 16

UPCOMING AWARDS

Empire State Counsel®

Launched in 2006, the Empire State Counsel® Program recognizes NYSBA members who, during the calendar year, performed 50 hours or more of pro bono legal services either through direct legal representation of a low-income/vulnerable individual, or donating free legal services to an organization whose services are designed primarily to address the legal and other basic needs of persons of limited financial means, or providing free legal services to an organization dedicated to increasing the availability of legal services to vulnerable and/or low-income populations.

Empire State Counsel® honorees receive a certificate suitable for framing, the signature Empire State Counsel® lapel pin, and may use this honorific designation as a credential on their resume. For more information and to download the nomination form visit <http://www.nysba.org/empirestatecounsel>.

*Deadline to become a 2014 Empire State Counsel® member is **February 28, 2015***

Presidents Pro Bono Service Awards

Each year the Association proudly bestows the President's Pro Bono Service Awards. These awards recognize outstanding pro bono contributions made by individual attorneys, law students, law firms, corporate counsel and/or government offices.

Although nominees do not have to be members of the New York State Bar Association, to be eligible for one of these prestigious awards an attorney must be admitted to practice in New York State and must have rendered her/his pro bono service or participated in a pro bono program within the state. For more information and to download the nomination form visit <http://www.nysba.org/PBAwards>.

*Deadline to submit a nomination is **March 13, 2015***

2015 Denison Ray Criminal Defender Award

The New York State Bar Association is pleased to call for nominations for the Denison Ray Criminal Defender Award. The Committee to Ensure Quality of Mandated Representation is honored to also bestow the Denison Ray Criminal Defender Award, named in memory of Denison Ray, a career legal activist who led legal services programs in New York and other states. This award is intended to recognize attorneys with institutional providers who exemplify the highest level of professionalism in providing skilled and zealous representation to indigent clients in criminal proceedings.

*To learn more about this awards and view past recipients visit www.nysba.org/DenisonCriminal. Deadline to submit a nomination is **April 13, 2015***

2015 Awards for Outstanding Achievements in Promoting Standards of Excellence in Mandated Representation

The New York State Bar Association is pleased to call for nominations for the Excellence in Mandated Representation Awards. To encourage adherence to the standards for Criminal and Family Courts created by the Committee to Ensure Quality of Mandated Representation, and in conjunction with the Committee's biennial, free Continuing Legal Education program for mandated providers, the Committee established an award intended to honor those who do not merely comply with the standards, but exceed them, setting an example for all to follow.

*The nomination form for the 2015 Denison Ray Criminal Defender Awards and the 2015 Excellence Award is available at <http://www.nysba.org/2015CEQMRawards>. To learn more about this awards and view past recipients visit www.nysba.org/MandatedRep. Deadline to submit a nomination is **April 13, 2015***

Second Small Business Legal Academy Held in Brooklyn (Continued from page 14)

that helped to plan and organize this year's rendition of the Small Business Legal Academy," said Cox. "To be able to provide substantive legal advice to nearly 100 entrepreneurs in a single day is a great feat that would not have been possible without the considerable efforts and collaboration exhibited by these organizations. At VOLS, we are proud of what we have achieved together, and we look forward to seeing what long-term effects the SBLA has on the entrepreneurs and small businesses that participated."

For more information on the SBLA or on VOLS' Microenterprise Project, please contact Benjamin Cox, Microenterprise Project Coordinator, at bcx@volsprobono.org or 347-521-5718. To make a donation to the project, please visit www.vols.kintera.org/micro.

About Small Business Legal Academy

The Small Business Legal Academy ("SBLA") was organized by the Association of Pro Bono Counsel ("APBCo"), a membership organization of full-time pro bono counsel and coordinators at major commercial law firms across the country. APBCo is dedicated to improving access to justice by advancing the model of the full-time law firm pro bono counsel, enhancing the professional development of pro bono counsel and serving as a unified voice for the national law firm pro bono community.

The Small Business Legal Academy was sponsored by the Association of Pro Bono Counsel (APBCo) together with nearly a dozen non-profit public interest law firms and Brooklyn Law School's Center for Urban Business Entrepreneurship (CUBE).

About Volunteers of Legal Service

The mission of Volunteers of Legal Service (VOLS) is to leverage the goodwill, resources, and talents of New York City's leading law firms to provide pro bono legal assistance to the city's neediest residents.

Through our projects, VOLS' staff and volunteer attorneys help all kinds of New Yorkers solve difficult legal problems that have significant consequences for them and for their families. Our Microenterprise Project leverages law firms' and legal departments' deep expertise in business law to promote economic development in New York City. Through the project, pro bono lawyers help low-income micro-entrepreneurs and small businesses overcome legal obstacles so that their businesses can thrive.

Photos from the 2014 Small Business Legal Academy in Brooklyn, NY



Legal Services Community Annual Meeting Calendar

Monday 26 th	Tuesday 27 th	Wednesday 28 th	Thursday 29 th	Friday 30 th
	Veterans' Meeting 11:00am-1:00pm Midtown 4 th Floor	CEQMR Meeting 9:00am -10:30am Green 4 th Floor	Legal Aid Meeting 9:30am- Noon Bryant 2 nd Floor	Pro Bono Coordinators Network Meeting 10:00am-3:00pm Morgan 2 nd Floor
		Joint Meeting 9:00am- 11:00am Sutfon South 2 nd Floor	Justice For All Luncheon 12:30pm-2:00pm Sutfon Center 2 nd Floor	
		PCAJ Meeting 11:15am-1:50pm Morgan 2 nd Floor	NYS Legal Services Association 2:30pm- 4:30pm New York 4 th Floor	
			LawHelp Consortium 4:30pm-6:00pm Hilton Board Room 4 th Floor	

*Rooms subject to change

When Language is a Barrier to Justice

Alison Sclater, Esq., Director, Pro Bono & Volunteer Department, New York Legal Assistance Group

Attorneys who provide legal representation to the poor and underserved are painfully aware of the justice gap that exists for people who appear in court without an attorney. A recent article in the New York Law Journal points to a problem that is widening that gap: a shortage of translators in New York courts to assist litigants who are not proficient in English. As a consequence, people seeking orders of protection, fighting for custody of their children, or facing eviction are forced to wait weeks or even months for an interpreter to be assigned. In some cases, they arrive at court only to find that the translator did not show up. This causes serious problems for workers whose jobs are put at risk because they are forced to take more time off, or for families whose resources are strained as they struggle with child and elder care. Sometimes people just give up, sign documents they do not understand, or are pressured into going forward with their case without an interpreter – all with predictable results.



NYLAG attorney Yi-Jen Chang (center) leading a Language Access training session for staff members

The need for language assistance services has never been greater. Today nearly two million people living in New York City do not speak English well, or at all. When access to translators or interpreters is denied, the result can be loss of services, public benefits, or vital legal protections – leading to hunger, poor health, homelessness, physical danger, and the breakup of families.

In September 2013 NYLAG formed an internal taskforce to explore the best way to improve access to legal services for clients with limited English proficiency – a sizable number of people in an organization where over half of the clients served last year were

continued on page 19

Legal Aid Honors Firms and Individuals with its Annual Pro Bono Publico Awards

Louis S. Sartori, Esq., Director, Pro Bono Practice, The Legal Aid Society

The Legal Aid Society was proud to once again honor the law firms and individuals whose outstanding work helped us provide life sustaining legal assistance to the neediest New Yorkers. Presented by the Honorable Jonathan Lippman, Chief Judge of the New York State Court of Appeals, the 2014 Pro Bono Publico Awards recognized over 330 individuals and 42 law firms for their unwavering commitment to close the justice gap for poor and disenfranchised members of our community.

This year's event, held at Common Ground's Prince George Ballroom and catered by The Works, an event planning subsidiary of Housing Works Inc., focused on the work of five firms and one outstanding Pro Bono leader.

Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP was presented with the 2014 Pro Bono Publico and Public Interest Law Firm Award for its exceptional pro bono commitment to The Legal Aid Society and our clients. Under the leadership of New York Pro Bono Committee Chair Roger Cooper, Legal Aid Society Board Member Victor Hou, Pro Bono Practice Director Jennifer Kroman and Pro Bono Coordinator Akilah Browne, the attorneys, legal assistants and administrative staff at Cleary have demonstrated a sustained commitment to meet the needs of the less fortunate in New York City. These dedicated professionals have worked countless hours alongside Society staff



Back Row, Left to Right: Richard J. Davis, Chair of the Board of Directors, The Legal Aid Society; Hon. Jonathan Lippman*, Chief Judge of the New York Court of Appeals; Blaine (Fin) V. Fogg*, President, The Legal Aid Society; Seymour James, Jr.*, Attorney-in Chief, The Legal Aid Society, Akilah Browne, Pro Bono Coordinator, Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP*

Front Row, Left to Right: Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP: Jennifer L. Kroman, Director of Pro Bono Practice; Roger A. Cooper, Partner; Victor L. Hou, Partner; Caroline F. Hayday, Counsel; Emily Carlson, Paralegal; Andrew M. Darcy, Associate.*

in order to ensure that no New Yorker will be denied access to justice because of poverty.

The Public Interest Law Leadership Award was presented to Sharon Katz, Special Counsel for Pro Bono at Davis Polk & Wardwell, LLP. Recognized for her extraordinary contributions as a volunteer attorney, as a leader of Davis Polk's outstanding pro bono program, Ms. Katz has provided constant support to The Legal Aid Society and its clients. Ms. Katz has skillfully guided the firm's multi-faceted pro bono program which has provided support for all three of the Society's practice areas; Civil, Criminal Defense and Juvenile Rights. Ms. Katz's leadership extends beyond her role at Davis Polk and is evidenced by her work with numerous legal service providers, city, state and federal

courts as well as city and state bar associations.

Four firms were honored with the Society's Innovative Pro Bono Assistance Award.

Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP's Women's Leadership Initiative (WLI), in collaboration with the firm's Pro Bono & Public Service Department, launched the WLI Housing Clinic which partners with the Society's Queens Neighborhood Office to represent women at New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) administrative hearings. The firm developed the clinic in an effort to both benefit women in need and provide junior attorneys with an opportunity to gain practical skills to further their professional development. Cadwalader's team

continued on page 19

Legal Aid Honors Firms and Individuals with its Annual Pro Bono Publico Awards (Continued from page 18)

assisted multiple women and families facing termination of their tenancies at NYCHA

Chadbourne & Parke LLP and Pro Bono Counsel Maureen Ketler Schad established a unique partnership with the Society to represent unaccompanied alien children in Immigration Court. Working with the Youth Group of the Society's Immigration Law Unit, each month pro bono counsel from the firm interview clients and appear before the judge on the juvenile docket. Cases are then brought back to the firm where a team of Chadbourne partners and associates assist individual clients in order to obtain immigration relief for these vulnerable children.

Ropes & Gray LLP was recognized for two distinct projects. The first is a collaboration with the Society's Bronx Neighborhood Office providing services to students at the Single Stop office of Hostos Community College. Hostos students, many the first in their families to attend college and overwhelmingly low income, mirror the community at large as being faced with

myriad problems. Ropes & Gray has put together a team of lawyers to help staff the site, which has enabled Legal Aid to vastly increase the number of students served at each intake session. The second, working with the Society's Prisoners' Rights Project and the firm of Emery, Celli, Brinckerhoff & Abady, brought a major class action seeking to end an unconstitutional pattern of brutality against prisoners in the New York City jails.

Under the leadership of Managing Director Neil Steinkamp, the global financial advisory firm of Stout Risius Ross, Inc. has undertaken pro bono referrals which have benefitted literally thousands of Legal Aid Clients. SRR volunteers have worked closely with our Civil Practice, including the Employment Unit, Immigration Unit, Family Law/Domestic Violence Unit, Special Litigation Unit and the Community Development Project. In the Criminal Practice, the Trafficking Victims Advocacy Project and Administrative Special Projects have both utilized the expertise of SRR's volunteers.

When Language is a Barrier to Justice (Continued from page 17)

immigrants, speaking dozens of languages. The idea was to formalize a process that had been in place for years, but not increase the burden on NYLAG's own bilingual and multilingual staff members – who themselves speak 19 different languages, and have long served as an ad hoc translation pool.

Based on task force's recommendations, earlier this year NYLAG launched a new Language Access Program that has dramatically expanded the agency's capacity by enlisting the services of a pool of volunteer interpreters. Today, this pool consists of 45 outside volunteers from many backgrounds: educators, recent immigrants, business professionals, attorneys and law students. All volunteers go through a

stringent screening process to make sure their language skills are strong. They speak a total of 20 languages; NYLAG is actively seeking new interpreters, and adding new languages, including sign language, on an ongoing basis.

When an interpreter is needed, a NYLAG attorney consults an online roster, organized by language and daily availability. The attorney then contacts the volunteer to schedule an interpretation, and consults with the interpreter about the case and any legal concepts or terminology that may be important to flag in advance. A similar process is employed when attorneys need assistance translating documents, such as immigration documents from a client's home country.


**CONNECT
WITH NYSBA**

Visit us on the Web: www.nysba.org

Follow us on Twitter:
www.twitter.com/nysba

Like us on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/nysba

Join the NYSBA LinkedIn group:
www.nysba.org/LinkedIn



PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS ARE...

P

Professionally persistent.

R

Reliable. Always ready, willing and eager to serve.

O

Optimistic, even when the odds appear to be stacked against the client.

B

Believers in justice, fairness, and that where there is a will, there must be a way!

O

Outgoing and enthusiastic.

N

Needed. They never give up and are tenaciously creative.

O

On call and available to tackle the most difficult cases.