

NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION



# NYSBA 2011

## President's Pro Bono Service Awards





As we mark the 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary celebration of the President's Pro Bono Service Awards, I am once again amazed and humbled by the generosity of New York lawyers. The depth, breadth, and scope of the 2011 honorees' pro bono contributions is simply astonishing. Pro bono service was donated in every conceivable area of law from downstate to upstate and from Central to Western New York.

Pro bono volunteers changed the lives of immigrants threatened with removal and gained asylum for those seeking refuge from religious persecution, tyrannical

governments, or safety from abusive and neglectful parents. Scores of domestic violence victims were brought safely to sanctuary through the efforts of volunteer lawyers. Individuals trapped in embittered marriages regained their freedom and independence through vital assistance provided in pro se divorce clinics and by individual practitioners willing to handle complex contested divorce matters. Low-income Spanish-speaking clients in neighborhoods throughout Queens County received free legal assistance through law student run Street Law en Español clinics. Elderly, low-income and disadvantaged debtors received welcome legal guidance and encouragement from law students in CLARO SAG programs in Kings, Queens and Richmond Counties. Similarly, indigent defendants were capably represented by volunteer attorneys in direct appeals, post-conviction proceedings and resentencing petitions, challenging the harsh sentences imposed under the Rockefeller Drug Laws.

Innovative pro bono initiatives – arising out of collaborative partnerships – were forged by legal services providers with large, small and mid-sized law firms, and government offices. These collaborations exponentially expanded access to justice for New York's most vulnerable residents. The Association is extremely pleased to recognize the leadership of the Honorable Henry J. Scudder, Presiding Justice of the Appellate Division, Fourth Department, for developing and implementing the first, and to date, only pro bono policy for appellate court attorneys and staff.

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It is deeply gratifying to know that the commitment to pro bono continues to be strong and vibrant, seemingly unaffected by the lingering economic crisis. The level of pro bono service provided by each of the recipients is commendable and noteworthy. I am inspired and I believe everyone who learns of the awardees' contributions also will be.

Congratulations to the 2011 President's Pro Bono Service Award recipients!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Younger', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Stephen P. Younger  
President

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THE NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

**2011 President's Pro Bono Service Awards**

**May 2, 2011**  
One Elk Street  
Albany, New York 12207

1:00pm – 3:00pm

**Program Agenda**

Introductory Remarks . . . . .	Vincent E. Doyle III President Elect
Welcome . . . . .	Stephen P. Younger President
Law Day Remarks . . . . .	Hon. Jonathan Lippman Chief Judge of the State of New York
Luncheon	
Keynote Address. . . . .	Hon. Henry J. Scudder Presiding Justice, NYS Supreme Court, Appellate Division, Fourth Department
Awards Ceremony . . . . .	Stephen P. Younger Vincent E. Doyle III
Closing Remarks . . . . .	Hon. George H. Lowe Co-Chair, President's Committee on Access to Justice

## **2010 President's Pro Bono Service Awards**

*Celebrating Outstanding Contributions in Pro Bono*

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For the past 21 years, the Association has proudly bestowed the President's Pro Bono Service Awards on members of the legal profession, law students, law school groups, law firms, in-house counsel and government offices whose outstanding pro bono contributions have greatly expand equal access to justice for the most vulnerable members of our society. Each honoree has positively impacted the lives of the individuals and families who were fortunate enough to receive free legal assistance when they needed it most - - when threatened with deportation, eviction, loss of custody, unjust denial of subsistence benefits, or seeking asylum from a tyrannical regime.

The President's Pro Bono Service Awards help raise public and professional awareness about the growing number of persons who, through no fault of their own, find themselves in desperate need of free legal services. It is currently estimated that more than 2.3 million unrepresented litigants have cases pending in New York State civil courts at a time when funding for legal services programs has been sharply curtailed on both the state and federal level. It is hoped that by recognizing the pro bono accomplishments of today's diverse group of honorees, legal professionals who have not yet become involved with pro bono will be inspired to actively seek out pro bono opportunities within their communities. Learning about the awardees' contributions, hopefully will encourage those who already volunteer to substantially increase their personal pro bono commitment.

The honorees' 2010 pro bono contributions were evaluated in light of the following four criteria:

- Number of pro bono clients served;
- Number of pro bono hours of service;
- Impact of service on clients; and
- Impact of service on a pro bono program.

A brief profile, gleaned from their nominating materials, describes some of the contributions each award recipient has made to pro bono.



## First Judicial District

**Eric H. Blinderman, Esq.**

Proskauer

New York, New York

### **Nominator**

Proskauer

New York, New York

Eric Blinderman is the International Litigation Counsel at Proskauer and the driving force behind the firm's Iraqi Human Rights Project. Since 2007

he has donated more than 2400 hours to pro bono projects assisting Iraqis, who because of their work supporting US interests in Iraq, are in imminent danger of being threatened, tortured or killed. For the past four years Eric has worked tirelessly to gain asylum and relocation to the United States for former Iraqi drivers, logisticians and translators who served our military and diplomats in Iraq and are now labeled traitors and collaborators because of their service. At Proskauer Eric leads a team of 60 attorneys and staff who help Iraqis find refuge in the US. Under his leadership, Proskauer has handled more than 160 cases involving more than 400 individuals.

Eric's pro bono work is not limited to the Iraqi Human Rights Project. He also has been involved with Angel Notion, an organization working to build a children's hospital in the Playa del Carmen area of Mexico, to serve the needy in the communities along the Mayan Riviera. In addition, Eric also provided pro bono legal services to Picture Earth, a non-profit environmental and educational awareness campaign.



## Second Judicial District

**Larissa Eustice, Esq.**

Kaye Scholer LLP

New York, New York

### **Nominator**

The Legal Aid Society

New York, New York

Larissa Eustice, a junior associate at Kaye Scholer, has made an exceptional contribution to pro bono service on behalf of adults and children with dis-

abilities in her capacity as co-chair of the firm's signature SSI Disability Pro Bono Project. The Project allows teams of associates to represent low-income children and adults with disabilities before the Social Security Administration. The associates gather and analyze medical evidence, interview clients, prepare pre-hearing memorandum, and represent their clients at a hearing before an administrative law judge, where they examine parties and fact and expert witnesses.

Larissa is the most junior associate ever to be appointed co-chair of a signature project and to the firm's Pro Bono Committee. She accepted her first SSI case as a summer associate, and then added two more to her caseload as a first-year associate. Since her appointment, Larissa has helped train and supervise more than 40 junior and summer associates on 32 SSI cases, resulting in 27 Fully Favorable decisions as well as hundreds of thousands of dollars in benefits to clients. Over the last four years, Larissa has contributed nearly 800 hours to pro bono legal work.

In addition to consistently maintaining one of the heaviest billable workloads at the firm, Larissa has devoted more than 200 hours to other types of pro bono work, including researching and drafting on a death penalty appeal and helping victims of domestic violence obtain divorces from their abusers.

Larissa's leadership has enabled dozens of other junior and summer associates to devote thousands of hours to public service.



## **Third Judicial District**

**David A. Price, Esq.**

Solo Practitioner

Albany, New York

### **Nominators**

The Legal Project

Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York

Albany County Bar Association

Albany, New York

Admitted to practice in 2009, David Price has already demonstrated an unwavering commitment and dedication to pro bono. David volunteers with all three of his nominators' organizations providing representation to victims of domestic violence in Family Court, low-income homeowners facing foreclosure, individuals who are in need of a will or health care proxy, those who have been denied unemployment insurance benefits, and those who are filing bankruptcy. In addition to representing individuals, David is a regular volunteer at legal clinics providing information and advice to homeowners dealing with foreclosure.

During 2010, David contributed more than 250 hours of pro bono to low-income clients in the Capital District. David is the attorney who can always be counted on to tackle the most complicated legal issue at a moment's notice. Indeed, if a client can not travel to see him, David willingly travels to the client's residence. One of his nominators wrote that, "David is not only dedicated to pro bono work, but he is dedicated to making sure his clients are comfortable with the legal process and understand each step of the way. ... His knowledge of many areas of law, his willingness to learn more, and his thoughtfulness towards his clients makes him unique."





**Fourth Judicial District**  
**Bethany Schumann-McGhee, Esq.**  
Solo Practitioner  
Amsterdam, New York

**Nominator**  
Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New  
York  
Albany, New York

A solo practitioner in Amsterdam, New York, Bethany's committee to public service began when she worked on the staff of then Assemblyman Paul D. Tonko. Writing in support of her nomination, Congressman Tonko commented that, "During my tenure in the New York State Assembly, Bethany was an invaluable member of my staff and played an instrumental role while working on the issue of mental health parity, leading to the final passage of Timothy's Law, which mandated health insurance coverage for mental health services. Since leaving my office she has become an attorney and I am proud to see Bethany's commitment to public service has continued."

Bethany first learned about the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York (LASNNY) while working on Mr. Tonko's assembly staff. Upon admission to the bar, she reached out to LASNNY and has been a valued and reliable volunteer with the organization since 2008 when she accepted her first pro bono case referral in a guardianship matter. In 2009 Bethany proposed to LASNNY that she offer a pro se divorce clinic as she was receiving more and more inquiries from potential clients who could not afford to hire an attorney. As a solo practitioner, Bethany reasoned that a pro se divorce clinic would allow her to assist a greater number of individuals, rather than just one or two. In 2009, through the pro se divorce clinic Bethany represented five clients. In 2010, she doubled that number to ten and expanded the scope of the clinic to include residents in Fulton and Montgomery Counties, donating approximately twenty hours helping clients obtain a divorce.

More recently, Bethany has agreed to coordinate development of a pro bono and modest means panel for the Montgomery County Bar Association. This is a big undertaking that requires local leadership, determination and commitment. As a solo practitioner and mother of two daughters, Bethany finds the time to not just do pro bono, but to do it well and inspire others to join her efforts. Bethany is proof that a lawyer practicing in a rural area can do pro bono and still manage a law firm.



## **Fifth Judicial District**

**John G. Powers, Esq.**

Hancock & Estabrook LLP

Syracuse, New York

### **Nominator**

Onondaga County Bar Association (OCBA)

Volunteer Lawyer Project

Syracuse, New York

John Powers, a partner at Hancock & Estabrook, has demonstrated extraordinary commitment to the needs of veterans and active duty service members through his stewardship of the newly created Veteran's Pro Bono Project and the Veteran's Legal Clinic.

In 2009, the OCBA Long-range Planning Committee determined the need for a special program which could address the unique problems facing active service members and veterans returning to Central and Northern New York from deployments overseas. The Committee contacted John, a West Point graduate and a veteran, to assist in developing such a program. John readily agreed and undertook the exhaustive 'legwork' associated with setting up the program, including contacting government and private agencies to determine the exact scope of the need, setting up a location for the walk-in-clinic at the Washington Street Vets' Center, recruiting volunteer attorneys from the community to staff the programs, coordinating the attendance of five-six other attorneys at the program on a monthly, rotating basis, establishing training, and personally attending the clinics.

Spending countless hours it took John approximately two years to develop the programs. During the inaugural year of the Veterans Project, it served a dozen veterans and service members. In 2010, the project more than doubled that number, with eligible clients representing twenty-one different upstate New York towns and cities. The programs are expected to grow as veterans return in large numbers from Iraq and Afghanistan.



## Sixth Judicial District

**Kurt D. Schrader, Esq.**

Pope & Schrader

Binghamton, New York

### **Nominator**

The Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York,  
Inc.

Binghamton, New York

Kurt Schrader, a partner in the Binghamton law firm of Pope & Schrader, has demonstrated a deep and ongoing commitment to Legal Aid and its Private Attorney Involvement (PAI) Program, volunteering with the organization since 2004. Although he is among the area's busiest and most sought after attorneys, Kurt always makes pro bono service a top priority. In the past two years he has provided pro bono divorce assistance to 40 Legal Aid clients.

Annually, Legal Aid receives hundreds of requests for divorce representation. Due to funding shortages, the program is able to provide in-house representation to a very small fraction of the eligible applicants. Consequently, Legal Aid relies heavily on private attorneys to fill the void. While many attorneys are willing to accept referrals in simple divorce cases, few will undertake contested cases which typically involve a substantial time and resource commitment. What makes Kurt stand out from other volunteers is his willingness to accept the contested cases. The Legal Aid clients Kurt has represented in contested divorce actions have included the elderly, speech impaired, non-English speaking and victims of domestic violence. The cases have involved disputes over marital property, custodial rights, spousal support and pensions. In addition, they have required travel to different counties, the use of interpreters, and extensive litigation.

Kurt also is an active participant in Legal Aid's bi-weekly divorce clinics providing advice and counsel to clients considering divorce. Clinics typically last three hours or longer during which time up to twelve clients are provided with 20-30 minute individual consultations. Toward the end of 2010, Legal Aid had to schedule four additional clinics because the demand was so great. Kurt volunteered for all four additional clinics.



**Seventh Judicial District**  
**Shaleeya B. McFadden, Esq.**  
Harter Secrest & Emery LLP  
Rochester, New York

**Nominator**  
Harter Secrest & Emery LLP  
Rochester, New York

An associate at Harter Secrest & Emery, Shaleeya McFadden has distinguished herself with her exceptional commitment to pro bono service. Over

the course of 2010, Shaleeya contributed 492 hours of pro bono work in five immigration cases.

Three of the pro bono cases dealt with obtaining “Special Immigrant Juvenile status” and permanent residence for children who fled countries in South America and Africa to escape extreme abuse, neglect and/or abandonment by their parents. These cases were challenging legally for a number of reasons: (1) the Family Court is usually hesitant to accept jurisdiction of such cases because the children are in removal proceedings, and (2) each child faced the imminent “aging up” to the age of 18 (if unable to secure Special Immigrant Juvenile status for the children, termination of their foster care funding would result, and without continued foster care funding, they would have been homeless again).

Shaleeya was able to secure permanent residence for each child within a relatively short time frame. Ordinarily, permanent residence can take more than a year to secure, but due to her advocacy efforts, Shaleeya secured both Special Immigrant Juvenile status and permanent residence for these three children within three months.

In two other cases, Shaleeya assisted two clients applying for immigrant visas, each of whom was separated from a spouse/fiancé living in the midst of war torn Afghanistan. The immigrant visas were approved and the couples were reunited.



## **Eighth Judicial District**

**Michael Anton Sciortino, Esq.**

Assistant Director, Information Technology  
Services

School of Public Health and Professions

The University of New York at Buffalo

Buffalo, New York

### **Nominator**

Erie County Bar Association

Volunteer Lawyers Project, Inc.

Buffalo, New York

Michael Sciortino has been a volunteer attorney with the Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project, Inc. (VLP) since 2007. Michael's pro bono commitment has focused exclusively on the VLP's Attorney of the Morning Program. Prior to 2010, Michael served as Attorney of the Morning 25 times, representing 119 clients in eviction proceedings. During 2010 he performed in excess of 107 hours of pro bono through the program representing 146 low-income tenants facing eviction and possible homelessness.

Michael's dedication to the program is evidenced by the fact that he is always willing to fill in on short notice when a scheduled volunteer has had to unexpectedly cancel. On occasion, he has been known to contact the program and volunteer to fill in if needed. According to the Executive Director, "Michael's willingness and ability to fill in on short notice has prevented VLP and the client's from being stuck without an attorney for the morning."

During the first three months of 2011, Michael already has served as the attorney of the morning 13 times, representing 22 clients. He is scheduled to provide coverage another 11 times between April and June 2011.

Besides serving as the attorney of the morning, Michael also assists VLP staff by helping to train other lawyers and law students to serve as attorneys of the morning and on how to be intake coordinators.



## **Ninth Judicial District**

**Elizabeth King, Esq.**

Pro Bono Volunteer

Bronxville, New York

### **Nominator**

Legal Services of the Hudson Valley  
(LSHV)

White Plains, New York

When LSHV needed assistance for clients seeking uncontested divorces, without hesitation Elizabeth

King answered the call. Initially Elizabeth shadowed an attorney handling such cases and then took over her own caseload. Soon thereafter, Elizabeth sought additional training in Unemployment Insurance Benefits matters, allowing her to successfully represent several claimants at hearings before the Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board securing benefits which they previously had been denied. She has since tackled cases involving complex health care-system issues and qualified domestic relations orders.

In 2010, Elizabeth donated more than 100 hours helping low-income clients residing in Westchester County. Her nominator writes that, "Elizabeth leaves no stone unturned and goes above and beyond the call of duty. ...She persists with clients where others would have given up, patiently setting up still another appointment, when they have routinely missed previously scheduled ones."

For the past two years, Elizabeth has dedicated her energy exclusively to pro bono work. In addition to volunteering with LSHV, Elizabeth also actively volunteers on several pro bono projects with the City Bar Justice Center.



## **Tenth Judicial District**

**Leah Belfort, Esq.**

In-House Volunteer Lawyer

Volunteer Lawyers Project

Hempstead, New York

### **Nominator**

Volunteer Lawyers Project

Hempstead, New York

Retiring after nearly 40 years as a Certified Public Accountant, Leah Belfort embarked upon the study of law, graduating from St. John's University School of Law at the age of 60 in 1997. In January 1998 she joined the Volunteer Lawyers Project as an in-house volunteer attorney. Since then she has devoted more than 5000 hours to the Project. In 2010 alone, she served over 496 hours, handling 82 cases. Because of Leah's extensive background in taxes she has enabled the Project to address legal problems that they were unable to handle previously.

As an in-house volunteer, Leah primarily provides assistance to clients whose legal problems can be resolved via telephone calls or correspondence, thereby ensuring timely and effective legal assistance to a wide variety of clients. However, when clients present with more complex legal problems such as the release of restraining orders on their bank account, and determination of insurance and Medicaid coverage in situations where they were sued for supposedly unpaid medical bills, Leah has capably assisted these clients.

When told of her nomination for the President's Pro Bono Services Award, Leah declared, "It has been a privilege to work with the Volunteer Lawyers project. This most worthwhile organization is, for many indigent persons in our community, the last hope of adequate legal representation. I urge all attorneys to give of their time and experience."



## Eleventh Judicial District Ned Kassman, Esq.

### **Nominator**

Queens County Bar Association  
Queens Volunteer Lawyers Project (QVLP)  
Queens, New York

Since 2008 Ned Kassman has distinguished himself as a pro bono volunteer attorney at the CLARO-Queens Consumer Debt Clinic, a program of the QVLP, the pro bono arm of the Queens County Bar

Association. CLARO provides limited legal advice to unrepresented low- and middle-income debtor defendants in Civil Court debt collections cases. Without legal representation debtors, including elderly, poor and non-English speaking individuals – are unable to raise viable legal defenses such as predatory lending terms and abusive collection practices.

Ned has been the bedrock of the CLARO clinic, providing not only a comprehensive consultation to clinic visitors, but also serving as a mentor for lawyers volunteering for the first time at the clinic. According to the Executive Director of the QVLP, “It is now standard practice for new volunteers to spend their first clinic session as “second-chair” with Ned.” Similarly, law student volunteers have found him to be an invaluable resource and role model. Moreover, Ned has provided tremendous assistance in the administration of the clinic, making suggestions and observations which have helped improve the quality of service to the low-income clinic visitors.

During 2010, Ned has participated in 16 clinic sessions, serving 70 clinic visitors donating approximately 75 hours. Importantly, Ned has undertaken some of the more complex and difficult consumer debt cases, devoting many hours outside of the clinic setting researching the law and drafting documents in these cases.





## Thirteenth Judicial District

**Sheila T. McGinn, Esq.**

Sargente & McGinn, LLC

Staten Island, New York

### **Nominator**

Staten Island Legal Services

Staten Island, New York

A partner in the Staten Island law firm Sargente & McGinn, Sheila has been a godsend to Staten Island Legal Services, a program of Legal Services NYC, establishing and launching the Staten Island CLARO Program.

Among other things, Sheila chaired the Planning Committee which spent nearly one year identifying and recruiting partners and obtaining the support and approval of court administrators. Sheila was instrumental in securing commitments from three co-sponsors: the Richmond County Bar Association, the Staten Island Women's Bar Association and Wagner College, as well as obtaining support for the project from the Honorable Phillip G. Minardo, the Administrative Judge of the Thirteenth Judicial District, and the Honorable Philip S. Straniere, the Administrative Judge of the Richmond County Civil Court.

Despite the demands of a bust law practice, Sheila moderated the initial training program which was attended by more than 60 volunteer attorneys who committed to work with the program. Without a doubt, Sheila's dedication and advocacy for the project was key in establishing its successful launch. Sheila continues to play a pivotal role in the CLARO program, as a frequent volunteer and member of the Steering Committee.



**Senior Attorney**  
**Hon. Hugh C. Humphreys**  
Retired  
Hamilton, New York

**Nominator**  
Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York, Inc.  
(LASMNY)  
Utica, New York

Retiring from the Madison County Family Court,  
Surrogate Court and County Court in January 2001,

Judge Humphreys has been a dedicated part-time attorney volunteer with the Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York. Volunteering at least one day per week, Judge Humphreys has contributed more than 4,000 hours. Since 2002, he has staffed LASMNY's Utica office Pro Se Divorce Clinic where his advice and counsel have helped in excess of 121 individuals to obtain a divorce. Besides, his work with the pro se clinic, Judge Humphreys maintains a caseload of contested matrimonials and other complicated matters. Judge Humphreys' nominator stated that, "His pro bono case load is so large and he is such a constant presence in LASMNY's Utica office that he is the first and only pro bono attorney ever to be given his own dedicated LASMNY office."

Not content with volunteering at LASMNY, Judge Humphreys also has served as the co-chair of the Sixth Judicial District Pro Bono Action Now Committee since its inception in 2007. Under Judge Humphreys' leadership, the Sixth Judicial District Pro Bono Committee has recruited nearly 230 pro bono attorneys; conducted eight community legal education seminars at which private attorneys receive free continuing legal education credit in exchange for a pro bono commitment; and has conducted nine pro bono clinics where 359 individuals received free legal services.

According to Paul Lupia, Executive Director of LASMNY, Judge Humphreys' greatest contribution has been his role as mentor and advisor to all LASMNY attorneys. "He liberally gives of his time to discuss legal issues and provides guidance to LASMNY litigation attorneys in trial strategy and complex evidentiary matters. His wit and good humor have kept morale high during these challenging times."



**Young Lawyer**  
**Angela C. Winfield, Esq.**  
Hiscock & Barclay LLP  
Syracuse, New York

**Nominator**  
Onondaga County Bar Association  
Volunteer Lawyer Project  
Syracuse, New York

Angela Winfield lost her vision in her left eye at age 10. During college, while in the midst of a classroom presentation, she suddenly lost her vision in her right eye, leaving her completely blind. Never missing a beat, Angela continued her education at Barnard College and went on to attend Cornell Law School, graduating in 2008.

Admitted to practice in 2009, Angela accepted a position as an associate at Hiscock & Barclay and simultaneously became an active volunteer with the Onondaga County Bar Association's Eviction Defense Clinic in Syracuse Housing Court, appearing once a month representing low-income tenants threatened with eviction.

Writing in support of Angela's nomination, Ellen Kimatian Eagan, a colleague with whom she recently co-chaired a pro bono landlord/tenant trial in State Court noted that Angela was in large part responsible for the successful outcome which resulted in a large damages award for their client. Angela gathered the evidence, drafted the complaint, drafted discovery requests and second-seated the trial, as well established a great rapport with the clients. "What I enjoy most about working with Angela is the courage she brings to the table as a litigator. She has no problem asking the hard question or articulating a weakness in a case, and then, in turn, marshalling both the law and the facts to make the best case."



## **Law Student**

**Maria Martinez**

J.D. Candidate June 2011

St. John's University School of Law  
Jamaica, New York

## **Nominators**

LatinoJustice PRLDEF

New York, New York

Latino Lawyers Association of Queens County (LLQC)  
Forest Hills, New York

Latin American Law Student Association (LALSA)  
St. John's University School of Law  
Jamaica, New York

Maria Martinez is the co-chair of the St. John's University LALSA students' Street Law en Español Community Outreach Program. The Street Law en Español Program is a joint outreach effort targeting the Queens Latino community and is operated in conjunction with the LLQC. Street Law en Español provides Spanish-language "Know Your Rights" workshops for Latino parishes, public library branches, and community based organizations in Queens County on such topics as domestic violence, immigration, family law, matrimonial law, landlord/tenant; and the availability of free legal services.

Maria has demonstrated critical leadership abilities in her role as the co-chair of the Street Law program. Among other activities, for the past two years Maria has been responsible for organizing the workshops which the law students hold each semester, arranging for use of community host sites, recruiting and training other students to participate, as well as personally conducting many of the workshops. In addition to her outstanding work on the Queens County Street Law program, Maria has also generously reached out to other LALSA groups at Brooklyn, Columbia, Touro and Cardoza Law Schools to share her expertise as these associations roll out their own Street Law workshops.

In recommending Maria for this prestigious recognition, her nominators noted that, "Her personal commitment, leadership, and indefatigable spirit have solidified the program's standing, and laid the foundation for its continued growth and expansion."

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In addition to her dedication to the Street Law program, Maria also has volunteered with the Courtroom Advocacy Project, another student run program that trains, recruits, supervises and mentors law students to serve as advocates for women seeking orders of protection in the Family Courts of New York City. In this program, Maria interviewed domestic violence victims and helped them draft court petitions for orders of protection. Through her participation in this program, Maria helped bring safety, peace of mind and stability to victims of domestic violence.



**Law School Group  
Brooklyn Law School's CLARO  
Student Action Group  
(CLARO SAG)**

Brooklyn Law School  
Brooklyn, New York

**Nominator**

Brooklyn Bar Association  
Brooklyn Volunteer Lawyers  
Project (VLP)  
Brooklyn, New York

The Civil Legal Advice and Resources Office (CLARO) was first launched in Brooklyn in 2006 in response to the increasing number of debt collection cases being filed in Civil Courts. Debtor defendants were inevitably poor and unrepresented. In contrast, the collections agencies almost always were represented by savvy counsel, knowledgeable in the substantive and procedural aspects of debt collection law.

Inasmuch as the legal services providers lacked adequate staff to individually represent the growing numbers of elderly, single mothers, individuals with limited-English proficiency and low-income debtors, most were forced to try to defend themselves as best they could. Not surprisingly, many of the overwhelmed debtors simply failed to answer or appear in the action, resulting in countless default judgments being entered - - oftentimes in cases wholly lacking in merit.

CLARO maximizes the limited pro bono legal resources available to low-income debtors by offering weekly, free walk-in clinics staffed by volunteer attorneys and law students who assist debtors with pro se filings and offer advice and counsel concerning possible defenses. Today, CLARO is a highly regarded pro-

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gram that has flourished into a city-wide initiative, with programs in Queens, Manhattan, Staten Island, and the Bronx.

Brooklyn CLARO SAG was established by two active Brooklyn law students who had volunteered with the Brooklyn VLP program. The student chapter is dedicated to educating the Brooklyn Law School community about the legal issues surrounding the burgeoning field of consumer debt. Working under attorney supervision, CLARO SAG students have the opportunity to gain a broad legal experience, ranging from how to answer a summons and complaint, how to vacate a default judgment by filing an order to show cause, informing defendants of possible affirmative defenses, how to respond to motions for summary judgment, how to file motions to dismiss and traverse hearings, prepping clients for their traverse hearings, assisting with the drafting of discovery demands, providing information on how to deal with harassing creditor telephone calls, and how to negotiate settlements.

In March 2010, in partnership with the Honorable Fern Fisher's Access to Justice Program, VLP expanded the CLARO program to include a Volunteer Lawyer for a Day Program in which volunteer lawyers, law graduates, and second and third year law students are permitted to provide limited scope representation to unrepresented litigants in consumer debt matters. The highly successful new program affords CLARO SAG student volunteers an opportunity to gain courtroom experience. During June 2010, student interns handled 95 cases, dismissing a total of \$391,080 of consumer debt.



**Small Law Firm**  
**(2 to 49 Attorneys)**  
**Lansner Kubitschek**  
**Schaffer**  
Brooklyn, New York

**Nominator**  
Steven S. Landis, PC  
New York, New York

Lansner Kubitschek Schaffer is a small three person law firm that has represented Sarah Greene and her daughter "S.G." pro bono as lead counsel in the United States Supreme Court, in the consolidated cases of *Camtreta v. Greene*, 99-1454 and *Alford v. Greene*, 09-1478 since October 2010. During this period, the firm has logged more than 1,600 hours on the case. Partner Carolyn Kubitschek, who argued the case before the United States Supreme Court on March 1, 2011, has

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spent in excess of 900 hours, averaging more than 70 hours a week since the firm accepted the case. Carolyn has a long history of experience and successful track record in family law, child welfare and children's rights issues.

Partner David Lansner has donated more than 250 hours, while at the same time, handling the rest of the firm's business, along with the firm's third partner Barbara Schaffer, who shouldered the bulk of the work for the firm's other clients, while also pitching in to help on S.G.'s appeal.

S.G. was only nine years old when she was taken from her classroom in an elementary school in Bend Oregon, and forced to endure two grueling hours of questioning by a male caseworker for the Oregon Department of Human Services on account of a false allegation of sexual abuse. Present during the entire interrogation was an armed deputy sheriff. The questioning consisted of the most intimate details of the child's young life. Although she repeatedly denied any abuse, the interrogation continued until S.G. became physically ill.

The interrogation set off a chain of events that led to S.G. being removed from her home for three weeks, during which time she was placed in Oregon's chaotic foster care system. While in foster care S.G. was subjected to a traumatic physical examination, by doctors she had never seen before, for evidence of sexual trauma.

On behalf of her daughter, S.G.'s mother sued alleging her daughter's Fourth Amendment Rights against unreasonable search and seizure had been violated. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals agreed, but held that the caseworker and the deputy sheriff were immune from damages because, before the ruling, the law was unclear. *Greene v. Camtreta*, 558 F.3d 1011 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2009). Nevertheless, it was the defendants who appealed to the Supreme Court. On October 12, 2010 the Supreme Court granted certiorari, at which time the firm took over the case at the request of the attorney who had handled it at the District Court and Court of Appeals level.



## Mid-sized Law Firm (50 to 200 Attorneys)

**Phillips Lytle LLP**

Buffalo, New York

### **Nominator**

**Mosey Persico LLP**

Buffalo, New York

“With six offices across New York State, the firm’s 174 attorneys are dedicated to providing legal service to those in need. The firm’s pro bono program is integral to its culture and commitment to serving diverse communities,” wrote the nominator.

During 2010 the firm’s attorneys devoted more than 3,400 pro bono hours in a broad range of legal disciplines, including litigation, corporate and not-for-profit. Conservatively valuing the firm’s 2010 pro bono contributions would equal approximately \$833,000 worth of free legal services provided to low-income and disadvantaged families, and various not-for-profit groups.

Illustrative of the firm’s pro bono commitment is its long-term partnership with the Erie County Bar Associations Volunteer Lawyers Project’s Attorney of the Morning Program. Until last year, Phillips Lytle was the only firm in Western New York participating in this program which provides representation in Buffalo City Court to low-income tenants facing eviction. Over the past ten years, more than 50 of the firm’s attorneys, including partners and associates, have participated in this program.



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Attorneys from the firm's Buffalo and Rochester offices also contribute substantial time representing immigration clients held at the Federal Detention Center in Batavia, New York. Another aspect of the firm's active pro bono practice is its representation of prison inmates in Federal Court civil rights litigation, including trials and appeals. Last year, two associates represented a prison inmate in a week long jury trial of a Section 1983 claim. Two other associates are currently engaged in the representation of a legally blind inmate in a claim filed under the Americans with Disabilities Act. In addition, the firm handled three pro bono appeals at the Second Circuit.

Through the Rochester Volunteer Legal Services Project, Phillips Lytle successfully represented a permanently disabled individual who, as a result of her disability, had failed to file income tax returns. The attorney handling the case was able to not only reduce the client's tax penalty, but also succeed in obtaining a hardship waiver which prevented collection of taxes.



## Large Law Firm (201 or more Attorneys)

**Davis Polk & Wardell LLP**

New York, New York

### **Nominators**

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

The Legal Aid Society

inMotion

New York, New York

The scope and breadth of Davis Polk's pro bono commitment is astonishing. Over the last three years, the firm's attorneys have devoted more than 190,000 hours to pro bono work. During 2010, the firm's primary pro bono focus was

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criminal justice an area where more than 180,000 hours were donated. Criminal justice initiatives ranged from individual representation to pro bono efforts to address systemic reform. For example, the firm serves as Counsel to the New York State Justice Task Force, one of the first permanent task forces on wrongful conviction in the United States, created by Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman in 2009. Other criminal justice initiatives include partnering with the Legal Aid Society and the Office of the Appellate Defender representing indigent defendants in 23 appeals and prosecuting nine appeals for the Kings County and Queens County District Attorneys' offices. In conjunction with the Legal Aid Society, Davis Polk worked on 23 resentencing petitions on behalf of inmates sentenced under the Rockefeller Drug Laws, gaining reduced sentences or release for several clients.

Besides criminal justice, Davis Polk has donated considerable pro bono expertise representing nonprofit clients in virtually every area of law including corporate governance, contracts, employment law, real estate, intellectual property, tax and benefits. One of the firm's nonprofit clients is Bronx Works, formerly Citizens Advice Bureau, a settlement house that strives to build sustainable communities in the Bronx through individual and group services. Bronx Works has been a pro bono client of the firm for well over a decade generating a steady stream of pro bono opportunities for corporate, real estate, tax and litigation attorneys.

Davis Polk & Wardwell also donates considerable pro bono to Volunteers of Legal Service (VOLS), providing invaluable legal assistance on two of the organizations critical projects: the Elderly Project and the Incarcerated Mothers Law Project. The Elderly Project provides legal representation to elderly poor and low-income clients living in Manhattan. During 2010, 60 lawyers from the firm provided free legal services to 80 seniors, most of whom were homebound, preparing wills, medical directives and powers of attorneys. The attorneys made multiple visits to the elderly clients' homes, interviewing them, drafting documents, reviewing and revising them, and finally executing the documents. "The isolation of the homebound, coupled with, in many instances, a limited ability to converse in English, make the work of the Davis Polk lawyers on their behalf important and compelling," wrote William Dean, Executive Director of VOLS, in a letter in support of the firm's nomination.

Through the VOLS Incarcerated Mothers Law Project, Davis Polk attorneys provide one-on-one legal counseling to mothers on child custody and visitation issues at the New York City jail on Rikers Island and at two state prison facilities. All legal services take place at the jail or prison, where lawyers meet individually with mothers to explain to them their parental rights and their responsibilities to maintain relations with their children. In addition, the attorneys facilitate communication with the caretakers of the children – whether agencies or individuals – to encourage them to arrange visits by the children to their mothers. "Their work

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is invaluable. The Davis Polk lawyers have a longstanding, deep commitment to these issues. They are at the heart of the project and fearless in taking on challenging cases,” said the VOLS family law consultant who works with the Davis Polk volunteers on this project.



## In-House Counsel or Government Office

### **Supreme Court of the State of New York, Appellate Division, Fourth Department**

**Hon. Henry J. Scudder, Presiding Justice**

Rochester, New York

### **Nominator**

**Volunteer Legal Services Project of Monroe County, Inc. (VLSP)**

Rochester, New York

The Rochester legal community owes a tremendous debt of thanks to the Honorable Henry J. Scudder for creating an office culture that not only permits but actively encourages pro bono service. Letters in support of this worthy nomination were provided by the Co-Presidents of the Board of VLSP, the Monroe County Bar Association, Legal Assistance of Western New York, the Legal Aid Society of Rochester, the Monroe County Department of Law, and three of Rochester’s largest law firms, Harter Secrest & Emery, Nixon Peabody and Harris Beach, as well as the Wolford Firm, a well known smaller law firm. Clearly, the breadth of support for this nomination underscores the far reaching and profound impact Justice Scudder’s visionary policy has had.

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Presiding Justice Scudder developed and implemented New York State's first, and so far only, pro bono and volunteer services policy for appellate court attorneys and staff. The policy encourages appellate court attorneys to set a personal goal of at least 20 hours of pro bono service, as recommended by Rule 6.1 of the New York State Rules of Professional Conduct. This policy is to be applauded because it calls attention to the fact that government lawyers can play an active and meaningful role in the delivery of pro bono legal services.

In 2010, court attorneys provided free legal assistance to 106 low-income members of the Greater Rochester, New York area through their participation in various clinics operated by VLSP, clients received advice in domestic violence divorces, child custody, debt, tax and wills issues at the Pro Se Divorce Clinic, Alternatives for Battered Women Clinic, Family Law Clinic and Wills Clinic.

Appellate Division staff also have provided coverage on the VLSP consumer hotline, offering brief advice to 83 clients over the course of 31 hours. The consumer hotline, serves an important purpose by having clients' questions answered efficiently, without a huge expenditure of time. Besides handling hotline inquiries, Appellate Division staff answered the call when a large law firm asked for hotline training for its attorneys so they would be able to volunteer.

Court attorneys at all levels of seniority, from the newly admitted to senior members of staff actively volunteer with VLSP, some accepting case referrals requiring full representation in the areas of wills and unemployment insurance benefits denials. Non-attorney staff also perform pro bono. In this regard, legal secretaries from the Fourth Department have typed wills at Wills Clinic and assisted clients at Pro Se Divorce clinic.

Not content to increase pro bono involvement merely within its own ranks, the Appellate Division Fourth Department, under Justice Scudder's leadership, has actively engaged in the recruitment of pro bono attorneys throughout the Seventh Judicial District. By donating their time to serve as pro bono ethics CLE presenters, the Presiding Justice, the Clerk of the Court, the Chief Counsel and the Principal Counsel of the Attorney Grievance Committee have recruited more than 150 pro bono attorneys in Monroe County and seven other rural counties. The Appellate Division, Fourth Department pro bono policy was the model for the Monroe County Law Department's pro bono policy which was recently implemented in March 2011. Justice Scudder has paved the way for more attorneys working in other government offices to become involved in pro bono.

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## Counties in the 13 Judicial Districts

<b>First:</b>	New York
<b>Second:</b>	Kings
<b>Third:</b>	Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Schoharie, Sullivan, Ulster
<b>Fourth:</b>	Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Montgomery, St. Lawrence, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren, Washington
<b>Fifth:</b>	Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego
<b>Sixth:</b>	Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Madison, Otsego, Schuyler, Tioga, Tompkins
<b>Seventh:</b>	Cayuga, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne, Yates
<b>Eighth:</b>	Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans, Wyoming
<b>Ninth:</b>	Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Westchester
<b>Tenth:</b>	Nassau, Suffolk
<b>Eleventh:</b>	Queens
<b>Twelfth:</b>	Bronx
<b>Thirteenth:</b>	Richmond

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## Previous Recipients of the President's Pro Bono Service Awards

### 2010-2000

#### 2010

Anne S. Raish – *1st*  
Christopher Rio – *2nd*  
Daniel J. Hurteau – *3rd*  
Emily Muller – *4th*  
David M. Hayes – *5th*  
Peter A. Orville – *6th*  
David Tennant – *7th*  
Catherine E. Nagel – *8th*  
Guy Fairstein – *9th*  
Stuart P. Gelberg – *10th*  
Hilary Gingold – *11th*  
Michael S. Davi – *12th*  
Serena M. Stonick – *13th*  
Hagit Elul, *Young Lawyer*  
Shirley Adelson Siegel,  
*Senior Lawyer*  
Levene Gouldin & Thompson LLP,  
*Small/Midsized Law Firm*  
Hiscock & Barclay LLP,  
*Large Law Firm*  
Gary B. Cohen, *In-House Counsel*  
Ryan Shannon, *Law Student*  
Suspension Representation Project  
(SRP), *Law Student Group/  
Organization*

#### 2009

Ronald Abramson – *1st*  
Kim Zinke – *2nd*  
Jena Rotheim – *3rd*  
Cheryl L. Maxwell – *4th*  
Edward McCardle – *5th*  
Thomas Miller – *6th*  
Jane Gabriele – *7th*  
Barbara R. Ridall – *8th*  
Simon Haysom – *9th*  
Charles J. Sherman – *10th*  
Nicholas DeCesare – *11th*  
Isabelle L. Curro – *12th*  
Jennifer P. Stergion, *Young Lawyer*  
Hon. Robert J. Nicholson,  
*Senior Lawyer*  
Kaye Scholer LLP, *Large Law Firm*  
DelBello Donnellan Weingarten  
Wise & Wiederkehr LLP,  
*Small & Mid-Size Law Firms*  
Siana McLean, *Law Student*  
Syracuse University College of  
Law Pro Bono Bankruptcy Practice  
Group, *Law School Group*  
Legal Department of IBM,  
*In-House Counsel*

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**2008**

Aaron M. Frankel – *1st*  
Cynthia Feathers – *3rd*  
Richard I. Gardner – *4th*  
Michael J. Sciotti – *5th*  
Herbert A. Kline – *6th*  
Jeffrey Wicks – *7th*  
Kenneth A. Manning – *8th*  
Devon Salts – *9th*  
Rudolph de Winter – *10th*  
Michael M. Cohen – *11th*  
Sarah Bell, *Young Lawyer*  
Warren Heilbronner, *Senior Lawyer*  
Milbank Tweed Hadley & McCoy  
LLP, *Large Law Firm*  
Blitman & King LLP,  
*Small/Mid-Size Law Firm*  
Katherine Steiner Higgins,  
*Law Student*  
Safe Passage Project of the Justice  
Action Center of New York Law  
School, *Law School Group*

**2007**

James W. B. Benkard – *1st*  
Michael J. O'Connor – *3rd*  
Matthew H. Dwyer – *4th*  
(*Awarded Posthumously*)  
Martin L. Fried – *5th*  
James R. Franz – *6th*  
Jodie L. Ryan – *7th*  
Francis J. Offermann, Jr. – *8th*  
Edith Sullivan – *9th*  
Lewis C. Edelstein – *10th*  
Regina Alberty – *11th*  
Benis Guzman, *Young Lawyer*

Adrienne D. Gonzalez, *Young Lawyer*  
Gail Rodgers, *Young Lawyer*  
Patterson Belknap Webb  
& Tyler LLP, *Large Law Firm*  
Costello, Cooney & Fearon, PLLC,  
*Small/Mid-Size Law Firm*  
Kaplan and Brennan, LLP,  
*Small/Mid-Size Law Firm*  
Olivia Nix, *Law Student*  
Willow Baer, *Law Student*  
Student Hurricane Network,  
Chapters in 12 New York State Law  
Schools, *Law School Group*

**2006**

John M. Aerni – *1st*  
Mark A. Beckman – *1st*  
Richard Croak – *3rd*  
Scott N. Fein – *3rd*  
Hon. James E. Doern – *4th*  
Anne B. Ruffer – *5th*  
Hope W. Olsson – *7th*  
James C. DeMarco, III – *8th*  
Lee Vartan – *9th*  
Patricia F. Neumann – *10th*  
Archibong Archibong – *11th*  
Richard Bara – *12th*  
Vincent J. Roldan, *Young Lawyer*  
Madeleine Schachter,  
*In-House Counsel*  
Hughes Hubbard & Reed LLP,  
*Large Law Firm*  
St. John's University School of Law,  
Latin American Law Students  
Association, *Law School Group*

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**2005**

Jeffrey Simes – 1st  
Ronald J. Tabak – 1st  
Jeffrey S. Trachtman – 2nd  
Ronald B. Orlando – 3rd  
Andrew J. Wylie – 4th  
Margaret Murphy Peterson – 5th  
C. Bruce Lawrence – 7th  
Matthew B. Herdzik, Jr. – 8th  
Elisabeth K. Wolfe – 9th  
Peter H. Levy – 10th  
Floyd Alan Sheeger – 11th  
(*Awarded Posthumously*)  
Evelyn McCabe – 12th  
Proskauer Rose LLP, *Large Law Firm*  
Nixon Peabody, LLP, *Large Law Firm*  
Siegel, Kelleher & Kahn,  
*Small/Mid-Size Law Firm*  
Joshua Sohn, *Young Lawyer*  
Kara Leopold, *Young Lawyer*  
Judi Coon, *Law Student*  
Fordham University School of Law,  
Legal Education and Advocacy  
Program, *Law Student Group*

**2004**

Saralyn Cohen – 1st  
Bruce Weiner – 2nd  
Brian LeCours – 3rd  
Barbara King – 4th  
Kathryn McCary – 4th  
Christopher Wiles – 5th  
Albert Kukol – 6th  
John R. McQueen – 7th  
Noralyn A. Dillon – 8th

Glenn Shapiro – 9th  
Robin Abramowitz – 10th  
William H. Scott – 11th  
David Tomlin – 12th  
Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton,  
*Large Law Firm*  
Law Offices of Harold I. Silverman,  
*Small/Mid-Size Law Firm*  
Gemma Rossi Corbin, *Young Lawyer*  
Gloria Bruzzano, *Law Student*

**2003**

Christopher J. Meade – 1st  
Debra Brown Steinberg – 1st  
Fern J. Finkel – 2nd  
Anne Reynolds Copps – 3rd  
Peter V. Coffey – 4th  
James T. Snyder – 5th  
David E. Butler – 6th  
Margaret A. Clemens – 7th  
Peter Bergenstock – 8th  
Randall S. Lewis – 8th  
Frank Muller – 9th  
Herbert Harris – 10th  
Elizabeth S. Hall – 11th  
Rochelle Sendar – 12th  
Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP,  
*Large Law Firm*  
Mackenzie Hughes LLP,  
*Small/Mid-Size Law Firm*  
Meade Versace, *Young Lawyer*  
Renee Hebert, *Law Student*  
Pace University School of Law,  
Pace Women's Justice Center,  
*Law School Group*



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**2002**

Kevin Curnin – *1st*  
Professor Susan Block-Lieb – *2nd*  
Professor Karen Gross – *2nd*  
Matthew J. Kelly – *3rd*  
Christine M. Galvin – *4th*  
George H. Lowe – *5th*  
Frank Novak – *7th*  
Kevin M. Reedy – *8th*  
Professor Vanessa Merton – *9th*  
Wallace L. Leinhardt – *10th*  
Stephen S. Weintraub – *11th*  
Robert Gilmore – *12th*  
Simpson Thacher & Bartlett,  
*Large Law Firm*  
Hancock & Estabrook, LLP,  
*Small/Mid-Size Law Firm*  
M. Akram Fraizer, *Young Lawyer*  
Peter Rolph, *Law Student*  
CUNY School of Law,  
Workfare Advocacy Project,  
*Law School Group*

**2001**

Andrew Tomback – *1st*  
Steven D. Cohn – *2nd*  
Marc S. Ehrlich – *3rd*  
Glen W. Brownell – *4th*  
Thomas Atkinson – *5th*  
Diana Hughes – *6th*  
Kim Reisch – *7th*  
Kevin M. Kearney – *8th*  
Michael E. Uhl – *9th*  
Robert W. Corcoran – *10th*

White & Case, LLP,  
*Special Recognition Award*  
Debevoise & Plimpton,  
*Large Law Firm*  
McNamee, Lochner, Titus  
& Williams, P.C.,  
*Small/Mid-Size Law Firm*  
Jayson Wolfe, *Law Student*  
Hofstra University School of Law,  
Domestic Violence Courtroom  
Advocates Project,  
*Law Student Group*

**2000**

Nancy Lazar – *1st*  
Mark A. Longo – *2nd*  
Jo M. Katz – *3rd*  
David Harper – *4th*  
Andrea King – *5th*  
Michael S. Sinicki – *6th*  
Barbara Roesch – *7th*  
Regina A. Reitz – *8th*  
Helga Klessen – *9th*  
Barbara J. Fritz – *10th*  
Jason Lutzky – *12th*  
Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP,  
*Large Law Firm*  
Wolford & Leclair LLP,  
*Small/Mid-Size Law Firm*  
Boaz Weinstein, *Law Student*  
Fordham Law School,  
Family Court Mediation Project,  
*Law Student Group*

**N Y S B A**

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**DO THE  
PUBLIC  
GOOD**

**VOLUNTEER  
FOR PRO BONO**



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