



October 26, 2021

2021 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

Table of Contents

Host Organization Summaries Page 3

Host Organization Letters

Letter from New York County Lawyers Association Page 4

Letter from New York State Bar Association Page 5

Letter from New York State Unified Court System's Office for Justice Initiatives Page 6

2020 Pro Bono Awardees

New York County Lawyers Association Awardees Page 7

New York State Bar Association Awardees Page 14

New York State Unified Court System's Office for Justice Initiatives Awardees Page 21

Special Recognition

New York City Housing Court Guardians Ad Litem Page 27

Office for Justice Initiatives Recognized Volunteers Page 30

**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.



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.



The New York State Unified Court System's Office for Justice Initiatives (www.DCAJ-OJI@nycourts.gov) strives to ensure meaningful access to justice for all New Yorkers in civil, criminal and family courts regardless of income, background or special needs.

October 26, 2021

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 2021 Celebrate Pro Bono Awards. We appreciate their commitment to providing free legal services to New Yorkers in need—particularly during a time of heightened crisis for those we serve. We remain inspired by our volunteers' dedication and sensitivity to our various pro bono causes.

Our success and impact is fueled by our community partners, sponsors and contributors. Two of our most valued community partners are the Office for Justice Initiatives at the Office of Court Administration and the New York State Bar Association. We are thankful for all of their work in serving the underserved.

The theme of this year's 2021 Pro Bono Celebration is "Moving Forward in a Post-Pandemic World". Yet, the effects of the pandemic continue to reverberate for all of us, and in particular those that we serve in our Pro Bono Programs. We consult, advocate for, and represent individuals who suffer the brunt of societal inequities—across socio-economic status, disability status, gender and race, among other identities.

NYCLA continues its over 100-year commitment to fight these inequities, through quality client service, identifying new and changing needs within our communities, and growing our awareness and sensitivity to the indigent we serve. This includes new and innovative educational programs in key pro bono areas, with thanks to our CLE Institute, addressing legal areas such as landlord-tenant law, veterans rights and family law.

As former New York State Court of Appeals Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman has stated, pro bono "is a core value of our profession, this is what we do — we help others, we serve others. This is what being a lawyer is all about."

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 2021 Celebrate Pro Bono Awardees!

Sincerely,



Vincent T. Chang
President



Anthe Maria Bova
General Counsel & Director of Pro Bono Programs



T. Andrew Brown

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October 26, 2021

Dear Colleagues:

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome everyone to the 2021 Celebrate Pro Bono Award Ceremony. The New York State Bar Association is privileged to join with the New York State Unified Court System's Office for Justice Initiatives and the New York County Lawyers Association during National Pro Bono Week for this cherished annual event.

I especially commend the outstanding volunteers of the Attorney Emeritus Program, several of whom are being honored tonight for their exemplary work. The Attorney Emeritus Program, administered by the Unified Court System's Office for Justice Initiatives in partnership with the Feerick Center for Social Justice at Fordham University School of Law, connects retired and non-retired attorneys who are at least 55 years old, with a minimum experience of 10 years, with qualified legal service providers, bar associations, and court-sponsored volunteer lawyer programs. Volunteers commit to provide at least 60 pro bono hours of unpaid civil legal assistance with their assigned organization per year. Hundreds of attorneys have performed thousands of hours of pro bono service statewide since the launch of the program in 2010, helping thousands of New Yorkers and inspiring lawyers of all backgrounds to answer the call and serve *pro bono publico*.

The New York State Bar Association's slogan is "Do the Public Good." I encourage all attorneys to follow this slogan and make pro bono service an integral part of their careers. There are many ways to serve, from participating in statewide projects like the Attorney Emeritus Program, volunteering with your local legal service provider, and through bar associations, including the NYSBA COVID-19 Pro Bono Network and the Free Legal Answers platform. Legal needs will increase as New Yorkers continue to navigate out of the COVID-19 public health crisis. We must be steadfast in our continued good work, now and into the future.

On behalf of the members of the New York State Bar Association, congratulations to all of tonight's distinguished honorees. Your extraordinary service represents the best efforts of the legal profession to do the public good.

Sincerely,

T. Andrew Brown



EDWINA G. MENDELSON
Deputy Chief Administrative Judge
Office for Justice Initiatives
New York State Unified Court System

111 Centre Street
New York, NY 10013



Dear Colleague:

I am thrilled to have this opportunity to honor the scores of attorneys, law students and advocates who have given so generously of their time and expertise to ensure access to justice for so many New Yorkers during this public health crisis.

During this past year of immense legal and health challenges for so many in our community, the NYS Courts Office for Justice Initiatives (OJI) has strived to ensure meaningful and equal access to justice in NYS courts by promoting access to our virtual courts for unrepresented court users and providing program services through virtual pro bono programs and other initiatives related to juvenile, adolescent, emerging adult, and family justice.

We are so grateful to our invaluable justice partners- bar associations, law schools, legal services providers, law firms and community organizations- who have continued to work together with us to launch our virtual assistance programs which have included on-line training and mentoring of pro bono attorneys; technology assistance for litigants needing to participate in virtual court proceedings; virtual pro bono programs; court and community access terminals; and online community legal workshops.

OJI's Division of Access to Justice is dedicated to improving equal access to justice for New Yorkers of low-income and modest means who cannot afford an attorney by making it easier to navigate the court system. The Division develops resources, including self-help services and pro bono programs, to equalize the playing field for all litigants. Pro Bono lawyers play a critical role in our society-giving voice to those who have been historically underrepresented in the legal system.

It is my true privilege to celebrate the talent and commitment exhibited by tonight's honorees and I extend my heartiest congratulations to you all.

You are role models for our profession and make an extraordinary contribution to our community.

Thank you for all you do.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edwina G. Mendelson', written over a horizontal line.

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

New York County Lawyers Association

State Central Registry Project

Pro Bono Programs

WHITE & CASE

White & Case LLP has been an important partner for the New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) Pro Bono Programs. Recently, a team of White & Case attorneys represented a client as part of NYCLA's **State Central Registry Project**, both at the administrative level and in an appeal. **Sylvia Fung Chin, Timothy Keegan, Greg Starner, and Amanda Wong** impressively advocated for their client.

Sylvia Fung Chin is a senior lawyer in corporate and commercial financing at White & Case LLP, with an emphasis on asset-based financing transactions. She is a frequent speaker at seminars and an adjunct professor at Fordham University School of Law, where she teaches Secured Transactions and Drafting and Negotiating Contracts. In addition, she serves on the NYS First Department Grievance Committee and is a member of a number of professional associates and organizations, including the American Law Institute, the American College of Commercial Finance Lawyers, the Tribar



Sylvia Fung Chin

Opinion Committee, and the ABA Legal Opinions Committee. Sylvia was the Director of the New York County Lawyers Association from 2004-2007, and currently serves on NYCLA's Pro Bono Committee. She regularly leads representation by White & Case attorneys for cases as part of NYCLA's State Central Registry Project.

Timothy Keegan is an associate at White & Case. His practice focuses on complex litigation involving intellectual property for key clients. Tim works with clients in a variety of sectors, including e-commerce, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, software, media, and technology. Tim has been an active volunteer in NYCLA's SCR Project. Prior to this case, Tim successfully represented another client at their administrative hearing to get their SCR report sealed. He is currently working on a new ongoing case.



Timothy Keegan

#KeepingFamiliesTogether



Greg Starner is a partner at White & Case where he handles disputes on behalf of international clients in cases involving complex contracts, business torts, securities, intellectual property, and class actions. Greg's impressive track record led to his selection as one of the New York Law Journal's "Rising Stars," a title intended to recognize breakout legal practitioners. Greg is committed to equal access to justice, and has performed extensive pro bono work, including his work for NYCLA's SCR Project as well as on behalf of low-income women in partnership with the non-profit organization Her Justice.

Greg Starner

Amanda Wong is an associate at White & Case. From the start of her time with White & Case as a summer associate, she has been involved in pro bono work, including working with a nonprofit organization that collaborates with legal firms to provide support to women living in poverty in New York City. Her commitment to pro bono service has continued with her participation in NYCLA's SCR Project to represent a client with an especially challenging case.

The State Central Registry Project 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 persons 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.

The White & Case team, led by Sylvia, represented this client of NYCLA's SCR Project at both the administrative level and subsequent Article 78 appeal in New York State Supreme Court. This attorney team initially represented the client at their administrative hearing to advocate that their client's SCR report be amended and sealed, so it would no longer be an obstacle to their livelihood. When the Administrative Law Judge ruled against the client in favor of the Administration for Children's Services, the White & Case team continued representation to appeal in the Supreme Court in an Article 78 proceeding, which resulted in a favorable settlement for their client. Sylvia, Tim, Greg, and Amanda's teamwork and advocacy will allow their client to pursue opportunities without facing unjust barriers. NYCLA is extremely grateful for Sylvia's leadership on this case and for the extensive contributions of every team member, which went above and beyond the basic requirements of the SCR Project as they pursued justice for their client.



Amanda Wong

New York County Lawyers Association

Social Security SDNY Project

Pro Bono Programs



Mark Levine

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. When a person's benefits are denied, there is an appeal process within the Social Security Administration. Individuals who have lost at the administrative level 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, 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. NYCLA's Social Security SDNY Project represents individuals with cases in the Southern District of New York, by reviewing the administrative record and filing motions and memoranda of law. Oral arguments are sometimes also held before the assigned judge. Having an attorney to advocate on their behalf is crucial for disabled clients seeking restoration of their benefits.

To date, Mark has closed three cases with the Social Security SDNY Project, and is currently representing three more clients with open cases. All three of his completed cases resulted in favorable decisions for his clients, being remanded back to the administrative level for further proceedings. This gives clients a fair chance at having their benefits reinstated. 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.

#DisabilityRights



New York County **Lawyers** Association

Legal Counseling Project

Pro Bono Programs

Raymond Barzey

Ray Barzey is an attorney with NJ Transit who has been volunteering with the **New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) Legal Counseling Project** since 2018.

When people cannot afford legal counsel or are uncertain about how to obtain legal assistance to solve a particular problem, they become discouraged. They either endure needless and undue hardship, or give up on addressing issues that might be solved with some assistance. The Legal Counseling Project, NYCLA's longest running pro bono program, gives the public the opportunity to speak one-on-one with an attorney to explore options and solutions to their legal problems. The program provides advice in the areas of Employment Law, Landlord/Tenant Law, and Family Law. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Ray regularly attended the in-person Legal Counseling clinics at NYCLA's offices. When those clinics were suspended due to the pandemic, he continued volunteering remotely by providing phone consultations. He has focused on applying his knowledge to Employment Law and Landlord/Tenant consults. He also took opportunities to participate in virtual trainings through NYCLA on both of these areas of the law, which have focused on the impacts of the pandemic on employment and landlord/tenant matters.

Ray volunteers weekly to provide phone consultations and he has helped more than 80 individuals in 2021 alone. One client had this to say about their consult with Ray: "I have spoken to Ray and he gave me great advice. I have taken one of his suggestions and put it to use and I couldn't have been happier. I am no longer alone in my fight with my housing issues." Ray's consistent commitment to his volunteer work has helped many people approach their legal issues with more knowledge and confidence and NYCLA is grateful for all his contributions.

#LegalCounseling

New York County Lawyers Association

Reentry Initiative

Pro Bono Programs



Asha Smith

Asha is a longtime volunteer with the **New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) Certificates Project**. The Certificates Project is part of NYCLA's Reentry Initiative, which provides civil legal assistance to New Yorkers with criminal records in a number of ways. The Certificates Project focuses on Certificates of

Relief from Civil Disabilities and Certificates of Good Conduct, which help dismantle the barriers criminal convictions can pose to opportunities for employment, housing, and civic participation. These Certificates help in concrete ways, but the process can be difficult to navigate and information about them is limited and complicated. The goal of the Certificates Project is to educate people on the benefits of Certificates, and to provide one-on-one legal help to determine eligibility and to complete the application process.



Asha was a regular participant at the in-person legal clinics that the Certificates Project held before the COVID-19 pandemic, in partnership with various community organizations that assist people with criminal records. She provided individual consultations to numerous individuals at these clinics to help determine their eligibility for a Certificate and to inform them of their rights. Since

the pandemic forced in-person clinics to pause, Asha has attended virtual clinics and presentations and has also provided remote consultations to clients who were individually referred to our program.

Asha is a member of the Board of Directors of the New York County Lawyers Association and previously served as the Association's Secretary. She is a passionate advocate of NYCLA's Pro Bono Programs, and that is reflected in her direct participation as a NYCLA pro bono volunteer. NYCLA is grateful for her many contributions to our programs and to New Yorkers in need of legal assistance.

#Reentry



Emma Ellman-Golan
**Patterson
Belknap**

Project, another program of NYCLA’s Reentry Initiative. The Parole Prep project helps currently incarcerated individuals appeal when they’ve been denied parole, both at the administrative level and in New York State Supreme Court. NYCLA works in partnership for this project with Parole Preparation Project NY, which helps incarcerated people prepare for their parole hearings.

Emma has both worked as a volunteer representing clients in this project, and as an administrative leader for the pilot project in collaboration with Parole Preparation NY, and the other lawyers at Patterson Belknap. Emma has been active with NYCLA’s other Pro Bono Programs in the past as well, and serves on the NYCLA Pro Bono Committee. Emma’s work reflects a strong commitment to the value of pro bono assistance, and her leadership is an example for the entire legal community.

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

Emma Ellman-Golan is an Associate at Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler LLP, in the firm's Litigation department. From 2017 to 2018, Emma served as a law clerk to the Hon. Madeline Cox Arleo of the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey. She attended the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Michigan Law School.

Emma has spearheaded the **New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) Parole Prep Pilot**



#Reentry

#ParolePreparation

New York County Lawyers Association

Pro Bono Programs

As part of the **New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) Veterans Discharge Upgrade Project**, Michael Farinacci successfully represented Mr. P., a veteran of the United States ("U.S.") Navy suffering from PTSD, in connection with his challenge to upgrade his military service discharge characterization.

Mr. P enlisted in the Navy in 2008 and was discharged under other than honorable conditions in July 2012—just days before the completion of his four-year enlistment commitment. During his enlistment, he provided humanitarian assistance in Haiti after the country experienced a massive 7.3 earthquake. This traumatic experience caused him to develop posttraumatic stress disorder ("PTSD") shortly after returning from Haiti and while still a member of the U.S. Navy.



Michael Farinacci
Patterson
Belknap



After his discharge, Mr. P had difficulty transitioning back into civilian life as he struggled with the stigma of his discharge and the lasting effects of PTSD. In 2019, he was diagnosed with PTSD by the Department of Veterans Affairs ("VA"). On September 6, 2019, Mr. P's application for a document review of his discharge characterization from the U.S. Navy was filed. On March 31, 2021, the Naval Discharge

Review Board ("NDRB") issued its decision and agreed that Mr. P's discharge categorization of under other than honorable conditions was inequitable and upgraded Mr. P's discharge characterization to a general discharge (under honorable conditions).

With this upgrade, Mr. P is eligible and has filed for VA disability compensation benefits. However, Mr. P still is not eligible for the G.I. Bill and a VA home loan—benefits that Mr. P wishes to receive—and Michael will continue to provide legal representation to Mr. P in his appeal of the NDRB's decision to further upgrade Mr. P's discharge categorization to honorable.

#VeteransRights



NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

COVID-19 PRO BONO RECOVERY TASKFORCE

John R. Morken is a partner and the head of the pro bono department at Farrell Fritz. He concentrates his practice in trust and estate litigation. With extensive trial and appellate experience, his practice includes probate contests, discovery proceedings, accountings, and commercial litigation related to estates.

His efforts in organizing pro bono assistance in child guardianship cases as part of the New York State Bar Association COVID-19 Pro Bono Recovery Taskforce were extraordinary. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic there was an increase in child guardianship cases where a

single or sole surviving adoptive parent passed away. Even in situations where the adoptive parent had designated a caretaker, that caretaker could not fully step into the role of “parent” without court involvement. Because access to the courts was limited during the public health emergency, and since caregivers must petition for guardianship or custody with the court to have the legal authority to make certain decisions on behalf of and in the best interests of the child, many caregivers found themselves with physical custody of children with no ability to make crucial decisions or receive necessary information for them regarding health, education, and finances.

As the Co-Chair of the Taskforce’s **Child Guardianship Working Group**, John spent countless hours with the Office for Justice Initiatives connecting with representatives of the Office of Children and Family Services, the Administration for Children’s Services, New York City Family Court, and others to understand the issue and how he could best bring resources to address the need. He identified volunteer attorneys, connected with experts in the field of guardianship to provide those attorneys with the necessary training, and worked with ACS to create a referral mechanism to ensure caretakers who needed these services were able to access them.

A prolific author and lecturer on estate litigation topics, John’s articles have appeared in the NYSBA Trusts and Estates Law Section Newsletter and in the NYSBA Journal. He is a frequent lecturer for the Surrogate’s Association of the State of New York. He has chaired and co-chaired the Trust and Estates Law Section annual meeting, presenting programs that have included: Settling Litigation in the Surrogate’s Court, Bearing the Draftsman’s Burden: The Shifting Standards of Capacity, and The Trial of a Will Contest. John is very involved in the work of his church, at which he serves as an elder, and with respect to mission efforts in West Africa and Haiti.

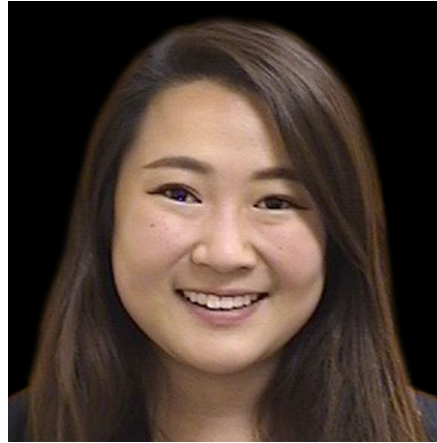
#ChildGuardianship



COVID-19 PRO BONO RECOVERY TASKFORCE



Dara Sheinfeld



Monica Lee



Alexa Lutchen



Elizabeth Weinstein

Since its founding, Davis Polk & Wardwell has upheld a commitment to serve pro bono clients with the determination and legal excellence that define its broader culture. As a firm, they devote tens of thousands of hours to pro bono cases, and they are dedicated to corporate social responsibility and volunteering in communities around the world.

Davis Polk's Pro Bono team led by **Dara Sheinfeld** worked tirelessly to promote pro bono assistance in child support matters as part of the **New York State Bar Association's COVID-19 Recovery Taskforce Child Support Working Group**. They crafted a partnership with Legal Information for Families Today's (LIFT) Family Legal Connection program to expand pro bono resources through LIFT's video-conferencing legal advice platform,

connecting unrepresented litigants in Family Court with pro bono attorneys for video consultations on child support matters. They developed this initiative with the NYS Courts Office for Justice Initiatives and the Family Courts in New York City and in four upstate Judicial Districts.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, this virtual pro bono platform has served as a critical tool in expanding pro bono resources to assist the growing number of Family Court litigants needing help with child support matters.

We are grateful to team members **Dara Sheinfeld, Monica Lee, Alexa Lutchen, and Elizabeth Weinstein** for their commitment to this pro bono effort and applaud their outstanding achievement.

#ChildSupport



Barbara M. Heyne is an outstanding Attorney Emeritus volunteer with **JustCause**, formerly Volunteer Legal Services Project of Monroe County, Inc. (“VLSP”), an organization established in 1981 to provide pro bono civil legal services to low-income clients. Ms. Heyne brings years of quality, practical experience to the clients she serves at JustCause. After a career with the NYS Office of Mental Health, Ms. Heyne earned her Juris Doctor degree in 1993. After admission to the Bar, Ms. Heyne’s legal career included working as assistant counsel for the Office of Mental Health, and then practicing in Federal Court with a focus on civil rights and employment law. Once retired, Ms. Heyne began volunteering with JustCause/VLSP in 2017, regularly assisting clients with unemployment insurance hearings, name changes, standby guardianships, wills and custody matters.

Barbara M. Heyne

Ms. Heyne consistently goes above and beyond, as she tries to accommodate each clients’ needs as much as possible. Ms. Heyne frequently meets with clients on weekends, in their homes, in nursing rehabilitation homes, or in the hospital. In one instance, she met a young mother with end-stage cancer at the hospital on New Year’s Eve Day, a bitterly cold Sunday. Ms. Heyne’s dedication and commitment has provided great comfort and peace of mind to individuals facing terminal diagnoses. Having completed countless wills, standby guardianship designations, and advance directives, Ms. Heyne puts each client at ease with the knowledge that all legal documents are in place, thereby allowing the client to focus on medical care and treatment.

Throughout the pandemic, Ms. Heyne continued to carry a robust caseload with JustCause/VLSP. By meeting clients outdoors and consistently distancing and mask wearing, Ms. Heyne closed fifteen name change cases, thereby greatly assisting many transgender clients. Furthermore, she closed nine estate planning cases while using the same precautions.

In her own words, Ms. Heyne reports, “The clients I’ve served have been active and helpful participants in the management of their cases. I’ve given them my knowledge and skills, but they’ve given me the opportunity to make a positive difference in their lives.”

With her extensive skills, experience and dedication to providing access to justice to vulnerable members of our community, Ms. Heyne has allowed JustCause/VLSP to serve more low-income clients in need of representation. Her advocacy is invaluable.

Lewis Steele is a retired senior attorney at the Office of State Review of the New York State Education Department where he spent over a decade. Mr. Steele has devoted over 500 volunteer hours to advancing the rights of students with disabilities in New York over the past year. Lewis approached **Disability Rights New York**, the Protection and Advocacy system for New York State, with a desire to improve advocacy resources for students with disabilities and their families, as well as lawyers and advocates. As a result of Lewis' hard work and expertise, we will soon be publishing online the first volume of the New York Special Education Law Digest for Students, Families, and Advocates.



Lewis F. Steele

Understanding decisions of federal judges and administrative hearing officers in special education cases is essential to navigating the rights of students with disabilities and the obligations of school districts. While many school districts have access to robust legal resources, students and their families are often unfamiliar with the judicial and administrative cases that impact their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and state special education laws. Given that parents are the primary enforcers of these laws, the need for a cost-free resource dedicated to special education advocacy is substantial. The Digest provides summaries of selected cases on well over 100 special education issues. Lewis has used his considerable insight and expertise to highlight legal arguments and outcomes for the benefit of special education stakeholders across the state. True to form, Lewis is committed to updating the Digest on a quarterly basis for the indefinite future.

Of particular note in these unprecedented times is Lewis's commitment to analyzing select cases involving COVID-19. The pandemic has been particularly detrimental to students with disabilities who struggle with remote learning or have had no or limited access to education and related services. This is uncharted legal territory for families and special education advocates.

Because of Lewis' passion for justice, students with disabilities and the advocates who support them will have a useful legal tool to help level the playing field and improve educational outcomes.

#Education #DisabilityRights



Oscar S. Straus III

Since he started volunteering with the **Cancer Advocacy and Elderlaw Projects (CAP/ELP)** in 2014, Mr. Straus has logged approximately 3,000 of pro bono service, and, pre-pandemic, routinely completed an average of 300 hours each year. He has distinguished himself through his empathy, compassion, and attention to his clients, as exemplified in one of his many cases:

A Vietnam War veteran was anxious to prepare a Will and advance directives after being diagnosed with terminal cancer with a life expectancy of two to four months. The client had a complicated family situation that included estranged adult children; he wanted to leave all of his property to his current spouse. Oscar immediately took the case and traveled to meet

with the client in his home to begin the process. He worked quickly to draft the documents and had final versions ready within a short time. As the client prepared to attend the signing ceremony, he wrote to say how much he appreciated Oscar's caring approach: "I wanted to let you know that Oscar Straus your attorney who came up to see me has been wonderful. He has been very understanding in having my documents ready for me in the next day or two.... We disabled Vietnam veterans sometimes are lost because we are now fighting to stay alive because of Agent Orange and the disabilities that are now hitting so many of us. Thank you so much for having people like Oscar helping us."

This client is one of dozens, if not hundreds, that Mr. Straus has helped over the years. Since the coronavirus crisis, he has continued to assist clients, including facilitating in-person, socially-distanced document executions for clients unable to handle the process remotely. In addition, he served as the speaker at two virtual presentations for community groups, focusing on the importance of preparing life planning documents. His stalwart contribution to the projects and our clients is invaluable.



#Elderlaw

Robert "Bob" Hilliard has worked with **Safe Passage Project** for years, representing many immigrant youth who are facing deportation. From 2006 to 2011, Bob worked as Spanish Court Interpreter with the NYC Office of Court Administration. He retired in 2011, and has continued to represent immigrants through the Attorney Emeritus Program.

He is very involved with his clients, helping them not only with their legal case, but in other aspects of their lives. Bob works independently but with guidance from Safe Passage, and is truly a champion for immigrants in NY, dedicating many hours of free work to our clients and their families. Bob's parents immigrated from Ireland, and he cherishes their Certificates of U.S. Citizenship. In 2003, Bob became a dual citizen of Ireland, and began learning Gaelic.



Robert S. Hilliard

Bob did a fantastic job representing K. and I. (age 13 and 10), two young siblings who faced deportation. Bob helped K and I's family to obtain necessary documents for their immigration case, was successful in the efforts to terminate their deportation cases, and maintained great communication with the family. Their cases took years, but thanks to Bob's advocacy, their deportation cases were closed and the siblings received their green cards.



Bob has worked on many cases like this, with similar results. His clients are lucky to have him as an advocate.

#ImmigrationLaw

Therese Rahill Wincott



Attorney Emeritus Program
New York State Unified Court System

Therese has been volunteering with the **Center for Elder Law & Justice (CELJ)** since the fall of 2018. From the very beginning of her involvement with the agency, she has committed to a regular schedule, devoting time each week both in the office and at home to assisting attorneys in our Guardianship Unit and MedLaw Partnership with their cases. Therese's research and writing skills have been invaluable to both CELJ's staff and clients, and it is evident that she enjoys putting those skills to work for some of our most vulnerable clients. She also brings a practical depth of knowledge to her advocacy, and is not afraid to tap into her extensive network of colleagues to help staff attorneys navigate the complicated systems involved in our clients' cases.

Therese has been an enormous help to the office over the course of the pandemic, assisting with a substantial backlog of Article 81 Discharge matters resulting from COVID-19 related disruptions in court proceedings. She has also provided extensive legal research on a variety of matters and drafted pleadings, petitions and Guardianship discharge documents. In all, over the past year alone, Therese has devoted 45 hours to assisting 28 clients.



Those who work most closely with Therese all agree that she is a notable steady and reliable volunteer whose work is always thorough, accurate, and efficient. Anyone in legal services who relies on pro bono volunteers to best serve their clients can understand that volunteers like Therese are a gift.

#Elderlaw #Guardianship



James Leonard

earned degrees in Civil Engineering from Colgate and Columbia Universities before attending Fordham University School of Law.

Jim started volunteering at the Manhattan CLARO weekly clinics in 2019, to help low-income New Yorkers resolve their debt-related legal issues. During the COVID-19 pandemic, after the in-person CLARO clinics had been suspended, Jim reached out to the New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA) about further consumer debt volunteer opportunities and got involved with the **Volunteer Lawyer for the Day (VLFD) Consumer Debt Program**. He provides remote assistance to clients with consumer debt cases in New York County Civil Court. He has also acted as the VLFD for these clients, by appearing virtually with them in order to assist in their court appearances and advocate on their behalf. Jim's assistance has been vital to NYCLA and to his clients, especially as a large number of consumer debt cases that were delayed during the the pandemic have been scheduled for appearances in 2021. He has helped over a dozen clients through this program since the start of 2021, often appearing at multiple court appearances with them and providing additional legal assistance outside of court. The considerable economic strain of the pandemic has made access to legal help for debt cases even more crucial, and Jim's commitment to his volunteer work is invaluable.



Jim is an Attorney Emeritus Program volunteer with a long career as in-house counsel in various capacities in the engineering and construction business. Prior to his retirement, he spent 20 years working as lead counsel for companies in the environmental consulting and hazardous waste remediation business. During this part of his career, he helped with the successful remediation of some of the most polluted sites in the world. James



#VolunteerLawyerForTheDay



Allison M. Fumai is a partner at Dechert LLP and focuses her practice on the representation of registered investment companies and their investment advisers. She advises mutual funds, closed-end funds and exchange-traded funds and their investment advisers on issues relating to the development and launch of new funds, ongoing compliance and regulatory matters, mergers, liquidations and restructuring of funds.



Allison M. Fumai

Despite her incredibly busy schedule, Allison has regularly volunteered with the **New York City Family Court Volunteer Attorney Program** for over 12 years, volunteering countless hours, traveling to all boroughs and often making herself available to provide last minute coverage. In addition, Allison is always eager to recruit and mentor new volunteers, and has hosted numerous attorney trainings for the program.

During this difficult pandemic year, in order to ensure that Family Court litigants continue to have access to legal help, Allison enthusiastically volunteered to continue her dedicated service in this project by offering her assistance with launching the Family Court Volunteer Attorney Project remotely--assisting with technical support and offering her firm's resources. And since we launched the project remotely, Allison volunteers on a weekly basis.



Although matters in Family Court are highly emotional, Allison's no-nonsense approach focuses her clients and provides them with the tools necessary to reach a favorable outcome in their matters. Allison's knowledge of the law, patience in addressing volatile situations and dedication to the program and its clients are invaluable.

#FamilyCourt



Noah Qiao



Noah Qiao is a partner in the Investment Funds Group at Kirkland & Ellis LLP. He advises private equity sponsors on a wide range of regulatory issues relating to asset management business and operations, including investment adviser structuring and registration with the SEC, fundraising, deal structuring, GP strategic matters and SEC examinations and enforcement investigations.

Noah has been volunteering on a regular basis with the **Family Court Volunteer Attorney Program** since 2015, assisting Family Court litigants in the Family Court Help Center in all NYC counties. Noah has been a joy to work with. Since the program launched remotely, Noah has enthusiastically volunteered on a weekly basis, sometimes stepping in to provide last minute coverage moments before a session. Noah’s approachable personality and calm demeanor help focus his clients and are indispensable when assisting with the often highly sensitive matters presented. His eagerness to help, subject matter knowledge and compassion for his clients are a shining example of pro bono service.



#FamilyCourt



Lili Wang is a recent law graduate from St. John's University School of Law. While a law student, Lili regularly volunteered in the Uncontested Divorce Program in Queens Supreme Court. As a law graduate, and throughout the pandemic, she has devoted countless hours to volunteering remotely in the **Office for Justice Initiatives' Virtual Uncontested Divorce Program.**



Lili Wang

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.



Since 2016 and 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 work with Mandarin-speaking litigants in the Uncontested Divorce Program has been an extremely valuable added bonus.

Lili has been a long-time, exceptionally dedicated volunteer in the Uncontested Divorce Program, juggling her many volunteer hours while working and attending law school. Her passion for helping people is truly delightful!

#UncontestedDivorce



Sean B. Oster

Justice Program for the past ten years. During this past year he has devoted a significant amount of his time to the **New York State Courts Virtual Uncontested Divorce Program**.

As his firm focuses exclusively on divorce and family law litigation, his extensive experience in this area has been especially valuable. Despite his busy schedule, he enthusiastically offers to volunteer his time whenever possible. Sean has previously been honored by the Office for Justice initiatives' Access to Justice Program for his outstanding pro bono service in Housing Court. His commitment to helping unrepresented litigants is inspiring!

Sean earned his law degree from the City University of New York Law School and his BA from the University of Miami.



Sean B. Oster is founder of a boutique law firm specializing in divorce and family law and has been a decisions editor for three publications of the New York Law Journal on New York Real Property Law, New York Civil Practice Law and Rules, and New York Estates and Surrogate's Court Law. Sean has been a dedicated volunteer in the Office for Justice Initiatives' Access to



#Uncontested Divorce



Theresa Frame first became involved in pro se matrimonial assistance when she volunteered at the Volunteer Lawyers Project of CNY, Inc.'s pro se divorce clinic after graduating from Syracuse University College of Law. Her interest in pro se matrimonial assistance continued as she clerked for Hon. Paul I. Marx, J.S.C. in Supreme Court, Westchester County's Matrimonial Part and worked on pro se motions and appeals as a Staff Attorney at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. During this past year she has devoted many hours on her own time in the **Office for Justice Initiatives' Virtual Uncontested Divorce Program**, often volunteering to fill in when no one else was available to assist pro se litigants. She has shown exceptional dedication to helping pro se matrimonial litigants during these challenging times.



Theresa Frame



After a brief stint in private practice, Theresa has returned to public service and is currently a Principal Appellate Court Attorney at the N.Y.S. Appellate Division, First Department.

#UncontestedDivorce



Special Recognition for New York City Housing Court Guardians Ad Litem

The Guardians Ad Litem (GALs) are the unsung heroes of Housing Court. NYC Housing Court GALs are trained fiduciaries who are appointed to advocate for litigants who are either mentally and/or physically impaired with the goal of preserving their tenancy.

At the onset of the COVID pandemic, the courts were forced to limit in-person proceedings. Yet, our GALs remained busier than ever. They worked diligently to successfully address vulnerable tenants' needs for urgent repairs; connected impaired litigants with food--at times using their own funds until food services were in place--; and conducted wellness checks to ensure that these litigants, many of whom were older and/or dependent on medication, remained connected and safe. Additionally, they continued advocacy efforts to ensure that their Housing Court cases moved forward, underlying legal problems were addressed, and services were put in place so that tenants' cases could be resolved.

Significantly, many GALs made their own smart phone or tablet available so that their court-appointed litigant could appear in virtual court proceedings, thereby assisting to address the digital divide that exists for many of our most vulnerable court users. They juggled these responsibilities despite concerns for their own health and safety, their own losses, and in the face of the same confusion and fear we were all experiencing.

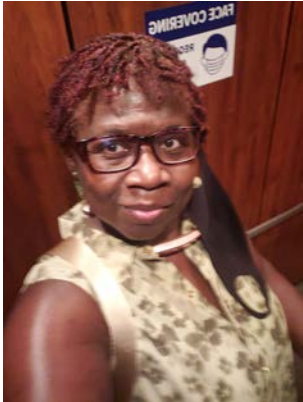
NYC Housing Court cases continue to be heard and solutions explored despite the challenges we face in these uncertain times. Yet, while cases move to resolution let us not forget the Housing Court GALs that diligently worked "behind the scenes" and gave so much of themselves during these difficult times to close the access to justice gap and protect the interests of the most vulnerable of litigants.

The COVID health crisis has exacerbated matters involving tenants with mental or physical impairment and elder abuse issues. But for the kindness, diligence, and advocacy of GALs, these especially vulnerable tenants would be hungry, disconnected, unprotected, and perhaps facing certain eviction.

They have and continue to change lives every day. We honor them for their dedication and tremendous impact and value to litigants in NYC Housing Court.



Special Recognition for New York City Housing Court Guardians Ad Litem



Andrea Brooks



Brenda Brown



Curtis Stallworth



Della DeKay



Eli Kimels



Hillary Grant



Ita Fink



Leonie Boreland



**Michelle Lawson
Burts**



Nicola DeMarco



Nurys Laureano



Rachel Gordon



Special Recognition for New York City Housing Court Guardians Ad Litem



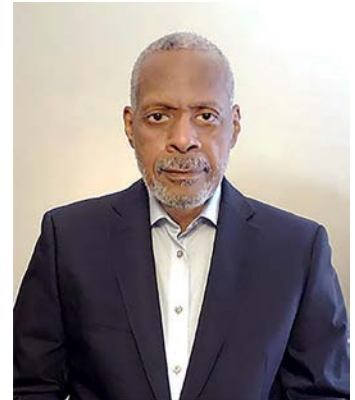
Robert Peters



Roberta Arnone



Roberta Lavey



Rudy Ferreira



Shani Friedman



Stuart Adler



William Gilinsky

Andrea Blair • Carla Heyward • Carmen Valentin • David Shapiro • Jae Lee

Melissa Martin • Mendi Maxwell • Phillip Dunn • Thomas Giles



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