



October 25, 2022

2022 CELEBRATE PRO BONO AWARDS

New York County Lawyers Association
New York State Bar Association

New York State Unified Court System's Office for Justice Initiatives

New York
County Lawyers
Association
Pro Bono Programs



NEW YORK STATE
BAR ASSOCIATION



ACCESS to JUSTICE

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**New York
County Lawyers
Association**

Pro Bono Programs

The New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) was founded in 1908. Throughout its history, NYCLA's bedrock principles have been the inclusion of all who wish to join and the active pursuit of legal system reform. NYCLA has historically been one of the largest and most influential county bar associations in the county. It operates multiple Pro Bono programs and highly values its many members who contribute their time and expertise to these projects and to New Yorkers in need of legal support.



Vincent Chang
President
New York County Lawyers
Association



Anthe Maria Bova
General Counsel & Director
of Pro Bono Programs
New York County Lawyers
Association



NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

The New York State Bar Association (NYSBA) has a long and proud tradition of advocating for equal access to justice for all New Yorkers. NYSBA provides educational training programs for pro bono volunteers and attorneys employed by legal services organizations and also oversees a number of attorney recognition programs that promote, recognize, and honor pro bono service by individual attorneys and law firms. NYSBA works to encourage the voluntary participation of its members in pro bono projects across the state.



Sherry Levin Wallach
President
New York State Bar Association



The New York State Unified Court System’s Office for Justice Initiatives strives to ensure equal access to justice in all NY State Courts for people of all backgrounds, incomes, and abilities, by using every resource, including pro bono programs, self-help services, and technological tools; and by securing stable and adequate non-profit and government funding for civil and criminal legal services programs.



Hon. Edwina G. Richardson-Mendelson
Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives

October 25, 2022

To our Pro Bono Community:

On behalf of the New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA), we are grateful to all of the honorees at this year's 2022 Celebrate Pro Bono Awards. We appreciate their commitment to providing free legal services to New Yorkers in need.

We host this annual celebration with two of our most valued community partners: the Office for Justice Initiatives of the Unified Court System and the New York State Bar Association. We are thankful for all of their work in the public interest to sustain crucial pro bono programming in New York State.

The theme of this year's 2022 Pro Bono Celebration is "Law in Everyday Life". Indeed, NYCLA's work is centered around the "everyday"; our programming focuses on the injustices, barriers and challenges consistently faced by low-income populations—including landlord-tenant disputes, family law matters, employment discrimination against individuals with criminal records, and ensuring social security benefits for individuals with disabilities.

Thanks to the work and feedback of our volunteers, NYCLA continues—as it has over 100 years—to evolve its pro bono practice and increase its impact through innovative new programs, and quality training through NYCLA's esteemed CLE Institute.

As former United States Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor has noted, "public service marks the difference between a business and a profession. While a business can afford to focus solely on profits, a profession cannot. It must devote itself first to the community it is responsible to serve. I can imagine no greater duty than fulfilling this obligation. And I can imagine no greater pleasure."

Neither can we.

We look forward to continuing this important work and expanding our impact with crucial partners in our legal community including, first and foremost, our volunteers.

Congratulations again to the 2022 Celebrate Pro Bono Awardees!

Sincerely,



Vincent T. Chang
President



Anthe Maria Bova
General Counsel & Director of Pro Bono Programs



Dear Colleagues:

As president of the New York State Bar Association, it is my distinct honor to join New York State Unified Court System's Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives Hon. Edwina Mendelson and New York County Lawyers Association president Vincent Ted Chang in welcoming everyone to the 2022 Celebrate Pro Bono Award Ceremony.

With NYCLA as our host, we come together every year during National Pro Bono Week to celebrate attorneys who have made giving back an integral part of their careers. And we single out a few who have performed exemplary pro bono service in the past year, including the distinguished honorees from the Attorney Emeritus Program nominated by the Feerick Center for Social Justice at Fordham University School of Law.

For the good of those we serve, our three organizations have developed a robust partnership to work toward the common goal of delivering equal justice under the law. In our pursuit of that goal, each of our organizations has focused on our particular strengths, whether it is education and training, strategies and logistics, or directing pro bono programs. We all actively encourage lawyers to give of their time and talent to help those who otherwise would not have access to legal services.

The presidents-elect of NYSBA spend the year prior to their elevation to the office as co-chair of our President's Committee on Access to Justice. It is vital to our mission, "do the public good," that those who step into the job of president come prepared with a deep understanding of the issues involved for pro bono clients, providers and support organizations alike.

This year, NYSBA was pleased to host the Partnership Conference, which brought together representatives of pro bono civil legal service providers from throughout the state for two days of learning, networking and celebrating the concept of *pro bono publico*. The biennial conference is a unique opportunity for lawyers working in the public interest and pro bono coordinators to meet and share their expertise and best practices. This year's theme was "Partnership Is Our Strength." Indeed it is.

On behalf of the members of the New York State Bar Association, I thank all our pro bono partners, and offer congratulations to this evening's honorees. Your exceptional contributions to the public good represent the best of our profession. May you inspire us all to greater action.

Sincerely,

Sherry Levin Wallach

President, New York State Bar Association



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LAWRENCE K. MARKS
Chief Administrative Judge

HON. EDWINA G. RICHARDSON-MENDELSON
Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives

Dear Colleagues:

I am delighted to have the opportunity to honor the cadre of attorneys, law students and advocates who have so generously committed their time and contributed their talents to ensure access to justice for so many New Yorkers this past year.

As the public health crisis recedes, legal challenges for many in our state will intensify. The NYS Courts Office for Justice Initiatives (OJI) strives to ensure meaningful and equal access to justice for people of all backgrounds, incomes, and abilities through virtual and in-person pro bono programs and other initiatives related to juvenile, adolescent, emerging adult, and family justice.

Our justice partners continue to play a critical role in championing the rights of those who would otherwise be left to navigate the court system without an attorney. The unwavering support of law firms, bar associations, legal service providers, law schools, and community organizations who collaborate with us on pro bono attorney training and programs, and community legal workshops significantly bolsters our mission to equalize the playing field for all litigants.

It is my sincere privilege to celebrate the exceptional contributions of tonight's honorees. I extend my heartiest congratulations to you all.

Thank you for all you do.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edwina G. Richardson-Mendelson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Hon. Edwina G. Richardson-Mendelson
Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives

New York County Lawyers Association

Tax Court Project

Pro Bono Programs

Phillip Colasanto volunteers with the **New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) Pro Bono United States Tax Court Project**. This program provides free legal advice to pro se litigants in US Tax Court calendar calls. Phillip works as a tax controversy and litigation lawyer who concentrates on civil and criminal tax controversies, representing both individuals and businesses, before the United States Tax Court and the United States District Court. He works at the law firm of Agostino & Associates, headed by Frank Agostino who also coordinates NYCLA's Tax Court Project. Phillip regularly applies his expertise in tax law to his volunteer work with NYCLA's program.



Phillip J. Colasanto



Phillip also extends his pro bono work beyond the scope of the assistance provided at calendar calls, by continuing to represent certain clients throughout their cases. One such client appeared



at a calendar call in 2018 where she was assisted by NYCLA volunteers. Phillip continued providing pro bono representation to the client throughout their lengthy case. His work was featured in Forbes magazine, which covered the case and highlighted the dedication to pro bono legal service exemplified by Phillip and the team at Agostino & Associates. For low-income taxpayers facing difficult disputes with the Internal Revenue Service, the opportunity to receive pro bono help

from experienced, highly capable lawyers like Phillip is crucial. Phillip's pro bono work has helped level the playing field in the US Tax Court.

#TaxLaw

#TaxCourt



Eric J. Vath

Eric has over 20 years of experience in land use and zoning law, including past work as a pro bono attorney representing homeowners facing foreclosure in Philadelphia. He practiced law in Pennsylvania and Washington, DC before joining GoldmanHarris LLC, a boutique law firm that focuses on zoning and land use in the five boroughs of New York City, where he works as a Planning and Development Specialist. As part of his transition to practice law in New York, Eric reached out to NYCLA to inquire about pro bono volunteer opportunities and initially participated with our program to contribute to his 50 hour pro bono requirement for admission to the New York Bar. He met that requirement in February and has continued consistently devoting time every week to providing legal consultations.

In the past year Eric has completed over 70 consults, helping people with their concerns as tenants and small private landlords in New York. His assistance often goes above and beyond, providing follow-up consultations to clients to fully address their concerns, and in certain cases even offering to contact landlords to help resolve clients' issues beyond the typical scope of advice the Legal Counseling Project provides. The clients he speaks with consistently indicate how helpful his advice was and their appreciation for his service. One had this to say after their consultation: "I feel empowered, in a place of knowledge, and not worried about misstepping as I move forward managing the issue. Thank you Eric!"

Eric Vath has volunteered extensively over the past year on the **New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) Pro Bono Legal Counseling Project**, providing free consultations to New Yorkers with legal concerns relating to Housing and Tenants' Rights. The Legal Counseling Project offers legal advice over the phone in the areas of Landlord/Tenant Law, Family Law, and Employment Law. Landlord/Tenant matters consistently make up the largest portion of inquiries covered by this program, and this need has increased even further with the serious impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on housing security, and with the expiration this past year of many pandemic relief programs. Eric's significant contribution to this program has helped make a difference for many New Yorkers facing uncertainty.

New York
County Lawyers
Association

Legal
Counseling
Project

Pro Bono Programs

#LegalCounseling

New York County Lawyers Association

Social Security SDNY Project

Pro Bono Programs



Puja Khare

Puja Khare has taken on multiple pro bono cases as part of the **New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) Pro Bono Social Security SDNY Project**. This program provides full-scope representation to individuals with disabilities whose Social Security Disability benefits were denied, and who have appealed the denial in the United States District Court in the Southern District of New York. When people are unable to work because they are disabled, they are dependent on Social Security benefits, but each year, the Social Security Administration rejects hundreds of thousands of people who apply. There is an appeal process within the agency, but individuals who have lost at all steps of the administrative process have the right to file civil actions in the United States District Court, and nearly 20,000 people do so each year. Many of these litigants are unable to afford representation and face a huge disadvantage when they try to proceed with their case pro se at the federal level. NYCLA's program helps address this gap by matching litigants with volunteer attorneys who represent them for free.

Puja is the Associate Vice President of the Greater New York Hospital Association, and previously worked in the Pennsylvania Office of General Counsel at the Department of Health. She started working with NYCLA's Social Security Project at the start of 2021, when she reached out expressing her interest in the program and in litigating these cases in the Southern District of New York. This program requires lawyers to be admitted to practice in the Southern District, and Puja pursued admission specifically in order to take on cases with NYCLA's program. She has represented four clients in the Southern District so far, including one case that is still ongoing, and has achieved important wins on behalf of her clients. Her hard work on each case and her significant contributions taking on multiple cases with NYCLA's program demonstrates her commitment to pro bono work.

#DisabilityRights

New York County Lawyers Association

Pro Bono Programs

W. Scott Kim is an Associate at Patterson, Belknap, Webb & Tyler LLP, who contributed significant pro bono service to the **New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) Veterans Discharge Upgrade Project**. After more than 5 years, Scott, under the supervision of Lew Popovski, a Patterson Belknap partner, secured a victory for his client Mr. B. in upgrading his Army discharge characterization from "Under Honorable Conditions" to "Honorable." Mr. B.'s initial application for relief filed in 2019 was rejected but in an appeal before the Army Discharge Review Board, the Board agreed in a 5-0 vote that Mr. B.'s discharge was inequitable.



W. Scott Kim
**Patterson
Belknap**

Mr. B. was discharged from the Army Under Honorable Conditions in 2010 based upon being minutes late to an appointed place of duty and possession of marijuana. The Firm argued Mr. B.'s discharge characterization was inequitable in light of his four years of honorable and decorated service, including being deployed to Iraq for combat service after the events in question. Mr. B. also suffered from undiagnosed PTSD resulting from witnessing a murder at the age of 11 and being raised by a drug-addicted abusive mother. After his mother's passing, at the age of 14, he began to face physical abuse at the hands of foster care parents. Mr. B.'s PTSD was then exacerbated by his



combat service in Iraq. Despite all the obstacles in Mr. B.'s life and being unceremoniously discharged from the Army in 2010, Mr. B. overcame all of this to become a Nurse Assistant at a hospital in Queens, helping those suffering from substance use disorder.

The Board agreed Mr. B.'s length of service (including combat service), his suffering from PTSD, and his post-service record warranted an upgrade of his discharge characterization to Honorable. This upgrade allows Mr. B full access to benefits for veterans and removes the stigma linked to a less than Honorable discharge. Scott's unfailing commitment to Mr. B throughout this very lengthy case was crucial in achieving this victory and upgrading Mr. B's discharge characterization to Honorable.

#VeteransRights



New York County Lawyers Association

Reentry Initiative

Pro Bono Programs

Jason Gonzalez is a pro bono volunteer with the **New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) Reentry Initiative**. This Initiative includes a number of programs that help dismantle the various barriers imposed by past criminal convictions. Jason has devoted his time to the Certificates Project, which provides counsel and assistance to people with criminal records on obtaining Certificates of Relief from Civil Disabilities and Certificates of Good Conduct, which facilitate their access to employment opportunities, housing, and civic participation.

Jason P. Gonzalez

Jason works as an attorney with the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission. He started volunteering with NYCLA's program in 2021, by participating in virtual legal clinics and providing individual consultations as part of the Certificates Project. These individualized consultations help people with criminal records determine their eligibility and understand the process of applying for Certificates. These Certificates can be extremely beneficial to people with criminal records, but can be complicated to navigate, and people often lack information about this important resource available to them. Jason continued working with NYCLA's Certificates Project beyond providing consultations, and he took on two clients to provide ongoing assistance throughout the lengthy application process. One of these clients



was granted their Certificate, while the other's application is still pending. His clients have benefitted greatly from his legal assistance to make their applications as strong as possible, and give them the best chance to receive a Certificate that can significantly improve their livelihoods.

#Reentry #ParolePreparation

New York County Lawyers Association

State Central Registry Project

Pro Bono Programs

Alvin Li is an Associate at Patterson, Belknap, Webb & Tyler LLP who receives this award for his impressive work on behalf of a client as part of the **New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) State Central Registry Project**. This program represents individuals who have been wrongfully or unfairly reported to the New York State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment. Alvin's client, Ms. C, had an upbringing filled with trauma and an adulthood plagued by difficulties and personal challenges. Unfortunately, she turned to drugs to cope with the stresses in her life. That led to an investigation by the New York City Administration for Children's

Services ("ACS") in 2020. During the investigation, she tested positive for drug use. As a result, ACS gave her an ultimatum—get clean or lose custody of her three children. Ms. C stopped using drugs and stayed clean, despite incredibly stressful circumstances. These circumstances included ending a toxic relationship and navigating the shelter system with her kids after being kicked out by her former partner. Moreover, Ms. C had to raise her kids as a single mother while working a difficult, but emotionally fulfilling, job as a caretaker for disabled individuals. What kept her going through all of this was her love for her children.

As Ms. C was turning her life around, the results of the ACS investigation hung over her and her family. Due to the positive drug test result, ACS entered an indicated report against Ms. C for maltreatment in the State Central Register. Ms. C was worried that she would lose her job as a result of this report being disclosed to her employer, so she requested a fair hearing and reached out to the New York County Lawyers Association for help. NYCLA referred Ms. C to the firm and we agreed to lend a hand.

After a long discovery process and a last minute administrative law judge substitution, Ms. C had her fair hearing. Ms. C gave compelling testimony—expressing remorse about her prior actions and explaining how she turned her life around over the last year. Based on that testimony and prior negotiations, the ACS attorney agreed at the end of the hearing that Ms. C's report was not reasonably related to her employment and should not be disclosed. After a month, the ALJ issued an opinion, agreeing that the indicated report was not reasonably related to Ms. C's employment due to her remorse and efforts at rehabilitation. This favorable fair hearing decision for Ms. C. will prevent her current employer—as well as future employers—from accessing a State Central Register report that does not reflect the person that she has become.



Alvin Li
**Patterson
Belknap**

#KeepingFamiliesTogether



Rhick Bose
Patterson
Belknap

New York County Lawyers Association

Reentry Initiative

Pro Bono Programs

Rhick Bose is an Associate at Patterson, Belknap, Webb & Tyler LLP who secured a significant victory for his client in the **New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) Parole Prep Pilot Project**. This program offers pro bono legal assistance to currently incarcerated individuals to prepare for their parole hearings, and to appeal if their parole is denied. Rhick's client, Mr. R., was denied parole at his first hearing before the parole board after serving more than thirty years in prison for a crime for which he continues to maintain his innocence. Rhick appealed the decision denying Mr. R. release through the

administrative appeal process, and when the decision was affirmed, Rhick filed an Article 78 proceeding on behalf of Mr. R.

Justice Maria G. Rosa of New York State Supreme Court in Dutchess County granted the petition.

Justice Rosa found that the parole board reached its determination to deny parole on erroneous and incomplete information. Judge Rosa found that the parole board's failure to consider Mr. R.'s corrected COMPAS report, corrected release plan, and birth certificate warranted vacatur of the parole board's decision and a de novo parole release interview.

This decision by Justice Rosa provides helpful precedent with respect to the parole board's departure from COMPAS assessments, and furthers useful precedent for issues of parolee waiver, holding that issues raised on administrative appeal

are not waived and are reviewable by the court. Rhick's commitment to pro bono service through this program will therefore not only impact his own client, but also contributes to improving the parole review process.



#Reentry #ParolePreparation

Pro Bono Programs

Michael Fisher is an Associate at Patterson, Belknap, Webb & Tyler LLP who went above and beyond in his pro bono work for the **New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) Access-A-Ride Project**. This program provides representation to individuals with disabilities who are denied use of the Access-A-Ride Paratransit Services that enable people to get around in New York City when they're unable to use public transportation.

In May 2022, Michael's client Ms. G. was denied renewal of her Access-a-Ride (AAR) service that she had for around 5 years, despite various physical and psychological disabilities. Ms. G. had relied on the AAR paratransit service to travel to medical appointments and visit her brothers, her only family. Michael Fisher volunteered to take on her case, and filed an appeal with the Access-a-Ride Appeal Board. Michael requested a hearing rather than just submitting a written appeal after determining the likelihood of success on appeal would be higher if the Appeals Board spoke with Ms. G. While waiting for the hearing, Michael reached out to various of Ms. G.'s doctors to learn more about Ms. G.'s disabilities and obtain letters in support of Ms. G.'s application. Michael used these letters to write a brief in support of Ms. G.'s application. The brief explained Ms. G.'s physical and mental disabilities in further detail, including Ms. G.'s schizophrenia, anxiety, and confusion, as well as her need for a walker following a severe automobile accident.

While drafting and submitting the brief in support, Michael also met regularly with Ms. G. several times to prepare her for the questions the Appeal Board might ask during the hearing. During the hearing itself, Ms. G. was well prepared for the Appeal Board's questions. Michael conducted a brief direct question to elicit further details on Ms. G.'s medical conditions. Six days later, the Appeals Board reinstated Ms. G.'s Access-a-Ride benefits, which will allow her to attend her medical appointments as well as see her brothers. Michael's commitment to his client was an exemplary demonstration of pro bono service and resulted in an important victory for his client!



**Michael Ian
Fisher
Patterson
Belknap**

#DisabilityRights #AdministrativeLaw



NEW YORK STATE
BAR ASSOCIATION



Attorney Emeritus Program
New York State Unified Court System

NASSAU - SUFFOLK LAW SERVICES

Jeff Adolph has been volunteering in Suffolk county with **Nassau Suffolk Law Services** since 2016. Jeff joined the **Attorney Emeritus Program** in March 2017. Since then, he has tirelessly worked with hundreds of low-income callers relating to child support. He has shared his invaluable expertise as a long time Family Court Attorney with the Department of Social Services of Suffolk County. He speaks with non-English speaking clients using Language Line and is a staunch advocate for callers who are both custodial and

non-custodial parents. For custodial parents, he will discuss the process of obtaining and enforcing on-going child support orders and arrears. He will also assist non-custodial parents who need to reduce their financial obligations because of disabilities or indigency. Jeff listens to every client and learns the facts of their case. Then he will patiently and thoroughly discuss how those facts will intersect with the child support process. Jeff is a delightful person with whom to work and over these years, he has been an outstanding resource for so many clients.

#FamilyLaw





NEW YORK STATE
BAR ASSOCIATION



Attorney Emeritus Program
New York State Unified Court System

MOBILIZATION FOR JUSTICE

Pat Castellan receives this Pro Bono Award for his extraordinary and outstanding service at **Mobilization for Justice (MFJ)**. MFJ envisions a society in which there is equal justice for all, and its mission is to achieve social justice, prioritizing the needs of people who are low-income, disenfranchised or have disabilities. MFJ does this through providing the highest quality direct civil legal assistance, providing community education, entering into partnerships, engaging in policy advocacy, and bringing impact litigation.

They assist more than 13,000 New Yorkers each year, benefitting 25,000. MFJ's Consumer Rights Project helps low-income New Yorkers facing a range of consumer problems, including debt collection. In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, MFJ's Consumer Rights Project was and continues to be inundated with New Yorkers--many of them struggling with COVID-related job loss, health problems, and other struggles--facing debt collection in various forms.

Pat, an attorney emeritus who has been in practice for over 40 years, was a longtime volunteer at the court-based CLARO (Civil Legal Advice and Resource Office) clinic in Bronx Civil Court. When CLARO initially suspended its services during the COVID-19 crisis, Pat heeded MFJ's call for help and became an MFJ **Attorney Emeritus Program** volunteer. He always treats his clients with respect and provides assistance that goes above and beyond, arranging video conference calls from his home with clients who have the necessary technology and communicating by phone, mail, or even in person with those who do not. After he completes pro se papers for clients he monitors the progress of their cases, reminds them of court dates, and answers subsequent questions that arise. Clients have told us they don't know what they would have done without him. One relieved client whose case was dismissed because of the papers Pat drafted on her behalf recently put it this way: "It was a blessing for me to be able to get the support I needed from Mr. Pat."

Pat's work product is thoughtful, creative, and of excellent quality. Many debt collection plaintiffs have agreed to drop their cases upon experiencing his deft litigation touch. Over the past two years Pat has helped approximately 75 clients, volunteering close to 500 hours of his time, while doggedly pursuing justice on behalf of marginalized New Yorkers, many of them from communities of color and many of whom have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.



Pat Castellan

#ConsumerRights

Sally Shreeves

Legal Information for Families Today (LIFT) is proud to nominate **Attorney Emeritus** volunteer **Sally Shreeves** for her distinguished pro bono service. Sally is an exceptional AEP volunteer and a committed advocate for New Yorkers in need. Sally has vastly exceeded the

expectations of the AEP. In 2022, thus far, she has volunteered for 96 hours and since she first began volunteering with LIFT in February 2021, she has completed over 200 hours.

Sally volunteers with LIFT's Pro Bono Program and conducts intakes with family court litigants referred to LIFT by other community-based organizations. She volunteers regularly and helps ensure that LIFT meets its commitment to call referrals within two business days for an intake. Sally has been incredibly flexible and generous with her time, and she often volunteers to conduct intakes during the evenings, a time when LIFT would not otherwise be able to contact litigants, but which is often the most convenient time for litigants who are busy working or caring for children during regular business hours. In 2022 to date, Sally conducted 91 intakes for LIFT's pro bono program!



NEW YORK STATE
BAR ASSOCIATION



Attorney Emeritus Program
New York State Unified Court System

**LIFT: LEGAL INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES
TODAY**



Sally is a compassionate listener. Every person she calls is in some sort of legal crisis. She often has to speak with vulnerable New Yorkers like survivors of domestic violence, people who struggle with their mental health, and folks who have experienced incarceration. She is able to gather necessary information from the litigant in a trauma-informed way. Sally has been gracious enough to allow LIFT's legal interns to observe her intake calls so they can learn from her as well. After conducting an intake,

Sally continues to help by transforming her intake notes into clear and concise case referrals to be sent to LIFT's pro bono volunteer attorneys. The pro bono attorneys rely on these referrals to help prepare for legal consultations with the litigants.

In addition to her regular work with LIFT's Pro Bono Program, Sally volunteered to be on LIFT's 2022 Gala Committee, where members commit to supporting the event personally as well as raising funds from their networks to help make the event a success. Sally has immensely benefited LIFT and has been integral in the growth and success of LIFT's Pro Bono Program. Sally is an essential and reliable team member and LIFT is grateful for her extensive volunteer work.



NEW YORK STATE
BAR ASSOCIATION



Attorney Emeritus Program
New York State Unified Court System

MY SISTER'S PLACE

Alisa Swire is an **Attorney Emeritus Program** volunteer with **My Sister's Place (MSP)**. She has completed over 60 hours since she began this pro bono work in March of 2022. She joined My Sister's Place with a passion for pro bono work and assisting survivors of domestic violence. MSP values client-centered and trauma-informed representation before all else. Alisa very naturally picked up these skills and interacts with clients with compassion and patience.



Alisa Swire

Alisa completed an extensive training curriculum in order to get a solid background in immigration law, and has hit the ground running ever since. Alisa brings her keen legal mind and decades of experience to every aspect of the work she is doing, and her work product shows thoroughness and attention to detail. Thanks to Alisa, MSP has been able to serve clients more efficiently.



During her time with MSP, Alisa has worked on U visa certification requests, U visa applications, and VAWA applications. These applications are filed with USCIS and when approved grant legal residency status to survivors of domestic violence. Alisa is an invaluable asset to the team at MSP.

#ImmigrationLaw



Jesus M. Zeno

volunteered with Access Justice Brooklyn's Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH) program. In this capacity, Jesus provides advice, counsel and direct representation to homeowners in cases brought against them by the Department of Buildings. Jesus has proved to be an invaluable volunteer bringing with him over 35 years of legal experience. He has provided a wealth of knowledge from which the other volunteers have drawn. His leadership and litigation skills have ensured successful years for the OATH program and saved clients thousands of dollars. In fact, Access Justice Brooklyn's first OATH case dismissal was procured through arguments by Jesus. The success of the OATH clinic would not have been possible without the skills and dedication of Jesus. Jesus received his BBA from Baruch College (CUNY) and his JD from Syracuse University College of Law.



ACCESS JUSTICE BROOKLYN

Access Justice Brooklyn nominates **Jesus M. Zeno** for special recognition during Pro Bono Week. Jesus is an experienced litigator who is actively involved with various community and legal organizations in Brooklyn and New York State. Jesus began volunteering with Access Justice Brooklyn in 2015 and is part of the **Attorney Emeritus Program**. Since 2018 and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Jesus regularly



#OATH #Homeownership



NEW YORK STATE
BAR ASSOCIATION



Attorney Emeritus Program
New York State Unified Court System

NEW YORK COUNTY LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

Mark Levine is an **Attorney Emeritus Program** volunteer who has worked extensively with the **New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) Social Security SDNY Project** since the summer of 2020. He has applied his considerable career experience as a litigator to his pro bono work and numerous clients have benefited from his advocacy.

NYCLA's Social Security SDNY Project provides full-scope pro bono representation to individuals with disabilities whose Social Security Disability benefits were denied, and who

have filed civil actions in the United States District Court in the Southern District of New York. Many of these litigants, who are unable to work and whose livelihoods depend on their benefits, cannot afford legal representation and are left to navigate the federal appeals process on their own. Having an attorney to advocate on their behalf is crucial for disabled clients seeking restoration of their benefits.

To date, Mark has closed eight cases with the Social Security SDNY Project, with over 500 hours under his belt since he started volunteering with NYCLA. He is currently representing two more clients with open cases. Recently, Mark represented a former healthcare worker, whose various ailments prevented her from working, necessitating crucial government benefits to support herself. After receiving an unfavorable decision in the Southern District of New York, Mark persevered and co-counseled with another experienced government benefits attorney to appeal to the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. His and his co-counsel's advocacy in the Second Circuit led to a remand of the client's case, giving the client a chance at the benefits they sorely need and deserve.

Mark's work is thorough and effective, and he takes each case and client seriously as he advocates on their behalf. He regularly reaches out after closing cases to take on newly referred clients. His assistance to the program has been invaluable, especially as he started taking on cases during the COVID-19 pandemic at a time of high need and challenging delays in the courts. Mark's commitment to the Social Security SDNY Project and to the people he represents shows the true value of pro bono legal work and NYCLA is grateful for his extensive contributions.



Mark Levine

#DisabilityAdvocacy



Léa Caurand

degree in law, with a concentration in International and Comparative law. She has been enjoying spending her time in a new city.

Léa started volunteering with the Consumer Debt VLFD Program to help low-income New Yorkers resolve their debt-related legal issues. Léa spent her time in the Consumer Debt Part, assisting the VLFD in client intakes, often utilizing her dual lingual capabilities to provide assistance to clients. She also assisted in many projects, including creating a litigant-friendly explanation of the tax consequences of a settlement, a flyer to help litigants understand the lifecycle of a case, as well as archiving vital data from the beginning of the VLFD program. Léa's archival work will be crucial to an upcoming ten-year retrospective of the VLFD program, shining a light on the varied consumer debt litigants the program was able to help. Léa's assistance has been indispensable to NYCLA, especially in her help with VLFD's transition back to in-person appearances. Léa's commitment to her volunteer work was invaluable.



Léa Caurand started volunteering with the **Office for Justice Initiatives' Consumer Debt Volunteer Lawyer for the Day (VLFD) Program** conducted in partnership with the New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) as an extern in June of 2022. Léa is a recent LLM graduate from the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law. She moved to New York from France, to complete her LLM. She completed her legal degree in 2021 at Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne University in Paris, where she received a



#VolunteerLawyerForTheDay



Frances Tyler

Frances Tyler is a 2nd year law student at New York University School of Law. Before joining the **Office for Justice Initiatives' Consumer Debt Volunteer Lawyer for the Day (VLFD) Program**, conducted in partnership with the Consumer Protection Unit of the New York Legal Assistance Group, Frances was a Peace Corps volunteer and most recently worked with the Suspension Representation Project, representing students facing suspension hearings.

Frances went above and beyond in assisting litigants in the Consumer Debt VLFD Program. She made sure that every client thoroughly understood their options and counseled them to ensure that they obtained the best possible outcomes. The litigants with whom she worked always left court feeling supported, informed, and empowered. She is a strong advocate and passionately committed to public service.

Frances is grateful to the Consumer Protection Unit at NYLAG for the opportunity to work directly with clients through the Volunteer Lawyer for the Day Program, and she hopes to



pursue a career that centers on serving people who can't afford to hire an attorney. Frances is truly committed to bringing legal services to underserved communities and helping low-income New Yorkers navigate the legal system.

#ConsumerDebt



Reizl Halikman

underlies my goal of practicing law," and this showed in Reizl's commitment to her clients. She quickly connected with clients and worked assiduously to serve them. She has been a most effective advocate and has demonstrated much care and compassion for her VLFD clients.

Reizl is enthusiastic about creating equity in the court system and is excited to one day use her law degree to create a more just society. On campus, Reizl is on the executive board of the First Generation Professionals Society at NYU where she fosters mentorship, both professional and social, amongst students who are the first in their families to attend college or graduate school. Reizl is a native of Central Florida and cares deeply about the people in her home state. While not advocating or studying in the law school library, Reizl enjoys jogging on the West Side Highway and cheering on her favorite players on Survivor.



Reizl Halikman is a 2nd year law school student at New York University Law School who assisted in the **Office for Justice Initiatives' Consumer Debt Volunteer Lawyer for the Day (VLFD) Program**, conducted in partnership with the Consumer Protection Unit of the New York Legal Assistance Group. As Reizl has stated: "My desire to be an advocate for people experiencing poverty or crisis

#VolunteerLawyerForTheDay



Michael Hughes

Michael Hughes is a 2nd year law student and Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar at Columbia University Law School. As a volunteer with the **Office for Justice Initiatives' Consumer Debt Volunteer Lawyer for the Day (VLFD) Program**, conducted in partnership with the Consumer Protection Unit of the New York Legal Assistance Group, Michael helped to provide legal assistance and information to New Yorkers facing debt collection lawsuits in the Civil Courts of the Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island. He has shown exceptional dedication to helping unrepresented litigants who are going through a difficult time.

Michael's interests in consumer law began with his work at "Better Markets," a progressive think tank aiming to influence policy making at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and collaborating with community organizations. He was a strong advocate for VLFD clients, staying



strong even when faced with extreme adversarial behavior from opposing counselors. NYLAG very much valued his time with VLFD.

Before law school Michael worked on banking regulation, financial reform, and consumer protection issues in Washington, DC. He graduated with honors from the University of Edinburgh where he studied Economics.

#ConsumerDebt

#VolunteerLawyerForTheDay



William Gilinsky



William Gilinsky has served as a **New York City Housing Court Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)** for 14 years, advocating for mentally impaired litigants at risk for eviction. During this time, Housing Court judges have chosen him to serve as the court appointed GAL in over 300 cases. In nominating William for a distinguished award this year, NYC Housing Court judges and court attorneys shared the following:

“Mr. Gilinsky has appeared before me many times and is tireless and dependable, is empathetic and diligent in the handling of his wards, is dedicated to the Court and pro-active with all parties, and has shown a rare quality in his work-ethic, including a caring, steadfast, and unflinching concern for the ward, the Court, and the court proceeding. I am not sure what we would do without his ability to connect to the most vulnerable population, and his dedication to do his very best to assist them.”

“Mr. Gilinsky goes above and beyond for each case and is thoroughly involved and prepared. He is a pleasure to deal with.”

“He truly goes above and beyond to help his wards.”

“Mr. Gilinsky is currently one of very few people accepting any GAL appointments in Staten Island, and for most of 2022, he has been the **ONLY** one to regularly accept our cases. This is in a borough of nearly 500,000 people, many of whom are in great need of such assistance.”



When William is not volunteering as a GAL, he works as a performer and stage manager on and Off-Broadway, touring nationally and internationally, and occasionally performing character roles in movies and television. He obtained a degree in Teaching K-12 Vocal Instrumental Music from the University of Kansas where he was a Fullbright Finalist.

#GuardianAdLitem



Della DeKay has served as a **New York City Housing Court Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)** for 14 years, advocating for mentally impaired litigants at risk for eviction. During this time, Housing Court judges have chosen her to serve as the court appointed GAL in over 2000 cases. In nominating Della for an award this year, NYC Housing Court judges and court attorneys shared the following:

“Ms. DeKay always take cases and rarely declines. She also gets a lot of results. She really helps out a lot!”



notes that being employed full-time enables her to solely accept pro bono cases. She likes to spend her spare time with her husband and pug “co-counsel,” Georgia AKA Mrs. Astor.



Della DeKay

“Ms. DeKay takes countless GAL pro bono cases and does a wonderful job for their wards.”

“Ms. DeKay always advocates for her clients aggressively and passionately.”

Della graduated from law school in September 2007 and accepted her first GAL case in 2008. She is currently an Associate Professor at St. John's University School of Education. She

#GuardianAdLitem

#HousingCourt



Erica Clark

Philadelphia Legal Assistance on custody, child support, and domestic violence matters. Erica brought this passion for assisting those in need to New York.

“It means so much to know I am able to provide some value to families that are navigating some of the most challenging moments of their lives. Whether it is helping a parent establish visitation with his/her children or guiding a parent through the process of seeking financial support for the children or advising a victim on how to obtain protection from their violent partner, each case provides an opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others.”

Erica is a restructuring associate in the New York office of Kirkland & Ellis LLP. She represents debtors, creditors, equity holders, investors, sellers, and purchasers in all aspects of corporate restructuring transactions, including prepackaged, prearranged and traditional chapter 11 cases, out-of-court workouts, and cross-border proceedings. Erica has a broad range of experience across a number of industries and has advised clients in some of the most complex bankruptcy proceedings.



Erica earned her J.D. from the University of Pennsylvania Law School and earned her B.A. from the University of Virginia.

#FamilyCourt



Erica Clark consults with unrepresented litigants on family law matters through the **Office for Justice Initiatives’ New York City Family Court Volunteer Attorney Program**. Erica's commitment to advocating for low-income pro se litigants on family law issues began while at the University of Pennsylvania Law School, where she participated in the Custody and Support Assistance Clinic (CASAC). At CASAC, Erica worked alongside attorneys at



Hassan Ahmed has been regularly participating with the **Office for Justice Initiatives' New York City Family Court Volunteer Attorney Program** for over 10 years. During this period, Hassan has volunteered consistently to provide coverage for all boroughs. Since launching the Family Court Volunteer Attorney Program remotely, he has devoted countless hours to the program. Hassan is committed to helping individuals and families through the challenges and transitions of child custody, support and other family law issues. On many occasions he has generously agreed to assist with last minute consultations.



Hassan Ahmed

When dealing with highly emotional and personal matters, Hassan's calming presence and demeanor helps focus the clients. He is a pleasure to work with and his sense of humor, compassion and knowledge are very much appreciated.

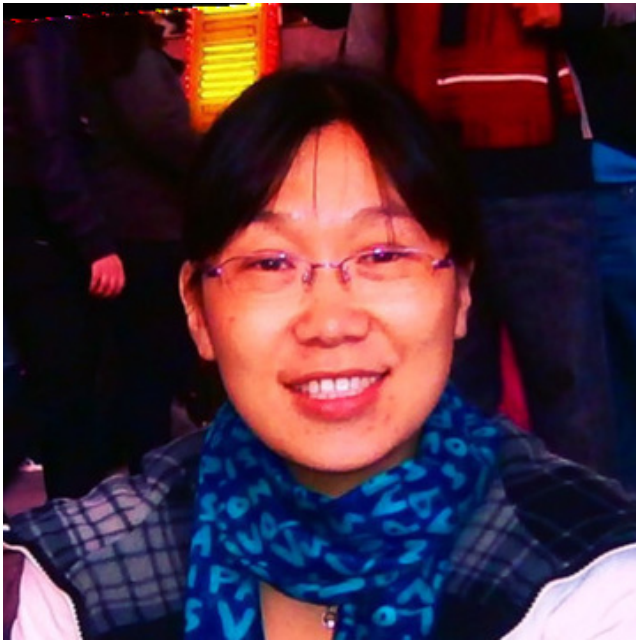


Hassan is a Senior Staff Attorney in the Trial, Investigations and Securities department at Dechert LLP. He has been with Dechert for over 16 years and has experience with complex litigation matters, regulatory investigations, antitrust matters and internal corporate investigations.

Hassan attended Southwestern Law School where he graduated Cum Laude and was Editor in Chief of the Law Review.

#VolunteerAttorney

#FamilyCourt



Lili Wang

while working and attending law school. As a law graduate, throughout the pandemic and continuing her service as the pandemic began to recede, she devoted countless hours to volunteering remotely in the Virtual Uncontested Divorce Program.

Lili is originally from Hebei Province, China, where she earned a Master's degree in English Literature. In New York she has worked as a tour guide, law office clerk, and freelance translator. While attending law school part time, Lili has worked as a per diem court interpreter in the Mandarin dialect in various Criminal, Civil, Family and Small Claims courts throughout NYC and Suffolk County. Her ability to assist Mandarin-speaking litigants in the Uncontested Divorce Program has been an extremely valuable added bonus.

Her commitment to her work in this program and her passion for helping people is truly inspiring!

#UncontestedDivorce



Lili Wang has been a long-time, exceptionally dedicated volunteer in the **Office for Justice Initiatives' Uncontested Divorce Program**.

Lili graduated from St. John's University School of Law. While a law student, Lili regularly volunteered in the Uncontested Divorce Program in Queens Supreme Court, juggling her many volunteer hours





Special Recognition for 7th Judicial District Special COVID Intervention Part (SCIP)

The **Office for Justice Initiatives** honors the access to justice champions who were instrumental in the development of the **Special COVID Intervention Parts (SCIPs) in the 7th Judicial District**. Judges and court staff joined with community partners in the district to assure that residents, particularly hard hit by the pandemic, would have access to courts and related services. Former Administrative Judge Craig Doran developed SCIPs to address the backlog of eviction cases and to assist tenants with dire needs, especially in Town and Village Courts where COVID restrictions presented additional challenges to hearing cases and accessing legal assistance.



SCIP offered a range of solutions to resolving landlord-tenant matters, by consolidating calendars and providing onsite court, community, and agency support services, including representatives from the Department of Human Services and 211 Lifeline. While tenants were assisted with applications for financial and other social service resources to help prevent eviction, they were linked with local legal service providers. Where appropriate, on-site court mediators offered alternative dispute resolution. Using a collaborative

approach, attorneys and court staff participated in mediation as a part of the SCIP protocol to assist landlords and tenants in reaching a mutually agreeable solution. Interpreters and virtual appearances were also provided. SCIPs in all eight counties of the 7th Judicial District significantly impacted the resolution of landlord-tenant cases.

We honor this collaborative partnership for its extraordinary efforts in creating this unique model and for providing access to vital services at a time when they were most essential.



The New York State Unified Court System Office for Justice Initiatives congratulates the following recipients of Certificates of Excellence for their outstanding work and dedicated service in helping to develop the Special COVID Intervention Part (SCIP) in courts in the 7th Judicial District.

**Mary Aufleger
Nicole Botti
Angee Brown
Jaime Cain
Eugene Crimi
Tim Curtin
Amy DiFranco
Hon. Craig Doran
Erin Elsner
Tina Foster
Laura Gustin
Hon. Teresa Johnson
Mark Muoio**

**Amy Monachino
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Margaret Perkins
Shannon Pero
Ken Perri
Zachary Pike
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Denise Read
Jeanna Savage
Nicholas Sprague
Jessica Serrett
Joseph Valentino
Thalia Wright**





The New York State Unified Court System Office for Justice Initiatives thanks the following individuals for their Dedicated Pro Bono Service to the 2022 Access to Justice Program

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**The New York State Unified Court System
Office for Justice Initiatives thanks the following
Attorney Emeritus Volunteers
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