

# NYSBA 2014

## President's Pro Bono Service Awards







# President's Message

Today marks the 24th Anniversary of the President's Pro Bono Service Awards. The President's Pro Bono Service Awards recognize the extraordinary pro bono contributions made by individual attorneys and law firms from around the State. The awards also celebrate the outstanding pro bono service provided by a

law student and a law school group. They are among the most prestigious and coveted of the Association's annual awards.

Publically recognizing extraordinary pro bono service helps to raise professional awareness about the vital role pro bono plays in ensuring equal access to justice for low-income individuals and families, persons with disabilities, the homeless, veterans who need legal services because of conditions related to their military service, and all who are marginalized on account of job loss, ill-health, victimization, or for their political beliefs. Recognition ceremonies, such as this, serve as a catalyst to get others involved in volunteering. This celebration also reminds the public that the members of our profession continue to be actively engaged and committed to helping the less fortunate in our communities.

The depth, breadth and scope of the honorees' contributions are truly remarkable. The 2014 President's Pro Bono Service Award recipients have engaged in diverse pro bono initiatives that include the representation of immigrants in asylum

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proceedings, survivors of domestic violence in divorce, custody and visitation matters, and providing legal advice and counsel to nonprofit organizations that work to empower the poor to earn a sustainable, living wage.

Many of the recipients we recognize today are solo practitioners, who despite the heavy demands of building or sustaining a law practice, have elected to incorporate pro bono into their solo practice. Several honorees after retiring from distinguished legal careers in corporate practice have been inspired to learn completely new practice areas so that they can better serve the essential legal needs of the poor in their community. Among the law student volunteers, many are active duty service members who have rallied their fellow students to take up the cause of veterans' rights.

On behalf of the Association, I am deeply honored to recognize the generous pro bono contributions made by each of the 2014 President's Pro Bono Service Award recipients. Each of you has made a difference in the lives of the individuals and organizations you have represented. Thank you for accepting the challenge to do the public good! Congratulations to each of you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David M. Schrauer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David M. Schrauer

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THE NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

## 2014 President's Pro Bono Service Awards

### Agenda

*Pledge of Allegiance*

*Introductory Remarks*

Glenn Lau-Kee  
President-Elect and Co-Chair  
President's Committee on Access to Justice

*Welcome*

David M. Schraver  
President  
New York State Bar Association

*Law Day Remarks*

Hon. Jonathan Lippman  
Chief Judge, State of New York

*Luncheon*

*Presentation of Awards*

David M. Schraver  
Glenn Lau-Kee

*Closing Remarks*

Glenn Lau-Kee

*April 30, 2014*

*Albany, New York*

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THE NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

## 2014 President's Pro Bono Service Awards

*Celebration 24 years of Outstanding Pro Bono Contributions*

### A Word of Thanks

Nominating Committee members devote countless hours reviewing the many nominations submitted in each of the award categories. The Association is deeply grateful to each of them for their thoughtful and careful review of each nominee's pro bono contributions. Members of the Nominating Committee are:

*David M. Schraver*

President

New York State Bar Association

*Hon. George H. Lowe, Co-Chair*

President's Committee on Access to Justice

*Glenn Lau-Kee*

President-Elect and Co-Chair PCAJ

*Edwina Frances Martin*

*Lewis Creekmore*

Co-Chairs of the Committee on Legal Aid

*Saralyn Cohen*

*Deborah O'Shea*

Co-Chairs of the Pro Bono Coordinators Network

*Gloria Herron Arthur*

Director

Department of Pro Bono Affairs

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## Criteria

Honorees are selected based on the depth, breadth and scope of the pro bono service rendered during 2013 and in consideration of the following criteria:

- Number of pro bono clients served;
- Number of pro bono hours donated;
- The impact of pro bono service on clients;
- The impact of service on a pro bono program; and
- The influence of their service on others to do pro bono.

A brief profile, gleaned from the nominating materials, describes some of the outstanding pro bono service rendered by each award recipient.

### Counties in the 13 Judicial Districts

**First:** New York

**Second:** Kings

**Third:** Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Schoharie, Sullivan, Ulster

**Fourth:** Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Montgomery, St. Lawrence, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren, Washington

**Fifth:** Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego

**Sixth:** Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Madison, Otsego, Schuyler, Tioga, Tompkins

**Seventh:** Cayuga, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne, Yates

**Eighth:** Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans, Wyoming

**Ninth:** Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Westchester

**Tenth:** Nassau, Suffolk

**Eleventh:** Queens

**Twelfth:** Bronx

**Thirteenth:** Richmond County at St. George, Staten Island

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## First Judicial District



*David A. Sausen, Esq.*

Kaye Scholer LLP  
New York, New York

**Nominator:**  
Alison King, Esq.  
Pro Bono Counsel  
Kaye Scholer LLP  
New York, New York

A partner in Kaye Scholer's Tax Department, David Sausen has considerable experience in advising tax-exempt organizations on various issues crucial to the success of their work, including private inurement, self-dealing, unrelated business taxable income, and excess benefit transactions. During 2013, David advised more than twenty different organizations across various fields. Nonprofit NYC organizations David has assisted with formation and corporate governance issues include:

- Several NYC charter schools;
- The Harlem Family Institute, which treats children with psychological problems in free clinics located in public schools;
- GiGi's Playhouse, a community center specifically designed to support individuals with Down syndrome and their families; and
- The Trans Justice Funding Project, a community-led funding initiative supporting grassroots groups run by and for trans people, among many others.



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Internationally, David's corporate pro bono work has benefited a host of tax-exempt organizations that serve the poor around the globe. International organizations Dave represents include:

- Global Health Corps' mission is to end the extreme disparity in healthcare outcomes and access to healthcare that exists between the rich and the poor around the world. David assisted Global Health Care in the 1023 application process, including aiding the non-profit in answering IRS questions so that the organization could obtain crucial tax-exempt status. Over the years, he has provided pro bono counsel to Global Health Corps on a regular basis, on issues ranging from partner contract negotiations to general guidance on permissible activities for exempt organizations.
- Echoing Green Foundation, a grant-making organization that gives fellowships to nonprofit start-up organizations that are committed to social entrepreneurship, has relied heavily on David's guidance.
- One Acre Fund concentrates on helping one-acre subsistence farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa by supplying a complete, functioning market system so that the poorest and most rural farmers can generate more income and permanently solve their own hunger problem. Thanks to David's legal guidance, One Acre Fund has served over 30,000 families in Africa.

Through his pro bono work David has trained and mentored scores of other attorneys. As an active member of Kaye Scholer's Pro Bono Committee for more than ten years, David's influence has been and continues to be both broad and deep.

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## Second Judicial District



*Sarah Levin, Esq.*

Patterson Belknap Webb  
& Tyler LLP  
New York, New York

**Nominator:**

Maxine A. Ketcher, Esq.  
Legal Services NYC-Bronx  
Bronx, New York

*Christopher Strong, Esq.*

Hoffmann Marshall Strong LLP  
New York, New York



**Nominator:**

Maxine A. Ketcher, Esq.  
Legal Services NYC-Bronx  
Bronx, New York

Former Patterson Belknap Webb and Tyler attorneys Christopher Strong and Sarah Levin are recognized for their leadership in establishing the SRC Pro Bono Pilot Project at the firm. The SRC Project was designed to provide pro bono counsel to low-income New Yorkers seeking to amend, seal, or expunge indicated reports of child abuse, neglect, or maltreatment from the State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment.

In New York City allegations of child abuse or neglect are investigated by the Administration for Children's Services which maintains the State Central Register listing the names of persons found to have abused or maltreated a child. The burden of proving such allegations is minimal. All that is necessary is a finding that

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there exists some credible evidence of the child's abuse or neglect. Reports can be made by anyone, even anonymously. Legal Services providers and domestic violence advocates report that abusers oftentimes make false claims against survivors as a form of retaliation. Currently, there are over 2 million people listed on the SCR.

Employers are often required to check the Register to determine if job applicants' or volunteers' names are listed. Although employers are not prohibited by law from employing or retaining an individual listed on the Register, the practical effect of an indicated report can be the sudden loss of one's long-term employment, career, or barring an individual from engaging in any formal care-taking for up to 28 years, thereby preventing the accused from working, formally or informally, with or around any vulnerable population.

Individuals listed on the SRC have a 90-day window in which they may request to have their names removed from the Register. If that request is denied, individuals may seek an administrative review and a fair hearing before an administrative law judge. Not surprisingly, individuals who seek review without counsel seldom are successfully in having their names removed.

Christopher was instrumental in initiating the SRC project at Patterson Belknap. He recruited associates, organized the initial trainings by Legal Services NYC-Bronx and New York University's School of Law Family Defense Clinic, and coordinated and distributed referrals from legal services providers and public interest law firms.

Sarah worked side-by-side with Christopher from the initiation of the project and when Christopher left to start his own firm, she seamlessly assumed the role of referral coordinator. While serving as coordinator, Sarah successfully recruited other law firms to participate in the project.

Thanks to the groundwork and infrastructure laid by Sarah and Christopher, the SRC project continues to thrive at Patterson Belknap.

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## Third Judicial District



*Robert P. Mascali, Esq.*

Pierro Law Group LLC  
Menands, New York

**Nominator:**

Erica Nicole “Nic” Rangel, Esq., M.P.A.  
Post Graduate Pro Bono Fellow  
Albany Law School Pro Bono Program  
Albany, New York

Capital District attorney Robert Mascali has distinguished himself as a long-time volunteer and mentor to law students attending Albany Law School. Over the years he has volunteered his time and talent counseling seniors on Senior Citizens Law Day and veterans and their families in legal clinics sponsored by the Veterans’ Right Pro Bono Project. Since 2012, Robert has donated in excess of 100 hours to on-campus pro bono work, in addition to the considerable time he spends providing legal assistance to veterans which extends well beyond the legal clinic settings.

Recently, Robert convinced Pro Bono Fellow Nic Rangel to work with him in planning a new law day program aimed at serving the legal and other needs of people with special needs and their families. Robert recruited 6 attorneys to give free 30-minute consultations, 12 attorneys and professionals in the field of financial planning and service providers to give 45 minute workshop presentations, and helped raise more than \$2,500 to underwrite the costs of the program. The day-long program was a tremendous success. Special needs individuals and family members came from over 90 miles away to attend workshops on guardianship, special needs trusts, other financial planning issues, and quality of life matters such as employment and job training opportunities.

Robert Mascali is truly the ideal community partner for law student pro bono work.

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## Fourth Judicial District



*Joel P. Peller, Esq.*

Block Colucci Spellman & Peller LLP  
Lake Placid, New York

**Nominator:**

Lillian Moy, Esq.

Director

Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York  
Albany, New York

Besides serving as the Town Attorney for the Town of Clifton Park, Joel Peller is a partner in the law firm Block, Colucci, Spellman & Peller with offices in Clifton Park and Lake Placid. For the past six years, Joel has been an active pro bono volunteer with the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York. As a member of the Private Attorney Involvement (PAI) panel, Joel has served more than 18 clients and spent more than 45 hours delivering legal services to low-income clients.

Since 2012, Joel also has spearheaded LASNNY's pro se divorce clinic in Franklin, Essex, Clinton, and Hamilton counties. In connection with the clinic, Joel prepares pro se divorce clients in Clinton County for the mandatory Inquests and accompanies them to the hearings. In order to demystify the Inquest proceeding, Joel was instrumental in developing the "Inquest Lifeline" brochure which explains the process in plain English and assists the client in preparing for the proceeding.

Joel also does pro bono work through CAPTAIN Youth and Family Services, assisting teens and their families with housing and other legal issues. In addition, Joel resolves attorney-client fee disputes as a volunteer arbitrator for the Unified Court System.

Joel's nomination was strongly supported by Assemblyman James Tedisco and attorney Jacqueline Kelleher. Assemblyman Tedisco noted that, "Joel has been steadfast in his efforts to make pro bono service part of his legal practice."

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## Fifth Judicial District



*Thomas E. Myers, Esq.*

Bond Schoeneck & King  
Syracuse, New York

**Nominator:**

Sally Fisher Curran, Esq.  
Executive Director  
Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga  
County, Inc.  
Syracuse, New York

Well respected and admired by his colleagues, Tom Myers is the consummate pro bono professional and role model. Tom has inspired and coordinated his law firm's participation in a variety of pro bono activities. He is a mentor to others and always leads by example. Tom has devoted countless hours developing, promoting and organizing the Firm's participation in the following pro bono activities:

- Syracuse City Court Eviction Defense Clinic – 26 participants from Bond assist low income tenants to avoid eviction on a weekly basis.
- Syracuse City Court Small Claims Arbitration Clinic – 6 participants from Bond.
- Village of East Syracuse Justice Court Pro Bono Clinic – 5 participants from Bond. While volunteering in Justice Court, Tom noticed a pattern of disruptive conduct eviction cases being brought under a village ordinance which required a landlord to evict a tenant who had three conduct citations filed by police or face a fine. Recognizing the unconstitutionality of the disruptive ordinance, Tom drafted a proposed order which the court signed

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dismissing eight of these cases on due process grounds. Since then, no new eviction cases have been filed under the ordinance.

- Say Yes to Education Program – 15 participants from Bond staff weekly drop-in legal clinics at the McKinley-Brighton Elementary School. Besides recruiting attorneys from Bond to staff the clinics, Tom has increased the overall number of attorney volunteers to more than 300, providing free legal advice and referral at three additional Syracuse schools. The legal clinics help inner-city youth and their families cope with problems that could lead to academic failure and drop out.

“Tom’s volunteer work with the poor and his leadership in encouraging others to become active in pro bono speaks to his personal commitment to the need for lawyers to give back to the community,” wrote Sally Fisher Curran.

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## Sixth Judicial District



*Kevin H. Yeager, Esq.*

Solo Practitioner  
Binghamton, New York

**Nominator:**

Arlene Sanders, Esq.  
Managing Attorney, Pro Bono Unit  
Legal Aid Society of Mid-NY, Inc.  
Binghamton, New York

Kevin Yeager, a busy solo practitioner without the support system typical of a large law firm, has demonstrated a strong and enduring commitment to pro bono since joining LASMNY's Private Attorney Involvement (PAI) program ten years ago. Early on, Kevin stood out as a volunteer due to his willingness to handle Chapter 7 bankruptcy cases which typically require voluminous document review, including tax returns, credit reports, information relating to income, assets, and liabilities, as well as client meetings and at least one court appearance. Despite the time commitment required by these cases Kevin willingly accepted several consumer bankruptcy cases for LASMNY clients, successfully securing fresh starts for them.

Although Kevin's private practice focuses on housing, real estate and estate planning, he sought and received permission from the court to be able to represent indigent tenants in eviction proceedings on days when he was not handling evictions for landlords. Since 2011, Kevin has represented 67 tenants in eviction proceedings, helping them avoid or delay evictions, reduce judgments and obtain needed repairs. Kevin has been and continues to be an outstanding pro bono volunteer.



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## Seventh Judicial District



*Kevin T. Saunders, Esq.*

Nixon Peabody  
Rochester, New York

**Nominator:**

Stacey B. Slater, Esq.  
Pro Bono Partner  
Nixon Peabody  
New York, New York

During 2013, Kevin Saunders rendered 136 hours of pro bono service; many of those hours were devoted to assisting veterans in the greater Rochester area with their legal problems. A Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Marine Corps Reserve, Kevin joined with four other veterans to create a website One Team, One Fight (1T1F) [www.1t1f.org](http://www.1t1f.org) which addresses veterans educational, employment, housing, medical, psychological and legal needs to ensure access to the education or training necessary to not only enter but succeed in the civilian workforce.

Kevin also helped organize a pro bono partnership between Nixon Peabody, Xerox Corporation and LawNY to help rural veterans in the Greater Rochester area and surrounding counties with a variety of issues, including benefits, trusts and estates issues. These partners staff monthly legal clinics at the Canandaigua VA office.

Kevin is being recognized for his pro bono commitment and selfless devotion to helping the men and women who served our country. Kevin is an exemplary pro bono role model for other attorneys.

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## Eighth Judicial District



*Joshua E. Dubs, Esq.*

Solo Practitioner  
Akron, New York

**Nominator:**

Robert M. Elardo, Esq.  
Executive Director and CEO  
Erie County Bar Association Volunteer  
Lawyers Project, Inc.  
Buffalo, New York

A solo practitioner, Joshua Dubs was recognized as a 2013 Empire State Counsel® honoree for performing in excess of 60 hours of pro bono service with the Erie County Bar Association's Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP). Joshua's service involved defending 48 eviction proceedings, eight name changes, three wills, and two tort claims.

Joshua is described by his nominator as a go-to volunteer, someone who can be counted on to accept a complex case or one that requires immediate attention. "He seems to never say 'no' when we ask him for help. He even tells low-income clients that try to hire him in his private practice to go through VLP and that he will take their cases pro bono."

A dedicated volunteer, Joshua Dubs is deserving of recognition as a President's Pro Bono Service Award recipient.

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## Ninth Judicial District



*Robert H. Hermann, Esq.*

DelBello Donnellan Weingarten  
Wise & Wiederkehr LLP  
White Plains, New York

**Nominator:**

Mary Grace Ferone, Esq.  
Attorney-in-Charge  
Legal Services of the Hudson Valley  
Yonkers, New York

Described as a “true soldier” in the fight to provide attorneys for the most marginalized New Yorkers, Robert Hermann is recognized for his exceptional skills and knowledge as an experienced federal court litigator and pro bono volunteer with Legal Services of the Hudson Valley. Mr. Hermann is co-counsel with LSHV in the matter of *Thompson v. Donovan*, a lawsuit alleging that HUD and New York State Homes and Community Renewal allowed low-income and disabled residents at a Yonkers housing project to be threatened with eviction after their landlord charged them exorbitant and legally questionable electrical rates. The complaint further alleges that the tenants were subjected to sub-metered electricity charges in the form of added rent under a lease that NYS HCR directed its landlord use in violation of federal law. This lawsuit could not have been filed without the support and guidance of Mr. Hermann and his law firm.

Mr. Hermann is an exemplary role model and mentor to the LSHV staff attorneys, graciously sharing with them his vast knowledge of litigation strategies and negotiation tactics. He has patiently guided them as they have worked on fashioning comprehensive and persuasive legal arguments in this important federal lawsuit.

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## Tenth Judicial District



*Evelyn Kalenscher, Esq.*

Retired

**Nominators:**

Maria Dosso, Esq.

Director of Communications and Volunteer Services

Nassau Suffolk Law Services

Islandia, New York

Roberta Scoll, Esq.

Staff Attorney

Nassau Suffolk Law Services' Volunteer Lawyers Project

Islandia, New York

Evelyn Kalenscher volunteers two days a week with the Nassau Suffolk Law Services Volunteer Lawyers Project in its Landlord/Tenant Attorney-of-the-Day program. Few things in life are as essential as safe shelter. Evelyn deeply appreciates how important it is to low-income tenants to avoid being displaced from their homes. Since 2009, Evelyn has handled 494 cases and contributed more than 1100 hours of pro bono. She is a reliable and dependable volunteer.

Recently, Evelyn succeeded in having an eviction matter dismissed where the estranged boyfriend petitioner sought to evict his live-in-girlfriend and their two children from the residence they had shared with him for the past ten years on grounds that they were mere licensees. In dismissing the eviction case, the judge found that the petitioner should not be permitted to 'breakup the family unit and evict another family member from the family home in a summary fashion with a mere 10 day notice to quit." Supreme Court and Family Court were the appropriate forums to settle these types of family issues.

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## Eleventh Judicial District



*Bernadette M. Crowley, Esq.*

The Law Office of  
Bernadette M. Crowley  
Douglaston, New York

**Nominator:**

Mark Weliky, Esq.  
Executive Director  
Queens Volunteer Lawyers Project, Inc.  
Jamaica, New York

A distinguished volunteer with the Queens Foreclosure Conference Project, Bernadette Crowley successfully resolved ten foreclosure cases last year totaling 125 hours. Thanks to her efforts, homeowners who had fallen behind in their payments were able to obtain loan modifications which allowed them to remain in their primary residences. The impact of Bernadette's pro bono work has been strongly felt throughout Queens, which was one of the hardest hit counties during the height of the foreclosure crisis. Again and again, Bernadette has stepped forward to represent a homeowner at the eleventh hour when no one else was available to cover the foreclosure conference. She has played a pivotal role in making the Queens Foreclosure Project a successful initiative of the Queens Volunteer Lawyers Project.

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## Twelfth Judicial District



*Eric C. Woglom, Esq.*

Retired

**Nominator:**

Dora Galacatos, Esq.  
Feerick Center for Social Justice  
New York, New York

Retiring in 2008 after a long career as a patent attorney, Eric Woglom embarked upon a second career as a volunteer with the Bronx CLARO project in 2011. Sponsored by the Bronx County Bar Association, Fordham Law School Feerick Center for Social Justice, Legal Services NYC – Bronx, and the New York City Bar, the Bronx CLARO program conducts weekly clinics. Clinic volunteers provide limited scope pro bono assistance on consumer debt collection issues for unrepresented litigants and other consumers under the supervision of consumer law experts.

Mr. Woglom has distinguished himself among volunteers through his willingness to go the extra mile in complex cases; conducting extensive independent research; pursuing advice and information from consumer law experts; and helping litigants step-by-step to navigate the court process in order to more effectively assert their rights and defenses.

Mr. Woglom is also noted for his unfailingly polite, engaging, and courteous manner in dealing with CLARO visitors. His manner and professionalism helps instill confidence and faith in the legal process.

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## Young Lawyer



*Tracy Lynn Sullivan, Esq.*

Solo Practitioner  
Syracuse, New York

**Nominator:**

Sally Fisher Curran, Esq.  
Executive Director  
Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County, Inc.  
Syracuse, New York

What makes Tracy Sullivan stand out is, that despite working to build her own private criminal law practice, she continues to donate a tremendous number of pro bono hours assisting low-income people in Central New York. Since her graduation from Syracuse College of Law in 2011, Tracy Sullivan has distinguished herself as a dependable volunteer with both the VLP eviction defense program in Syracuse City Court and Legal Services of Central New York. From March 2011 to January 2013, Tracy volunteered over 25 hours a week with Legal Services of Central New York on a complex civil action the agency brought against a federal public housing authority and a private corporation for violations of the tenants' rights. LSCNY Staff Attorney Mary Traynor described Tracy as an "ethical, skilled, relentless, smart and creative litigator... [who]...exemplifies the very best of pro bono!"

Since graduation, Tracy has volunteered 40 hours or more each year in Syracuse City Court advocating for indigent tenants threatened with eviction. During 2013, Tracy appeared more than 20 times with VLP. She stands out as a volunteer for her willingness to handle four or five cases at a time also for her ability to manage challenging cases and difficult clients.

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## Senior Lawyer



*Frank Longo, Esq.*

Solo Practitioner  
Kenmore, New York

**Nominator:**

Robert Elardo, Esq.  
Executive Director  
Erie County Bar Association Volunteer  
Lawyers Project  
Buffalo, New York

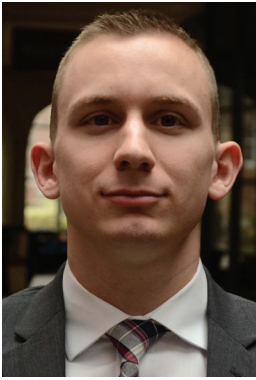
Frank Longo pursued a legal career later in life, following a distinguished career as a teacher and school administrator. While in law school he began volunteering with VLP. Upon graduation he worked for several years as a Law Guardian, after which he worked as a dedicated confidential law clerk to a Family Court Judge. Retiring in 2012, Mr. Longo again contacted VLP and offered to volunteer.

As a volunteer, Mr. Longo handled non-parent petitions for custody and visitation in Family Court. Last year he worked on seven such cases, providing more than 60 hours of pro bono service. Described as “an extremely valuable volunteer,” Mr. Longo also volunteers at the Family Court HelpDesk which provides limited scope advice to unrepresented litigants. Besides his vast experience in Family Courts matters, Mr. Longo has a calm and compassionate demeanor which enables him to handle some of the more difficult and emotionally draining cases involving the safety and well-being of minor children. In each case, Mr. Long has made a tremendous difference in the lives of the endangered child and the non-parent client. Mr. Long is truly an extraordinary role model for not only other senior lawyers, but all members of the profession.



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## Law Student



*Joshua Bennett, 3L*

Veterans' Rights Project  
Albany Law School  
Albany, New York

**Nominator:**

Erica Nicole "Nic" Rangel, Esq., M.P.A.  
Post Graduate Pro Bono Fellow  
Albany Law School  
Albany, New York

A 3L at Albany Law School, Joshua Bennett has taken the lead as director of the Pro Bono Society's Veterans' Rights Project, donating more than 321 hours serving veterans' needs. Joshua's passion for assisting veterans may be attributed to his having served six years active duty in the United States Air Force. He continues his service commitment to his country as a member in the New York Army National Guard.

The Veterans' Rights Project is a student-run pro bono organization that supports the efforts of local volunteer attorneys providing free legal services to approximately 70 veterans a semester in a broad range of areas. The project also sponsors MCLE events for attorney VA accreditation and workshops on issues such as PTSD, readjusting to civilian life, and landlord/tenant law.

As the director of the project, Joshua led 34 peers in providing service to 148 veterans in the Capital Region during 2013. He also personally organized three veteran legal assistance days at the law school. In addition, Joshua was instrumental in developing important alliances with veterans' agencies within the Capital Region. Joshua is an outstanding member of the student body as well as a respected pro bono volunteer.

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## Law School Group



### *Veterans Legal Assistance Project*

Maurice A. Deane School of Law  
Hofstra University  
Hempstead, New York

**Nominator:**

Eric Lane  
Dean and Eric J. Schmertz Distinguished  
Professor of Public Law and Public Service  
Maurice A. Deane School of Law  
Hofstra University  
Hempstead, New York

During 2013, the Veterans Legal Assistance Project served more than 150 clients, enlisted twenty volunteer attorneys, and was staffed by twenty law students. Over forty law students conducted intakes during the clinics and assisted the attorney volunteers. The VLAP is deserving of recognition not just because of the number of pro bono hours contributed, but rather because of the

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profound impact the group's service has had on their fellow law students – inspiring many to do pro bono.

According to the Veterans Health Alliance of Long Island, there are currently 138,000 veterans living on Long Island, the second largest veterans' population in the United States, many without access to legal services. Recognizing the vast needs of this population group, Hofstra Law Veterans Law Student Association decided to tackle the problem by organizing two, day-long clinics twice-a-year. The first clinic was held in April 2013 and the second followed in November 2013. Clinics are open to all veterans free of charge and are staffed by attorneys knowledgeable in a wide range of veteran specific legal issues such as VA benefits and USERRA. Legal advice is also provided in family law; social security disability; employment; housing; bankruptcy; debtor/creditor law; landlord/tenant; elder law; tax; wills; trusts and estates; Medicaid; and Medicare.

The law students were instrumental in forging community partnerships with the Nassau County Bar Association, the Office of the Nassau County Executive Ed Mangano, and the Nassau County Veterans Services Agency. They also recruited volunteer attorneys, counselors and advocates to work with them. In preparation for the clinics, the law student volunteers arranged a series of training sessions covering a diverse range of legal topics relating to veteran' legal needs, mental health issues, and ethics.

Recognizing that many veterans need more long-term assistance, the students developed a proposal to establish a Veterans Externship Program which will give law students the opportunity to work under attorney supervision on pro bono matters requiring more in-depth attention. The VLAP students are currently developing a sustainable plan which will enable the project to continue serving veterans for many years to come.

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Large Law Firm

# Dechert LLP

*Dechert LLP*

New York, New York

**Nominator:**

Elizabeth Guggenheimer, Esq.  
Deputy Director/Director of  
Institutional Advancement  
Lawyers Alliance for New York  
New York, New York

Dechert has an exceptional commitment to pro bono as evidenced by the fact that 99% of the lawyers at its New York office provided pro bono service during 2013. Since 2010, pro bono at Dechert's New York office has increased by over 50%, increasing from 13,597 hours in 2010 to 21,464 in 2013. That averages out to approximately 105 hours per attorney on a broad range of diverse projects including:

- Immigration rights and immigrant communities: Partnering with groups like Immigration Equality, Her Justice, Human Rights First and NYLAG, Dechert helps immigrant victims of domestic violence, human trafficking, and child abuse find pathways to citizenship.

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Dechert has facilitated the representation of several LGBT individuals who were persecuted for expressing their sexual orientation. The Firm also developed a pro bono practice group to focus on gender-based domestic violence in collaboration with the City Bar Justice Center and has assisted over two dozen women to obtain U-Visas or protection under the Violence Against Women Act.

- **Housing, poverty law and other human needs:** Dechert's pro bono work has helped hundreds of low-income and vulnerable New Yorkers have meaningful access to justice. Firm attorneys participate in the New York City Family Court Volunteer Attorney Pro Bono Project, volunteer with The Legal Aid Society, NYLAG, and Sanctuary for Families on issues ranging from affordable housing; SSI benefits; divorce; child support, and domestic violence cases.
- **Criminal justice and civil rights:** Attorneys in the white collar practice group co-counsel criminal appeals with The Legal Aid Society and accept court appointments from the US Southern District Court's Criminal Justice Act Panel. Dechert also has a long pro bono history advocating for prisoners' civil rights on an individual and systemic basis. During 2013, Dechert continued its many years of work to enforce the federal consent decree for Green Haven, mandating constitutionally compliant medical care for inmates with special medical needs like HIV.
- **Nonprofit organizations having positive impact on low-income and disadvantaged New Yorkers:** For the last decade, Dechert has impacted tens of thousands of New York's poor and disadvantaged residents through pro bono assistance to nonprofits. This legal advice has allowed these organizations to deliver essential services to vulnerable populations and communities, including children, seniors, individuals with disabilities, immigrants, and other individuals in need of food, shelter, and support.

Dechert's nomination was jointly sponsored by The Legal Aid Society, the Pro Bono Partnership, and New York Lawyers for the Public Interest.

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## Small Law Firm



Greg Franklin, Esq.



Sara Ashcraft, Esq.

### *Ashcraft, Franklin, Young and Peters LLP*

Rochester, New York

**Nominator:**

Melanie S. Wolk, Esq.

President

Greater Rochester Association for Women Attorneys

Rochester, New York

Partners Sara Ashcraft and Gregory Franklin have devoted hundreds of pro bono hours representing vulnerable populations such as victims of domestic violence and low-income, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender clients.

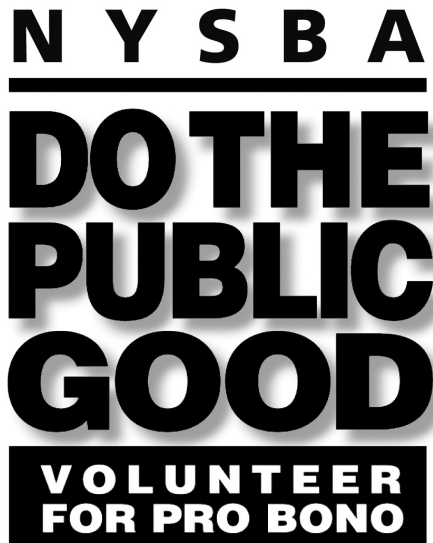
Sara has focused her volunteer work with Volunteer Legal Services Project of Monroe County, Inc., representing indigent clients in abusive relationships in divorce proceedings. Sara is

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well-known for always treating her clients with sincere care in a professional and appropriate manner. Writing in support of Sara’s nomination, Monroe County Supreme Court Justice Elma Bellini observed that, “[she] is an excellent, well-prepared attorney, with a busy private practice, yet still makes time to represent individuals who do not have the resources to afford an attorney.”

Gregory Franklin has devoted many hours representing low-income clients in adoption proceedings. Currently, Greg is assisting a VLSP client seeking to adopt his deceased sister’s five children and bring them to the United States from war torn Congo.

Few communities are more in need of culturally-sensitive and competent legal services than poor and low-income individuals from the LGBT communities. Time and again, Greg has stepped forward to represent indigent same sex couples in custody disputes. He also has given generously of his time, knowledge and experience in representing LGBT individuals to teach and mentor other lawyers; thereby improving the overall quality of representation afforded members of this community.



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## Previous Recipients of the President's Pro Bono Service Awards 2013-2000

### 2013

Proskauer Team – 1st Judicial District  
James Maleady - 2nd Judicial District  
Michelle Wildgrube – 3rd Judicial District  
Andrew Moses – 4th Judicial District  
Anthony P. Marshall – 5th Judicial District  
Mary Jo Long – 6th Judicial District  
Michael S. Schnittman – 7th Judicial District  
Matthew B. Herdzik – 8th Judicial District  
Daniel A. Schlanger – 9th Judicial District  
Michael Aronowsky – 10th Judicial District  
Julia Maeng – 11th Judicial District  
Jeffrey Alfano – 13th Judicial District  
Lindsay Moilanen – Young Lawyer  
Michael O'Brien – Senior Lawyer  
Catherine (Cady) Sinnwell Gerlach – Law Student  
Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP – Large Law Firm  
Morrison & Foerster LLP– Mid-sized Law Firm  
Ehrlich & Arcodia PC – Small Law Firm  
Theresa K. Mohan – In-House Counsel  
Seventh Judicial District Help Center – Government Office

### 2012

Caroline Heller - 1st Judicial District  
Weil Advantage Team - 2nd Judicial District  
Alyssa Talanker - 3rd Judicial District  
Jessica H. Vinson - 4th Judicial District  
Jill O'Sullivan - 4th Judicial District  
Susan N. Esce - 5th Judicial District  
Carol Ann Malz - 6th Judicial District  
Lucien A. Morin, II - 7th Judicial District  
Peter C. Obersheimer - 8th Judicial District  
Julia M. Santiago - 9th Judicial District  
Barry M. Smolowitz - 10th Judicial District  
Mohammad Saleem - 11th Judicial District



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Noah Liben - 12th Judicial District  
Daniel C. Marotta - 13th Judicial District  
Natalie Fleming Nolen - Young Lawyer  
Benjamin Pomerance - Law Student  
Syracuse University College of Law Pro Bono Advisory Board - Law School Group  
Noemi Fernandez - Small Law Firm  
Bond Schoeneck & King PLLC Syracuse Office - Mid-sized Firm  
Gibson Dunn & Crutcher - Large Law firm  
Daniel F. Kolb - Senior Lawyer  
Ronnie Abrams - Government Office  
Lesley Rosenthal - In-House Counsel

## 2011

Eric H. Blinderman – 1st Judicial District  
Larissa Eustice – 2nd Judicial District  
David A. Price – 3rd Judicial District  
Bethany Schumann-McGhee – 4th Judicial District  
John G. Powers – 5th Judicial District  
Kurt D. Schrader – 6th Judicial District  
Shaleeya B. McFadden – 7th Judicial District  
Michael Anton Sciortino – 8th Judicial District  
Elizabeth King – 9th Judicial District  
Leah Belfort – 10th Judicial District  
Ned Kassman – 11th Judicial District  
Sheila T. McGinn – 13th Judicial District  
Hon. Hugh C. Humphreys – Senior Attorney  
Angela C. Winfield – Young Lawyer  
Maria Martinez – Law Student  
Brooklyn Law School’s CLARO – Law School Group  
Lansner Kubitschek Schaffer – Small Law Firm  
Phillips Lytle LLP – Mid-sized Law Firm  
Davis Polk & Wardell LLP – Large Law Firm  
Supreme Court of the State of New York, Appellate Division – Government Office

## 2010

Anne S. Raish – 1st Judicial District  
Christopher Rio – 2nd Judicial District  
Daniel J. Hurteau – 3rd Judicial District

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Emily Muller – 4th Judicial District  
David M. Hayes – 5th Judicial District  
Peter A. Orville - 6th Judicial District  
David Tennant – 7th Judicial District  
Catherine E. Nagel – 8th Judicial District  
Guy Fairstein – 9th Judicial District  
Stuart P. Gelberg – 10th Judicial District  
Hilary Gingold – 11th Judicial District  
Michael S. Davi – 12th Judicial District  
Serena M. Stonick – 13th Judicial District  
Hagit Elul – Young Lawyer  
Shirley Adelson Siegel – Senior Lawyer  
Levene Gouldin & Thompson LLP – Small/Mid-sized Law Firm  
Hiscock & Barclay LLP – Large Law Firm  
Gary B. Cohen – In-House Counsel  
Ryan Shannon – Law Student  
Suspension Representation Project (SRP) – Law Student Group/  
Organization

## 2009

Ronald Abramson – 1st Judicial District  
Kim Zinke – 2nd Judicial District  
Jena Rotheim – 3rd Judicial District  
Cheryl L. Maxwell – 4th Judicial District  
Edward McCardle - 5th Judicial District  
Thomas Miller – 6th Judicial District  
Jane Gabriele – 7th Judicial District  
Barbara R. Ridall - 8th Judicial District  
Simon Haysom – 9th Judicial District  
Charles S. Sherman – 10th Judicial District  
Nicholas DeCesare – 11th Judicial District  
Isabelle L. Curro – 12th Judicial District  
Jennifer P. Stergion - Young Lawyer  
Hon. Robert J. Nicholson - Senior Lawyer  
DelBello Donnellan Weingarten Wise & Wiederkehr LLP - Small/Mid-sized Law Firm  
Kaye Scholer LLP - Large Law Firm  
Siana McClean - Law Student  
Syracuse University College of Law Pro Bono Bankruptcy Practice - Law School Group  
Legal Department of IBM - In-House Counsel

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## 2008

Aaron M. Frankel - 1st Judicial District  
Cynthia Feathers – 3rd Judicial District  
Richard I. Gardner – 4th Judicial District  
Michael J. Sciotti - 5th Judicial District  
Herbert A. Kline - 6th Judicial District  
Jeffrey Wicks - 7th Judicial District  
Kenneth A. Manning – 8th Judicial District  
Devon Salts – 9th Judicial District  
Rudolph de Winter – 10th Judicial District  
Michael M. Cohen – 11th Judicial District  
Sarah Bell - Young Lawyer  
Warren Heilbronner - Senior Lawyer  
Milbank Tweed Hadley & McCoy LLP - Large Law Firm  
Blitman & King LLP - Small/Mid-Size Law Firm  
Katherine Steiner Higgins - Law Student  
Safe Passage Project of the Justice Action Center of New York Law School - Law School Group

## 2007

James W. B. Benkard - 1st Judicial District  
Michael J. O'Connor – 3rd Judicial District  
Matthew H. Dwyer – 4th Judicial District (Awarded Posthumously)  
Martin L. Fried – 5th Judicial District  
James R. Franz – 6th Judicial District  
Jodie L. Ryan – 7th Judicial District  
Francis J. Offermann, Jr. – 8th Judicial District  
Edith Sullivan – 9th Judicial District  
Lewis C. Edelstein – 10th Judicial District  
Regina Alberty – 11th Judicial District  
Benis Guzman - Young Lawyer  
Adrienne D. Gonzalez - Young Lawyer  
Gail Rodgers - Young Lawyer  
Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler LLP - Large Law Firm  
Costello, Cooney & Fearon PLLC - Small/Mid-Size Law Firm  
Kaplan and Brennan LLP - Small/Mid-Size Law Firm  
Olivia Nix - Law Student  
Willow Baer - Law Student  
Student Hurricane Network, Chapters in 12 New York State Law Schools - Law School Group

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## 2006

John M. Aerni – 1st Judicial District  
Mark A. Beckman – 1st Judicial District  
Richard Croak – 3rd Judicial District  
Scott N. Fein – 3rd Judicial District  
Hon. James E. Doern – 4th Judicial District  
Anne B. Ruffer - 5th Judicial District  
Hope W. Olsson – 7th Judicial District  
James C. DeMarco, III – 8th Judicial District  
Lee Vartan - 9th Judicial District  
Patricia F. Neumann – 10th Judicial District  
Archibong Archibong – 11th Judicial District  
Richard Bara – 12th Judicial District  
Vincent J. Roldan - Young Lawyer  
Madeleine Schachter - In-House Counsel  
Hughes Hubbard & Reed LLP - Large Law Firm  
St. John's University School of Law, Latin American Law Students  
Association - Law School Group

## 2005

Jeffrey Simes – 1st Judicial District  
Ronald J. Tabak - 1st Judicial District  
Jeffrey S. Trachtman – 2nd Judicial District  
Ronald B. Orlando – 3rd Judicial District  
Andrew J. Wylie – 4th Judicial District  
Margaret Murphy Peterson – 5th Judicial District  
C. Bruce Lawrence - 7th Judicial District  
Matthew B. Herdzik, Jr. – 8th Judicial District  
Elisabeth K. Wolfe – 9th Judicial District  
Peter H. Levy – 10th Judicial District  
Floyd Alan Sheeger – 11th Judicial District (Awarded Posthumously)  
Evelyn McCabe – 12th Judicial District  
Proskauer Rose LLP - Large Law Firm  
Nixon Peabody, LLP - Large Law Firm  
Siegel, Kelleher & Kahn - Small/Mid-Size Law Firm  
Joshua Sohn - Young Lawyer  
Kara Leopold - Young Lawyer  
Judi Coon - Law Student  
Fordham University School of Law, Legal Education and Advocacy  
Program, Law Student Group

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## 2004

Saralyn Cohen - 1st Judicial District  
Bruce Weiner - 2nd Judicial District  
Brian LeCours – 3rd Judicial District  
Barbara King – 4th Judicial District  
Kathryn McCray – 4th Judicial District  
Christopher Wiles – 5th Judicial District  
Albert Kukol – 6th Judicial District  
John R. McQueen – 7th Judicial District  
Noralyn A. Dillon – 8th Judicial District  
Glenn Shapiro – 9th Judicial District  
Robin Abramowitz – 10th Judicial District  
William H. Scott – 11th Judicial District  
David Tomlin - 12th Judicial District  
Law Offices of Harold I. Silverman - Small/Mid-Size Law Firm  
Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton - Large Law Firm  
Gemma Rossi Corbin - Young Lawyer  
Gloria Bruzzano - Law Student

## 2003

Christopher J. Meade – 1st Judicial District  
Debra Brown Steinberg – 1st Judicial District  
Fern J. Finkel – 2nd Judicial District  
Anne Reynolds Copps – 3rd Judicial District  
Peter V. Coffey – 4th Judicial District  
James T. Snyder – 5th Judicial District  
David E. Butler – 6th Judicial District  
Margaret A. Clemens – 7th Judicial District  
Peter Bergenstock – 8th Judicial District  
Randall S. Lewis – 8th Judicial District  
Frank Muller – 9th Judicial District  
Herbert Harris – 10th Judicial District  
Elizabeth S. Hall – 11th Judicial District  
Rochelle Sendar – 12th Judicial District  
Mackenzie Hughes LLP - Small/Mid-Size Law Firm  
Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP - Large Law Firm  
Meade Versace - Young Lawyer  
Renee Hebert - Law Student Award  
Pace University School of Law, Pace Women’s Justice Center - Law School Group

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## 2002

Kevin Curnin – 1st Judicial District  
Professor Susan Block-Lieb – 2nd Judicial District  
Professor Karen Gross – 2nd Judicial District  
Matthew J. Kelly – 3rd Judicial District  
Christine M. Galvin – 4th Judicial District  
George H. Lowe – 5th Judicial District  
Frank Novak – 7th Judicial District  
Kevin M. Reedy – 8th Judicial District  
Professor Vanessa Merton – 9th Judicial District  
Wallace L. Leinhardt – 10th Judicial District  
Stephen S. Weintraub – 11th Judicial District  
Robert Gilmore – 12th Judicial District  
Simpson Thacher & Bartlett - Large Law Firm  
Hancock & Estabrook LLP - Small/Mid-Size Law Firm  
M. Akram Fraizer -Young Lawyer  
Peter Rolph - Law Student  
CUNY School of Law, Workfare Advocacy Project - Law School Group

## 2001

Andrew Tomback – 1st Judicial District  
Steven D. Cohn – 2nd Judicial District  
Marc S. Ehrlich – 3rd Judicial District  
Glen W. Brownell – 4th Judicial District  
Thomas Atkinson – 5th Judicial District  
Diana Hughes – 6th Judicial District  
Kim Reisch -7th Judicial District  
Kevin M. Kearney – 8th Judicial District  
Michael E. Uhl – 9th Judicial District  
Robert W. Corcoran – 10th Judicial District  
White & Case LLP - Special Recognition Award  
Debevoise & Plimpton - Large Law Firm  
McNamee, Lochner, Titus & Williams P.C. - Small/Mid-Size Law Firm  
Jayson Wolfe - Law Student  
Hofstra University School of Law, Domestic Violence Courtroom  
Advocates Project - Law Student Group

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## 2000

Nancy Lazar – 1st Judicial District

Mark A. Longo – 2nd Judicial District

Jo M. Katz - 3rd Judicial District

David Harper – 4th Judicial District

Andrea King – 5th Judicial District

Michael S. Sinicki – 6th Judicial District

Barbara Roesch - 7th Judicial District

Regina A. Reitz - 8th Judicial District

Helga Klessen – 9th Judicial District

Barbara J. Fritz - 10th Judicial District

Jason Lutzky – 12th Judicial District

Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP - Large Law Firm

Wolford & Leclair LLP - Small/Mid-size Law Firm

Boaz Weinstein - Law Student

Fordham Law School, Family Court Mediation Project - Law Student  
Group



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