



October 19, 2023

2023 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.



Adrienne Koch
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.



Richard C. Lewis
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 19, 2023

To our Pro Bono Community:

On behalf of the New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA), we are grateful to all of the honorees at the 2023 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 National Celebration of Pro Bono is "Voices of Democracy: Ensuring Justice for All". Democracy and volunteerism are inextricably linked. As esteemed civil rights activist and political philosopher Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. observed: "Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in."

In this sense, NYCLA votes every day through the implementation of its robust pro bono programming, a key part of NYCLA's multi-faceted mission. Working to ensure meaningful access to justice for all, NYCLA assists thousands of low-income individuals each year. Taking a holistic approach to pro bono work, NYCLA provides services in family, housing, employment, tax, reentry, social security, consumer debt and social services law. As a 21st century bar association, NYCLA also continues to evolve through innovative new programs and quality training through NYCLA's esteemed CLE Institute.

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 2023 Celebrate Pro Bono Awardees!

Sincerely,



Adrienne Koch
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 Adrienne Koch in welcoming everyone to the 2023 Celebrate Pro Bono Award Ceremony.

Along with our co-sponsors, NYCLA and the Office for Justice Initiatives, 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.

Next year, NYSBA will be hosting a Partnership Conference in September that will bring 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. Next year's theme will be "Pearls of Wisdom: Thirty years of partnership past, present and future."

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,
Richard Lewis



STATE OF NEW YORK
UNIFIED COURT SYSTEM
EXECUTIVE OFFICE
Office of Court Administration
25 Beaver Street
New York, New York 10004
(212) 428-2660

HON. JOSEPH A. ZAYAS
Chief Administrative Judge

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

Date: October 11, 2023

Dear Colleagues:

I am excited to have this opportunity to honor the many dedicated and talented attorneys, law students and advocates who have devoted so much of their time to provide urgently needed pro bono legal assistance to so many New Yorkers this past year. I am especially thrilled to have this opportunity to greet you in-person tonight after almost four years of having to hold this event virtually!

Having just emerged from the collective trauma of a world pandemic, many in our community are now facing the further trauma of legal challenges, with particular impact on our most vulnerable residents. At this juncture, our mandate to ensure meaningful and equal access to justice in NYS courts is essential. The NYS Courts Office for Justice Initiatives (OJI) strives to provide program services through virtual and in-person pro bono programs and other initiatives related to juvenile, adolescent, emerging adult, and family justice.

The collaboration of our invaluable justice partners is crucial to this endeavor. The law firms, corporate law departments, bar associations, legal services providers, law schools and community organizations that work with us to implement our pro bono programs are critical to our mission.

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,

Edwina G. Richardson-Mendelson

Deputy Chief Administrative Judge

New York County Lawyers Association

Legal Counseling Project

Pro Bono Programs

Sonia Griffin has been a committed volunteer for the **New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) Legal Counseling Project**. This program offers free phone consultations to New Yorkers with issues related to landlord/tenant law, family law, and employment law. Sonia leveraged her experience in Housing and Family Law to give consultations in both of these areas, which have by far the highest need in the Legal Counseling Project. Her participation and expertise have been invaluable in expanding access to these free legal services.



Sonia Griffin

Sonia has over twenty years of legal experience, including her current career working with the New York State Office of Court Administration. This work has included positions as a court attorney in Housing Court and Supreme Court in the Matrimonial Part. Her career demonstrates her commitment to access to justice in addition to her commitment to pro bono service.



Since she first reached out to NYCLA to volunteer with the Legal Counseling Project, she has kept up a consistent schedule, participating in the program twice a week. She has been an extremely reliable and flexible volunteer who channels the knowledge of her long legal background to her pro bono service. During her time with NYCLA, she provided over 60 consultations and gave crucial information about legal rights and options to people who can't afford representation. One client had this to say about their consultation with Sonia: "The volunteer was not only knowledgeable and able to advise me on the legal aspects of my issue, but she was a friendly and sympathetic listener. I felt less anxious and more equipped to take action after speaking to her."

#LegalCounseling



New York
County Lawyers
Association

State Central
Registry Project

Pro Bono Programs



Sylvia Precht

Sylvia Precht and **Adam Drake** are associates with White & Case LLP who have worked together on two cases 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 (SCR). Reports on the SCR can restrict access to employment, adoption, and fostering. The SCR disproportionately affects the poor and people of color. Access to free and competent legal representation to amend or seal these reports helps address this injustice by removing the unfair barriers they impose on people’s lives.



Adam Drake

Sylvia and Adam are both committed to pro bono service. They have worked together on two State Central Registry cases with NYCLA over the past year, both with positive outcomes for their clients. They helped their first client get her report on the SCR amended and sealed without requiring a hearing. Thanks to their advocacy, the Administration for Children’s Services did not pursue the case through the full hearing process and the client’s SCR report will no longer be an obstacle to her livelihood, as it was found there was not enough evidence to substantiate the report against her.

Sylvia and Adam also worked together on another unique case. This client had previously been represented by NYCLA’s SCR Project in 2020, and had won her case by having her report sealed after a hearing. However when she attempted to register as a family care provider in New Jersey, her sealed SCR Report was disclosed, which resulted in the denial of her application. Sylvia and Adam worked to advocate on the client’s behalf in order to appeal this denial, showing that her report had been sealed in New York and therefore her license should have been approved in New Jersey. This case included not only direct advocacy for the client, but also looking into the system as a whole that resulted in the client’s sealed report being disclosed. Their work, which went above and beyond the usual scope of the State Central Registry Project, resulted in the client’s Family Care Provider license being granted, and also raised awareness of this issue and formally documented the steps they took to resolve it.

#KeepingFamiliesTogether

New York County Lawyers Association

Social Security SDNY Project

Pro Bono Programs

Christina Seda-Acosta, Counsel at Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler, receives this award for her work on the **New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) Veterans Discharge Upgrade Project**. Having a less-than-honorable discharge can prevent veterans from accessing benefits they deserve, as well as carrying a stigma that can negatively impact their livelihoods. Many veterans may be unfairly given a less-than-honorable status due to mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This program provides free legal representation to help veterans upgrade their discharge status.

Christina recently secured a victory on behalf of her client Ms. A, who was discharged from the Marine Corps in 2011 on the basis of isolated infractions for tardiness, and the inhalation of an herbal incense product, which Ms. A believed to be tobacco. Reflective of her integrity, Ms. A had self-reported the latter incident. Although she tested negative for drug use, that incident formed the basis for her subsequent discharge. Despite the impact of this decision on her professional goals and mental health, Ms. A went on to dedicate her life to helping others. Nonetheless, she continued to be impacted by the circumstances of her discharge, and Christina sought to remedy this when she took on her case as part of the Veterans Discharge Upgrade Project. She argued that Ms. A's discharge was inequitable on the basis that the misconduct that led to her discharge was the direct result of PTSD she had experienced while deployed. Ms. A had an otherwise excellent record of service, having served in Afghanistan with distinction and received five decorations. Her post-service conduct was also exemplary: she furthered her education and received a Master of Public Health degree, and worked as a public health advocate for marginalized groups and as an essential worker during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thanks to Christina's representation, Ms. A received an upgrade in her Marine Corps discharge characterization from Under Other than Honorable Conditions to General Under Honorable Conditions. This win comes after a denial in 2013 of an initial application submitted by Ms. A. Christina's representation was supervised by Jason Vitullo, Partner at Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler.



**Christina M. Seda-
Acosta**
**Patterson
Belknap**

#VeteransRights



**Andrew
Kirschenbaum
Patterson
Belknap**

**New York
County Lawyers
Association**
Pro Bono Programs

Andrew Kirschenbaum is an Associate at Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler, and receives this award for his work on the **New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) Access-A-Ride Project**. Access-A-Ride Paratransit Services help people with disabilities get around New York City. NYCLA's Access-A-Ride Project provides free representation to clients with disabilities who were unfairly denied these paratransit services, and advocates for them to receive the accommodations they deserve so they can get around the city.

Andrew secured a victory for his client, Ms. C, in obtaining partial Access-A-Ride services. Ms. C's initial application for Access-A-Ride was denied outright by New York City Transit,

but in an appeal before the Eligibility Appeals Board for Access-A-Ride, the Board reversed and granted Ms. C conditional use of the service.

Ms. C suffers from vestibular disorders that cause episodes of severe imbalance, as well as chronic lower back pain, sciatica, and sacroiliitis. These conditions significantly impair her ability to access and navigate the fixed-route transit system, particularly where she is required to ascend or descend stairs. Throughout 2022 these conditions worsened progressively until Ms. C eventually had to take a leave of absence from her job in Manhattan, in part to avoid the subway commute from Brooklyn. Eventually using the subway even for shorter trips became too painful, difficult, and hazardous for Ms. C, and she was paying out of pocket for taxis to take her to medical appointments to address the very issues that were preventing her from working and using the subway.



The Appeals Board agreed that Ms. C had been erroneously denied Access-A-Ride services, and granted her use of the service for any trip for which she would need to use stairs to access the subway platform.

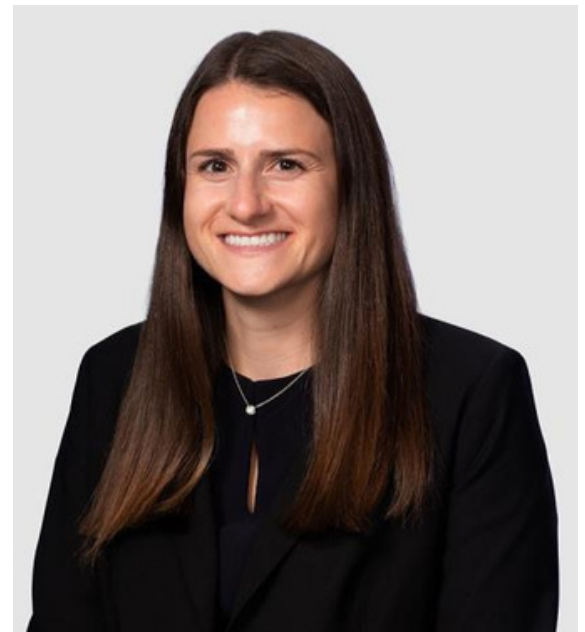
#DisabilityRights #AdministrativeLaw

New York County Lawyers Association

Reentry Initiative

Pro Bono Programs

Madeline More, an Associate at Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler, receives this award for her work on the **New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) Reentry Initiative: Parole Prep Project**. The Reentry Initiative helps people with criminal records dismantle the unfair civil legal barriers they face as a result of their convictions. The reentry process begins with release from incarceration, and the Parole Prep Project helps incarcerated individuals prepare for parole interviews, and appeal denials of parole.



Madeline J. More
**Patterson
Belknap**

Madeline took on a parole appeal for her client, Mr. M. On September 1st, 2023, the Appeals Unit of the New York State Board of Parole vacated Mr. M's parole denial, and remanded Mr. M's parole application for a de novo hearing. Mr. M had been denied parole six times, and this marks his first administrative appeal victory. Mr. M is a Vietnam War veteran suffering from multiple chronic health conditions. He has been incarcerated for 34 years--nearly half his life. Mr. M has maintained that he was wrongly accused since he was arrested decades ago. In his most recent parole denial



decision, the Parole Commissioners concluded that there was a reasonable probability that Mr. M would not live at liberty without violating the law. However, Mr. M's COMPAS Report, the risk assessment tool used by the Parole Board in their decisions, gave him the lowest score possible for risk of felony violence, arrest, abscondment, and criminal involvement upon re-entry into the community. Following Madeline's persuasive advocacy, the Appeals Unit agreed that the Parole Commissioners' conclusion represents a substantial

departure from the Board of Parole's own assessment tool, and that because it was unaccompanied by any explanation, the conclusion violated New York State regulations and caselaw. Mr. M is now scheduled for a new parole hearing date this fall.

#Reentry #ParolePreparation



Nadav Ben Zur
**Patterson
Belknap**

**New York
County Lawyers
Association**

**Social Security
SDNY Project**

Pro Bono Programs

Nadav Ben Zur is an Associate at Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler. He receives this award for his work on the **New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) Social Security SDNY Project**. This program provides free legal representation to New Yorkers with disabilities whose Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) was denied by the Social Security Administration. There is an appeal process to challenge these denials within the Administration, and then clients have the right to file civil actions in the

United States District Court. NYCLA's program represents these cases in the U.S. District Court in the Southern District of New York (SDNY).

Nadav, along with the supervising partner John Winter, achieved a victory in their case on behalf of their Social Security SDNY Project client. Their client suffered from physical and mental conditions that made her unable to work and had required her to be hospitalized multiple times. At her administrative level case she had no representation, and as a Spanish speaker she faced additional challenges when it came to advocating for herself. An oral argument was scheduled for this case, and Nadav's advocacy for his client led



the judge to decide in her favor at the conclusion of the oral argument. Their client has been able to obtain the disability benefits she requires and deserves for her daily living needs.

#DisabilityRights



Victor Metsch is Of Counsel in the Litigation, Alternative Dispute Resolution, and Appellate Practices in the New York office of Smith Gambrell Russell. He received his B.A. in Industrial and Labor Relations from Cornell University and his J.D. from New York University School of Law. He has served on various committees of the New York City Bar Association such as the Committee on State Courts of Superior Jurisdiction; the Committee on Professional and Judicial Ethics; the Committee on Professional Discipline; the Committee on Professional Responsibility; and the Committee on the Judiciary. He also served on various court committees of the New York State Bar Association.



Victor Metsch

Victor has been a long-time and committed volunteer attorney with the City Bar Justice Center. He started volunteering with the **Office for Justice Initiatives and City Bar’s Civil Court Project** in April 2022. Since that time, he has handled over 40 matters and has provided invaluable support to the Project. He is extremely generous with his time, his advice to clients is consistently sound and pragmatic, and he enthusiastically approaches each assignment he receives. His deep range of litigation and other practice area experience--he has over 40 years of litigation experience--is of great benefit to the Project.



Victor also enjoys writing a blog called “Legal Victor,” which appears on the Smith Gambrell Russell website and discusses a wide range of legal issues of interest to the public. His articles have also appeared in the New York Law Journal, and during the pandemic he contributed an article for the City Bar Justice Center’s website entitled “Insights Shared by NELP Volunteer Victor Metsch on Pro Bono Lessons Learned During the Pandemic.” Victor ended that article with this important message to lawyers: “Get involved. Stay involved. Unlike billable hours, the satisfaction from helping others is immeasurable.”

#CivilCourt



Michael Bozicas

consultant and volunteer for a reentry organization providing mental health services to formerly incarcerated men.

It was these experiences that drove Michael to attend law school and view the law as an important tool to create more compassionate social safety nets and inclusive societies for all. He was a compassionate, dedicated and incredibly talented volunteer 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. He helped get very positive outcomes for many clients who were most impressed by both his kindness and his ability to think outside the box to fiercely advocate on their behalf. In his written reflection of his time with VLFD, Michael wrote, "It was incredibly rewarding to help alleviate our clients' concerns regarding their court hearing, but the influence and power that attorneys wield really came into focus for me once I began representing them during the pretrial conferences. I became much more aware of every word I used." He was an invaluable asset to the VLFD program, and clearly demonstrated his passion for helping people.



Michael Bozicas is a student at New York University School of Law. Prior to law school he worked for six years at Silicon Valley Bank in New York City, where he provided tailored debt financing solutions to companies supporting and advocating for consumer technologies, and supported his clients with the challenges of starting a new business. In addition, for nearly two years, Michael served as a pro bono

#VolunteerLawyerForTheDay #ConsumerDebt



Réno Tonon is a recent graduate from the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, where he completed his LLM. He completed his legal degree in 2021 at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University, where he received a degree in law, with a concentration in English and North American Business law. While he now is living in Luxembourg, he enjoyed his time in New York, getting to know a new city.



Réno Tonon

Réno began volunteering in 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) in the winter of 2023, helping low-income New Yorkers resolve their debt-related legal issues. Réno spent his time in the Consumer Debt Part, assisting the VLFD in client intakes, often utilizing his dual lingual capabilities to provide assistance to French speaking clients. His attentiveness to the clients was impressive and appreciated by those he was able to



help. He treated clients with the utmost kindness, and those that have come back to court for other matters have expressed disappointment that his time with the program has ended. During his time with the program he went above and beyond, learning the intricacies of Consumer Debt work, making sure numerous clients per day not only had assistance, but had a viable plan for the future of their matter. Réno's assistance has been indispensable to the clients he served in the Volunteer Lawyer for the Day Program.

#VolunteerLawyerForTheDay #ConsumerDebt



Michael Kotowski

Following semester interning at the Northeast Regional Office of the Federal Trade Commission where he discovered an interest in consumer protection, drafting motions on behalf of the Commission and connecting with consumers affected by unscrupulous business practices. He combined his passion for direct client services with his interest in consumer law through working 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 a VLFD volunteer, Michael was eager to start litigating cases and proved to be a tough, knowledgeable, and passionate advocate for his clients. Clients very much appreciated his help as a very hard working and relentless consumer advocate. Both his supervisors and court personnel were impressed with his professionalism and dedication. In a written reflection of his experience with VLFD, Michael stated, "VLFD is a program which saves the Court time and ensures that consumer-defendants' rights are respected and limits the extent to which plaintiffs prey on defendants. I cannot imagine what consumer court proceedings were like prior to this program's existence. I am excited to continue learning so I can better be a part of that helpfulness.... Here, I can do something about it, put my practice where my mouth and heart are. Given the unnecessary human suffering in the name of excess and greed I have borne witness to in my life, VLFD has thus far been a deeply cathartic experience for me. The best part of VLFD is, the more I learn about our practice, the more help I can provide." This coming spring, Michael will continue serving the public at Make the Road New York as a pro bono scholar.

#VolunteerLawyerForTheDay #ConsumerDebt



Currently a third-year student at New York University School of Law, **Michael Kotowski** is a lifelong resident of New York State who aspires to serve working and indigent New Yorkers. After completing his undergraduate education at Binghamton University, and a Fulbright Grant, spending nearly a year as an English Teaching Assistant in Malaysia, Michael was exposed to the power of public service through pro bono work as a paralegal at Cravath, Swaine & Moore. He spent his first law school summer working at Essex County Public Defenders in Newark, then spent the



Craig Druehl is a partner at Dechert LLP. His primary focus is financial restructuring where he represents ad hoc groups and official committees of creditors, as well as distressed investors, lenders and other creditors in out-of-court restructurings and bankruptcy litigation in Chapter 11 and 15 cases. Craig is recognized in New York and nationally as a highly regarded lawyer for restructuring and insolvency, pharmaceuticals and life sciences, aviation, and gaming.



Craig P. Druehl



Despite his demanding schedule, Craig still finds time to volunteer with the **Office for Justice Initiatives' New York City Family Court Volunteer Attorney Program**. Craig has been regularly volunteering with the Family Court Volunteer Attorney Program for over 12 years. He is one of the most consistent and dedicated attorneys who is always available to provide last minute coverage. He helped in the transition of the Program to a virtual platform during the COVID-19 pandemic and regularly helps train and mentor new volunteers, offering them valuable insights in providing limited scope consultations. He provides much needed legal advice and invaluable guidance to families about the process of child support, paternity, family offense, and custody matters in the Family Court.

#FamilyCourt



Dara L. Sheinfeld

have achieved precedent-setting litigation victories, securing U.S. refuge under the Hague Convention for multiple families and early release from prison as a result of numerous resentencing applications and clemency petitions.

Through her supervision, Dara helps Davis Polk lawyers develop and strengthen their trial and investigative skills and serves as a resource to other law firms on pro bono best practices. She is also an invaluable resource to numerous public interest legal services organizations, strategizing with their lawyers about complex cases and bringing pro bono resources to areas of great client need.

In addition to her extraordinary work at Davis Polk, Dara finds time to regularly volunteer with the **Office for Justice Initiatives' New York City Family Court**

Volunteer Attorney Program. She has been volunteering with the Program since 2017. Dara's calming presence combined with her vast knowledge make her an absolute joy to work with. She is highly skilled at diffusing emotionally charged situations and is adept at guiding clients through their legal obstacles.



Dara Sheinfeld is Counsel and Head of Pro Bono Litigation at Davis Polk & Wardwell, where she leads pro bono litigation initiatives focusing on trial work, matters assisting survivors of domestic violence, and family law. As Head of Pro Bono Litigation, Dara oversees pro bono family court litigation, post-conviction relief matters in criminal courts, federal civil rights and Hague Convention actions, and civil and criminal appeals. Dara has led Davis Polk teams that



#FamilyCourt



William Gilinsky

William Gilinsky has served as a **New York City Housing Court Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)** for over 15 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 plaque award this year, NYC Housing Court judges and court attorneys shared the following:

“Mr. Gilinsky takes the most difficult of cases and he does everything he can to resolve those cases. His good nature and generosity is unwavering.”

“I once again would like to nominate Bill Gilinsky. He consistently go[es] far above and beyond what is expected... and produce[s] the best results.”

“[Mr. Gilinsky is] outstanding in the work and representation as GAL.”



William exemplifies the type of special people Housing Court GALs are. Once, during a NYC heat wave, he purchased a fan for a litigant he was appointed to advocate on behalf of. She had cancer and the heat in her apartment was suffocating. While this particular act of kindness is outside of the scope of what is expected from GALs, William connected with her on a human level and made the extra effort to bring her some relief.

William has performed on Broadway and has been a stage manager in over 35 professional productions worldwide. He has a degree in teaching K-12 Vocal Instrumental Music from the University of Kansas and was previously a teacher in the Omaha public schools.

#GuardianAdLitem



Brenda Brown



Brenda Brown has served as a **New York City Housing Court Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)** for over 9 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 400 cases. In nominating Brenda for a distinguished plaque award this year, NYC Housing Court judges and court attorneys shared the following:

“[Brenda does] outstanding work, consistently follows up with clients and goes above what is called for: visit[s] them, brings leases to them, calls APS, caseworkers etc. [She] makes sure all their needs, housing and otherwise, are met [and] takes pro bono cases often!”

“[Brenda is] dedicated in assisting the litigants with doing whatever is necessary in their cases, and is always prepared in court.”

Brenda makes it a priority to personally meet with the impaired litigants she is appointed to advocate on behalf of, seeking to build a relationship with them so that they feel safe and confident knowing that they are not alone.

Brenda’s wealth of experience includes working for the Women’s Prison Association at the Rikers Island Discharge Enhancement program, Episcopal Community Services, the Criminal Justice Initiative Parole Unit, and the Children’s Sunday School

Ministry at her church. She has also been a guest speaker at PACE University, Senator Bill Perkins’s Office in Harlem, the Government Relations Community Service Society, and the University of Albany. Brenda also serves her community by giving out food to the homeless, and bookbags, school supplies, and toys to families and children living in shelters. She loves cooking and spending time with her family and describes herself as a proud mother and grandmother.



#GuardianAdLitem



NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION



Attorney Emeritus Program
New York State Unified Court System



Lynn Barsamian

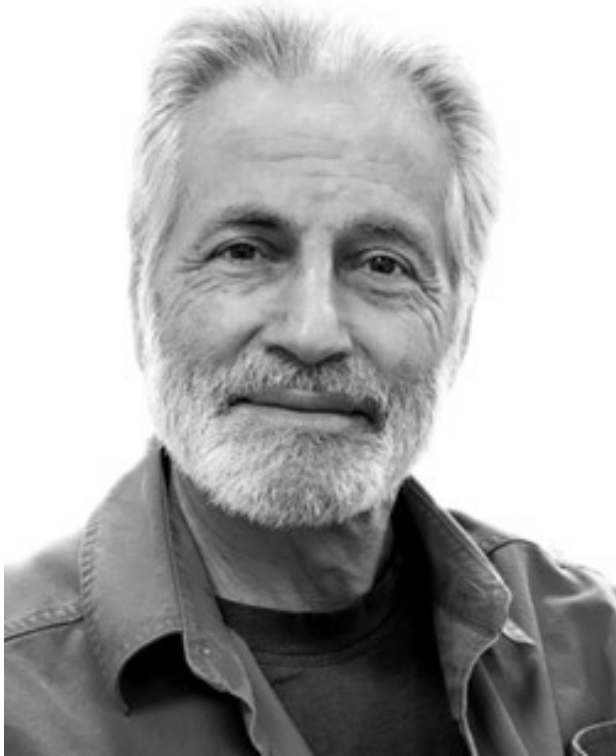
Lynn Barsamian receives this award for special recognition of her pro bono service through the **Fordham Law School Feerick Center for Social Justice’s Bronx CLARO (Civil Legal Advice and Resource Office) Program**. Ms. Barsamian has made invaluable contributions to the Program. Her commitment to CLARO was instrumental in helping Fordham Law School’s Feerick Center for Social Justice pilot a return to in person services at the Bronx CLARO clinic, when the program resumed court-based operations after COVID hiatus. Week after week, Ms. Barsamian commuted in from New Jersey to meet with unrepresented consumer-defendants despite the continuation of social distancing requirements in the court. She is always willing to help, whether it is taking on a particularly challenging case or helping new volunteers get oriented to their case work. Bronx CLARO is dependent on the dedication of volunteer attorneys like Ms. Barsamian. She is an exemplary volunteer with a deep commitment to learning and service.



Lynn Dadourian Barsamian is a graduate of Fordham Law and practices in New York and New Jersey. She has served as a board member on charitable and local organizations and previously served on the Allendale Board of Education. She enjoys volunteering at CLARO representing pro se defendants in civil debt litigation at the Bronx Civil Court. She serves as a Board member on the Fund for Armenian Relief, an organization providing humanitarian aid in Armenian. She also assists that organization with legal matters. Lynn and her

husband, Dik, are empty nesters residing in Allendale NJ with their two mini schnauzers, Lily and Cliff.

#CLARO #ConsumerDebt



NEW YORK STATE
BAR ASSOCIATION



Attorney Emeritus Program
New York State Unified Court System

Stephen M. Jacoby

in a divorce in Kosovo (which applied to one specific client); a proposed revision to PWJC's Retainer (which applies to all clients); a default motion (which applied to a specific client); and the confidentiality of addresses held by Child Support Collection Unit (which applies to many clients). His research and writing and analysis and editing are invaluable to our practice - we have been able to pursue avenues of litigation strategy that we would never have been able to do. So, although his contributions may not necessarily be quantified with xxx many clients or xxx wins, the impact of his work on our practice - and therefore our clients -- is huge.

After an LLB (Columbia Law School 1965) and an LLM in International Law (NYU 1972), interrupted by three years in Active Coast Guard Reserves, including Vietnam, Mr. Jacoby's legal career began in Szold, Brandwen, Meyers and Altman (NYC) and then at the American Jewish Congress. For 27 years, Mr. Jacoby was an Assistant New York Attorney General defending, among others, governors, commissioners, judges, medical schools, prison guards, and the Legislature. Mr. Jacoby has always been fascinated by legal research and trying to determine what laws and courts really intend. He reports feeling privileged for the past five years to do what he loves, through the Attorney Emeritus Program, to assist the vital work of the Pace Women's Justice Center. In addition to his pro bono service, Mr. Jacoby also enjoys photography, art, and writing. At present, he serves as vice president of the Croton Council on the Arts and an editor of its New Croton Review, a literary and arts journal.

#LegalResearch



NEW YORK STATE
BAR ASSOCIATION



Attorney Emeritus Program
New York State Unified Court System

Evelyn Kalenscher is an Attorney Emeritus through the Unified Court System. Since 2009, Evelyn has worked as a pro-bono attorney for the **Nassau/Suffolk Law Services Volunteer Lawyers Project** in the Landlord/Tenant Part of the Nassau County District Court, representing indigent clients who are at risk of being evicted from their homes. During that time, not only has she represented hundreds of clients in court, negotiating settlements that favor tenants, she has also made numerous motions to dismiss resulting in the proceeding being withdrawn or dismissed by the court.

Several cases stand out:

A son was allegedly being evicted from his home by his elderly mother. Ms. Kalenscher discovered the house was put in a trust with a relative appointed trustee. The relative never participated in the proceeding and did not want to evict son. After Ms. Kalenscher made a motion to dismiss, annexing the deed to the property in the name of the trust, opposing counsel withdrew the case.

In another matter, the tenant, who occupied a basement apartment, was beaten up and thrown out by the landlord. Even though there was a criminal proceeding against the landlord resulting in an order of protection in favor of the tenant who never returned to the premises, and the apartment was considered uninhabitable since it was in the basement, the landlord was seeking a money judgment for past due rent or use and occupancy. Ms. Kalenscher obtained a copy of the criminal court's order and made a motion to dismiss which was granted with prejudice.

A true advocate for disadvantaged clients, Ms. Kalenscher is a member of the Nassau County Bar Association and served as vice Chair of the District Court Committee in 2021-2022, Chair of the Domus Committee in 2012-2013, and Vice Chair of the Ethics Committee from 2008-2010, and its Chair from 2010-2012. Ms. Kalenscher is also a member of the New York State Bar Association and serves on the Real Property Committee. In addition to being a long-time member of the Theodore Roosevelt American Inn of Court, she is a past president and a member of the board. Evelyn also sits on the board of the Nassau Lawyers Association.



Evelyn Kalenscher

#Landlord/Tenant



NEW YORK STATE
BAR ASSOCIATION



Attorney Emeritus Program
New York State Unified Court System

Jonathan Zich

Jonathan Zich first began volunteering with the **Mobilization for Justice (MFJ) Housing Project** in 2019. When COVID hit and everyone and all organizations had to adjust to the new norms, Mr. Zich played an important role in adapting to the new technology to reach MFJ clients and continued to use the new technology to litigate MFJ clients' cases. Mr. Zich remains a steadfast part of MFJ's eviction prevention work, never shying away from the difficult cases so long as he can make an impact and prevent the tenant from being evicted. He is patient and exercises good judgment and is also a fierce and persuasive advocate in Housing Court. The Housing Project is very lucky to continue to have Mr. Zich's help.

Jonathan Zich has been Emeritus Volunteer Attorney with the Mobilization for Justice Housing Project since 2018 involved in Civil Court litigation. In addition to his work with MFJ, Mr. Zich has served in numerous volunteer positions in New York City. He is committed to ensuring that individuals grappling with potential homelessness have access to the assistance they need to deal with the complexities of landlord-tenant law, eviction proceedings, and housing regulations. He has extensive experience in commercial real estate development, both as an attorney and a principal. He is married to book author/playwright Nancy Davidoff Kelton and lives in lower Manhattan. He holds a J.D. from the Fordham University School of Law and a B.A. from George Washington University.



#HousingCourt

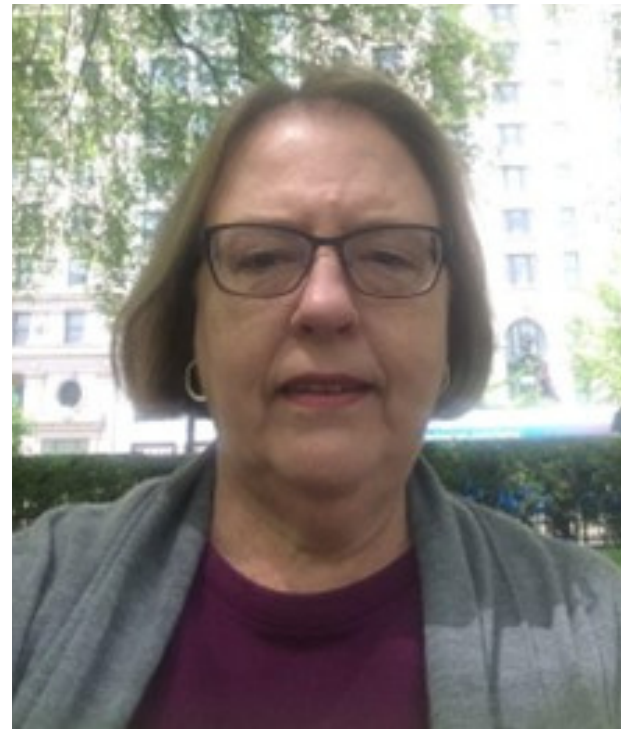


NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION



Attorney Emeritus Program New York State Unified Court System

Ann Williams receives this award for her pro bono service as an Attorney Emeritus with **JustCause** in Rochester, NY. Ms. Williams was a staff attorney for JustCause (previously Volunteer Legal Services Project) since 2002 and was the point of contact for the Attorney Emeritus Program (AEP). While not directly responsible for pro bono recruitment, she diligently encouraged volunteers to join the AEP. This resulted in 30 AEP volunteers for JustCause.



Ann Williams

To expand pro bono efforts and options, Ms. Williams worked with Harter Secrest & Emery and the University of Rochester to launch the HELP-U Program. Wills clinics are held at low income housing complexes to help the underserved population who are at least 60 years old. Ms. Williams has also helped transgender clients with name changes. This significantly improves their safety and quality of life by having names and pronouns that match their identities. Before retiring from JustCause in 2021, Ms. Williams ensured that her successor, Marlene Attardo, was well versed in the AEP to maintain that group of volunteers. According to Ms. Attardo, Ms. Williams “was instrumental in creating a smooth transition which ensured that I hit the ground running. Our clients and volunteers have greatly benefited from and appreciated Ms. Williams’ genuine commitment to providing peace of mind for end of life decisions and needs.”



Leading by example, when Ms. Williams retired, she almost immediately joined the AEP. Ms. Williams is still using her vast knowledge of wills, dispositions of remains, and other advance directives to help those who would otherwise not be able to afford these legal services. She participates in clinics, including JustCause’s first bilingual wills clinic. Ms. Williams also accepts clients directly on a regular basis. In less than two years, Ms. Williams has completed over 40 pro bono hours. Ms. Williams was a valued staff attorney and colleague, and she is now a valued volunteer.

#CivilLegalService



NEW YORK STATE
BAR ASSOCIATION



Attorney Emeritus Program
New York State Unified Court System

Beth G. Schwartz

Beth Schwartz is a retired clinical professor of law and former director of professional skills at Fordham Law School. Before teaching, Ms. Schwartz was a government attorney representing both the City of New York and the federal government. She joined the **City Bar Justice Center** through the Attorney Emeritus Program in June 2021 and was matched with the **Federal Pro Se Legal Assistance Project (Fed Pro)**, which provides litigation assistance to self-represented individuals who seek to file, or have filed, a civil suit in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York. Ms. Schwartz is a powerful asset to the Fed Pro team as she works closely with litigants by reviewing their draft pleadings, advising them on various legal theories they can raise, and walking with them through their discovery matters. Ms. Schwartz brings her knowledge of federal law and procedure to each case and thoughtfully analyzes them. She speaks candidly to litigants about the strengths and weaknesses of their matters, which they appreciate. She also expresses her curiosity to learn new areas of law. Ms. Schwartz has a passion for serving clients and seeking justice, and she also continues to use her gifts as a professor in teaching CBJC's and Fed Pro's interns and staff. Ms. Schwartz brings knowledge, experience, compassion, and a sense of humor, which the Fed Pro team appreciates especially when working hard on important matters. Although Ms. Schwartz joined CBJC as a volunteer, the time she has given to the project makes her seem like staff.



Ms. Schwartz is currently a volunteer lawyer with several organizations, including the City Bar Justice Center's Federal Pro Se Legal Assistance Project, the Parole Advocacy Initiative, and Legal Assistance of Western New York. Ms. Schwartz was the recipient of the City Bar Justice Center's 2022 Outstanding Pro Bono Service Award.

#FederalLaw



New York State Courts Office for Justice Initiatives' Circle of Excellence Award



Angela Britton

Angela Britton is the supervising court attorney for the **Office for Justice Initiatives' New York City Family Court Volunteer Attorney Program**. She has been involved with the program since its inception in 2006 and is responsible for its continued success. The program provides brief legal consultations to unrepresented litigants who come to Family Court on matters involving child support, paternity, custody, visitation, guardianship and orders of protection. The program has had a huge impact and to date has assisted more than 40,000 families.

Angela is being honored with the New York State Courts **Office for Justice Initiatives' Circle of Excellence Award** for her outstanding contributions to the New York City Family Court Volunteer Attorney Program, her exceptional service to litigants, and her deep commitment to benefiting children and families in Family Court. Over the last 17 years her extraordinary work in coordinating successful and longstanding pro bono partnerships with over 40 New York City law firms and corporate law departments has enabled access to justice for the many thousands of litigants in NYC Family Court that have been served by the program. During the Covid-19 pandemic, her indefatigable efforts in launching a virtual pro bono platform for the program were a critical tool in expanding pro bono resources to assist Family Court litigants. During a public health emergency, using both low-tech and high-tech methods, she created a model for a virtual platform that expanded the program's reach, enabling diverse clients with limited resources to access legal help without having to travel, lose work time or find childcare. We've found that this model also significantly expands the pool of volunteer attorneys and facilitates their participation.

Angela is a pleasure to work with and her unflinching energy, dedication and depth of knowledge are an inspiration to all the volunteer attorneys she has supervised. Her constant good humor, patience and compassion is very much appreciated by the litigants she helps.

Angela began her career with the New York Family Court in April 2000 working as a Court Attorney in Bronx County Family Court conferencing child protective matters. She has been responsible for the supervision and recruitment of volunteer attorneys and expansion of the New York City Family Court Volunteer Attorney Program since 2006. She is a recipient of New York County Lawyers Association Unsung Heroes Award (2012) recognizing non-judicial members of the federal and state court systems for exemplary performance. In May 2019, Angela received the Kathryn A. McDonald Award for excellence in service to Family Court. She received her JD from Brooklyn Law School.



The New York State Unified Court System Office for Justice Initiatives thanks the following individuals for their Dedicated Pro Bono Service to the 2023 Access to Justice Program

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| Stuart C. Adler | Tiange Chen | Jennifer Gordon |
| Hassan Ahmed | Clémence Chollet | Rachel Gordon |
| Lisa B. Andrzejewski | Erica Clark | Amanda Gottlieb |
| Erin Azie | Naya S. Coard | Avery Gott |
| Youngchool Bae | Dominique Collins | Brad A. Green |
| Zeinab Bakillah | Paige N. Costakos | Alexis Grinstead |
| Robert Becker | Della Dekay | Matthew Hans |
| Alison E. Beskin | Meghann Donohue | Bethany Hickey |
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| Anthony Bongiorno | Emma Ekema | Jillian Ingrisano |
| Justine Borer | Nicholas Enriquez | Makala M. Kaupalolo |
| Marine Bouaziz | Rudy Ferreira | Erica Kerstein |
| Allan Brilliant | Allison Fumai | Janet J. Kljyan |
| Andrea Brooks | Sabrina M. Galli | Sydney Korean |
| Manon Champignolle | Sarah Genachok | Gabrielle Kornblau |
| Edward Chen | Thomas Giles | Gaston Kroub |
| Pamela Chen | Katrina Gonzales | Eric S. Lankton |



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| Kevin Liang | Martha Petrocheilos | Frances Tyler |
| Yi Liu | Michael Qian | Shmuel Vasser |
| Stacy Anne Mahoney | Noah Qiao | Anna Wang |
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| Isabella Neihardt | Caroline Strauss | Jaime Yachta |
| Caitlin Oakley | David Suh | |
| David E. Oppliger | Isabella Timash | |



**The New York State Unified Court System
Office for Justice Initiatives thanks the following
Attorney Emeritus Volunteers
for their Dedicated Pro Bono service in 2023**

| | |
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| Percival Bob Bailey | Mark Levine |
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| Eileen Katz | Andrea Weiss |
| Leah Keith | Jonathan Zich |
| Janet Le | |

