

Denison Ray Civil Awards Phil Dailey Award

2026 CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

DENISON RAY CIVIL AWARDS

The New York State Bar Association's Committee on Legal Aid is pleased to call for nominations for the 2026 Denison Ray Civil Awards.

The award is named in memory of career legal activist Denison (Denny) Ray, who led legal services programs in New York and other states. A total of four (4) awards will be presented. Two awards will be given to staff attorneys employed by nonprofit entities that provide free civil legal services to low-income clients. One award will be presented to a director of a civil legal services program or a director of a pro bono volunteer program. The final award will be presented to a nonprofit organization that provides or facilitates the provision of civil legal services to low-income clients.

CRITERIA

The Civil Legal Services Staff Attorney Awards recognize individual attorneys' extraordinary commitment to:

- The provision of creative, skilled, and zealous representation of low-income clients;
- Collaboration with pro bono volunteer attorneys from the private bar to expand access to justice opportunities for low-income clients; and/or
- Efforts to inspire, mentor, and support colleagues in the delivery of exceptional legal representation to low-income clients.

The Director Award recognizes outstanding leadership at a civil legal services or pro bono program by an executive director or legal director who inspires the kind of extraordinary commitment by staff and service to the community set forth in the above criteria.

The Nonprofit Organization Award recognizes extraordinary commitment to

- Strengthening access to justice initiatives;
- Delivering or facilitating the provision of civil legal services to low-income and/or disadvantaged clients;
- Increasing the provision of pro bono services; and/or
- Marshaling resources to maximize services to the community.

PHIL DAILEY AWARD

Much of the advocacy work in civil legal services and pro bono programs is done by advocates who are not attorneys. The Phil Dailey Award was created in 2016 in memory of Phil Dailey, a Paralegal at Legal Assistance of Western NY in Geneva, NY, to acknowledge the vital services of non-attorney staff who demonstrate an excellence and dedication to providing equal access to justice.

CRITERIA

- A non-attorney staff member of a civil legal services or pro bono provider who is recognized for creative, skilled, and zealous representation of low-income clients;
- Collaboration with pro bono volunteer attorneys from the private bar to expand access to justice opportunities for low-income clients; and/or
- Efforts to inspire, mentor, and support colleagues in the delivery of exceptional legal representation to low-income clients.

AWARDS COMMITTEE

Award recipients will be selected by a committee consisting of the chairs of the President's Committee on Access to Justice and the Committee on Legal Aid.

DENISON RAY CIVIL AWARDS PHIL DAILEY AWARD

Deadline

June 30, 2026

2026 Nomination Form

Nominee: _____

Title & Organization: _____

Address: _____

Email Address: _____ Phone Number: _____

Award Category (Check One)

- Civil Legal Services Staff Attorney
- Pro Bono Program Director
- Legal Services Director
- Nonprofit Organization
- Phil Dailey Award

Nominator: _____

Title & Organization: _____

Address: _____

Email Address: _____ Phone Number: _____

How do you know the Nominee?

Nominees need not be NYSBA members. Nominations should be made by persons personally familiar with the nominee's work – but not by the nominee. Each nomination form should be limited to one nominee. Please submit this 2024 form and a statement explaining why the nominee should receive an award. You may submit up to three additional supporting documents.

PAST AWARD WINNERS

Civil Legal Services Staff Attorney Award Winners

2024	Kaitlyn Lauber Mark H. Wattenberg
2022	Catherine Callery Mallory Livingston
2021	Laura Diane Rolnick
2018	MaryBeth Conway Jennifer Metzger Kimura
2016	Josh Cotter David Kagle
2014	Susan C. Antos Lori M. O'Brien
2012	Michael Hanley Ian F. Feldman
2010	Pamela J. Bayer Jeff Hogue
2008	Jason D. Hoge James T. Murphy
2006	David E. Ralph
2004	Sarah Betsy Fuller Judith Studebaker
2001	Carole Boccumini Joshua Zinner
2000	Marc Cohan Peter O'Brien Dellinger
1998	Michael Hampden Mary M. Withington
1997	Leslie D'Cora Holmes Barry Strom
1995	Margaret H. McDowell Douglas Roy Ruff Wendy H. Wahlberg
1994	Sheryl Randy Karp Jerrold M. Levy William F. Mastroleo

Legal Services Program Director Award Winners

2024	Kristin Brown
2022	Jill Bradshaw-Soto
2018	Barbara Finkelstein
2016	Karen Nicolson
2014	Alan S. Harris
2012	Michael Rothenberg*
2010	Steven B. Telzak*
2008	Lillian M. Moy

Pro Bono Program Director Award Winners

2022	Jacqueline Adorno
2021	Cindy Kanusher
2012	Richard S. Hobish
2006	Lisa A. Frisch

Nonprofit Organization Award Winners

2024	Legal Services of the Hudson Valley
2021	Pace Women's Justice Center
2016	Community Service Society of New York Next Door Project
2014	Prisoners' Legal Services of New York
2012	New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)
2010	LegalHealth, a Division of the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)
2008	The Worker's Rights Law Center of New York, Inc.
2006	Western New York Law Center of Buffalo and its Executive Director, Joseph Kelemen, Esq.
2004	inMotion Inc.
2001	Greater Upstate Law Project (GULP), Inc.

Phil Dailey Award Winners

2024	James M. Denson
2022	Ronald Nellons
2021	Kelly Perine
2018	Deborah O'Shea
2016	Phil Dailey*

*Awarded posthumously.