

New York State Conference of Bar Leaders 2014–2015 Executive Council

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New York State Conference of Bar Leaders
NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

One Elk Street
Albany, NY 12207
www.nyscbl.org

NEW YORK STATE CONFERENCE OF BAR LEADERS

2014 Bar Leaders Innovation Awards



Presented in statewide recognition of local, minority, ethnic, specialty, special purpose bar associations, and the Women's Bar Association of the State of New York for outstanding service to the public and the profession through innovative projects and programs that serve to enhance public understanding of the law, advance and promote the work of the legal profession, and support the best interests of the public.

New York State Conference of Bar Leaders Annual Breakfast

Friday, January 30, 2015

7:30 a.m.

Sutton Parlor North, Second Floor
New York Hilton Midtown

Held During the 138th Annual Meeting of
the New York State
Bar Association
January 26 – 30, 2015



New York State Conference of Bar Leaders

The New York State Conference of Bar Leaders works to advance the objectives of the organized bar; encourages communication and collaboration among bar associations; promotes leadership development for present and future bar leaders; and provides forums that foster networking opportunities among bar associations.

The Conference is committed to the principles of inclusion and diversity. NYSCBL supports its constituent bar associations in their efforts to advance these principles.

2014 Bar Leaders Innovation Awards

Small Bar Association—Fewer than 500 Members

The New Rochelle Bar Association's (NRBA) "Lawyer in the Classroom" Program is a joint initiative with the New Rochelle Board of Education, introducing fourth- and fifth-grade public school students to elementary concepts of law, with the objective of teaching students the art of persuasive written and oral argument. The program provides interesting and challenging opportunities for our attorney members to volunteer their time in their local community, while interacting with local students, teachers and school administrators.

The Program was initially conceived as a once- or twice-a-year visit by a local lawyer to each of the local public schools. An attorney would visit a classroom for an hour, describe to the students what she or he did on a daily basis, and then entertain questions from the students. The School District also invited other professionals from the community, such as policemen, firemen, and local politicians to visit the public schools.

Two years ago, NRBA officers requested a formal meeting with the New Rochelle School District administrators and proposed a formal, expanded program whereby attorneys would make regularly scheduled visits to each public elementary school and follow a curriculum which would introduce students to the structure and purpose of the legal system, the court system, and the role of the various members of the legal community in the system. Volunteers were recruited from the NRBA membership. The lawyer/volunteers reviewed an online program called I-Civics, from the American Bar Association as a method of teaching elementary concepts of government and law at the elementary school level. The school administrators received the proposal with great enthusiasm, designating it an "enrichment program" which would benefit the school system at absolutely no cost.

At the end of the school year, groups of students were taken to the New Rochelle City Court where they spent the morning observing proceedings in the courtroom. Each of the individuals in the courtroom, including the Judge, Court Officers, District Attorney, and other attorneys described their respective roles and then answered students' questions. Now in its third year, this "enrichment program" provides elementary public school students with a unique opportunity to learn about the legal system and to interact with judges and lawyers, and it presents a unique opportunity for Bar Association attorneys to contribute to the local community in a very positive and meaningful way. The volunteer time commitment is approximately two hours a week up to three weeks.

Large Bar Association—2,000+ Members

The New York County Lawyers' Association (NYCLA), based in Manhattan with approximately 9,000 members, created a State Central Registry (SCR) pro bono project. This program provides pro bono representation to individuals wrongly placed on the New York State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment. Volunteer attorneys advocate for the amendment, sealing, or expungement of indicated reports of abuse and review documents, develop the case, and represent individuals at their fair hearings before an administrative law judge.

The program was developed because people sometimes end up on the SCR, which is maintained by the New York State Office of Children & Family Services, due to false allegations made by an abusive partner. Amendment, expungement, and sealing of SCR records benefits low-income New Yorkers in profound ways by opening up entry-level employment and licensure in care-giving fields and by ensuring that an indicated report does not become an obstacle to employment. Without the assistance of an attorney or advocate, individuals have fared poorly in attempting to challenge a listing in the SCR. Legal services advocates working on these cases note that the success rate for challenging a listing increases dramatically when people are represented by counsel.

A group of 12 attorneys from Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler were the first to represent clients in this project. They were trained and supervised by experienced attorneys through Legal Service NYC – Bronx and NYU's Family Defense Clinic. During representation, Fordham Law School's Feerick Center for Social Justice and Public Interest Resource Center provided additional assistance and support. The participating attorneys received referrals from Legal Services NYC – Bronx, NYU's Family Defense Clinic, NYCLA members David Lansner and Carolyn Kubitschek of Lansner & Kubitschek, and Sanctuary for Families.

Attorneys met with clients, gathered documents and evidence, interviewed witnesses, drafted affidavits, subpoenaed records, wrote to the New York State Office of Children & Family Services (OCFS) to ask for a written review of the clients' records, negotiating with opposing counsel from the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), and in three cases, represented clients at fair hearings in front of administrative law judges.

NYCLA is greatly expanding services for a client population in desperate need of legal assistance. There are very few legal services organizations that represent clients who wish to remove their names from the SCR, and they cannot handle the large demand for these cases. Partnering law firms with legal services organizations and providing support to individual volunteer attorneys who are not affiliated with a law firm is maximizing the benefit that this program has for low-income New Yorkers and for the NYCLA community as a whole.

Program

Welcome:	Diane Herrmann , Chair, New York State Conference of Bar Leaders
Remarks:	David P. Miranda , President-Elect, New York State Bar Association
Presentation of Awards:	Diane Herrmann and David P. Miranda