



# NYSBA News Release

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## **NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES 2014 PRESIDENT'S PRO BONO SERVICE AWARDS**

Law students who helped hundreds of veterans with their legal matters and a law firm that donated nearly 22,000 hours of pro bono services are among the 18 winners of the New York State Bar Association's 2014 President's Pro Bono Service Awards.

The awards were presented at a Law Day luncheon on April 30 at the State Bar Center in Albany. State Bar President David M. Schraver of Rochester (Nixon Peabody), as well as President-elect Glenn Lau-Kee of Manhattan (Kee & Lau-Kee) and George H. Lowe of Syracuse (Bond, Schoeneck & King), co-chairs of the President's Committee on Access to Justice, will preside at this year's ceremony.

"Pro bono service is one of the proudest traditions of the legal profession. Each year, attorneys give generously of themselves to change someone's life for the better," said Schraver. "We are pleased to recognize an outstanding group of recipients. They truly do the public good."

In addition to honoring attorneys representing 12 of New York's 13 judicial districts, the awards are given to a lawyer practicing for less than 10 years or under the age of 36, a senior lawyer, a large law firm, small law firm, a law school group and a law student.

The winners are:

### **1st Judicial District (Manhattan)**

*David Sausen* of New York City (Kaye Scholer) has helped nonprofit organizations register for and maintain tax-exempt status. In 2013, he advised 20 nonprofit organizations on matters including private inurement, unrelated business taxable income and excess benefit transactions.

### **2nd Judicial District (Kings County)**

*Christopher Strong* (Hoffmann Marshall Strong LLP) and *Sarah Levin* (Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler LLP) volunteer with the New York County Lawyers' Association's "SCR Pro Bono Pilot Project." It was designed to provide counsel to low-income New Yorkers seeking to amend, seal or expunge reports from the State Central Register of Child Abuse and Mistreatment.

### **3rd Judicial District (Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Schoharie, Sullivan, Ulster counties)**

*Robert Mascali* of Menands (Pierro Law Group) developed a volunteer pro bono program that offered workshops on guardianship and special needs trusts, as well as employment and job training opportunities for those who assist people with special needs.

**4th Judicial District** (Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Montgomery, St. Lawrence, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren, Washington counties)

*Joel Peller* of Clifton Park (Block, Colucci, Spellman & Peller, LLP) has volunteered with the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York since 2008. During that time, he has assisted 18 clients and helped with *pro se* divorce clinics that assist low-income individuals with uncontested divorces in Franklin, Essex, Clinton and Hamilton counties. He also prepared an "Inquest Lifeline" brochure that informs clients about what to expect and how to prepare for an inquest during a divorce case.

**5th Judicial District** (Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego counties)

*Thomas E. Myers* of Syracuse (Bond, Schoeneck & King, PLLC) coordinates his firm's pro bono activities in the Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County's Eviction Defense Clinic. He also trains attorneys in eviction defense.

**6th Judicial District** (Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Madison, Otsego, Schuyler, Tioga, Tompkins counties)

A solo practitioner, *Kevin Yeagher* of Binghamton has represented 67 tenants in eviction cases since 2011. He has helped them avoid or delay evictions, reduce money judgments or obtain needed home repairs.

**7th Judicial District** (Cayuga, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne, Yates counties)

*Kevin Saunders* of Rochester, a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserves and an associate at Nixon Peabody, donated 136 hours of pro bono services in 2013. He and four veterans created the One Team, One Fight website, which addresses veterans' employment, psychological and legal needs.

**8th Judicial District** (Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans, Wyoming counties)

Even with a busy solo practice, *Joshua Dubs* of Buffalo donated 60 hours of pro bono work on 46 eviction defense cases, eight name changes, three wills and two tort defense cases through the Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project. In the first quarter of 2014, he accepted an additional 20 eviction defense cases and a transgender name change case.

**9th Judicial District** (Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Westchester counties)

*Robert Hermann* of White Plains (DelBello Donnellan Weingarten Wise & Wiederkehr, LLP) is pro bono co-counsel in the matter of *Thompson v. Donovan*, a case pending in the U.S. District for the Southern District of New York. The complaint alleges that government agencies failed to act when low-income and disabled Yonkers residents were threatened with eviction after their landlord charged high electrical rates.

**10th Judicial District** (Nassau, Suffolk counties)

*Evelyn Kalenscher* of Hempstead, a retired attorney, volunteers twice a week with the Landlord Tenant Attorney of the Day of the Nassau Suffolk Law Services' Volunteer Lawyers Project. She represents indigent tenants facing eviction.

**11th Judicial District** (Queens County)

Handling 10 foreclosures for the Queens Foreclosure Conference Project, *Bernadette M. Crowley* of Douglaston donated more than 125 hours of pro bono service. She successfully attained loan modifications to allow families to retain their homes.

### **12<sup>th</sup> Judicial District (Bronx)**

*Eric C. Woglom*, retired for six years, has volunteered with the Bronx Civil Legal Advice and Resource Office (CLARO) since 2011. He helps unrepresented litigants with consumer debt collection issues.

### **Young Lawyer**

*Tracy Lynn Sullivan* of Syracuse has a solo practice representing indigent defendants in local criminal courts in Onondaga County. She has volunteered more than 40 hours annually to the Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County since 2011, while also voluntarily assisting Legal Services of Central New York for 25 hours per week.

### **Senior Lawyer**

*Frank J. Longo* of Kenmore has volunteered with the Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project since 2012. He donated more than 60 hours of services for five cases in 2013, mostly handling non-parent petitions for custody or visitation in Family Court.

### **Law Student**

*Joshua Bennett* of Albany, a U.S. Air Force veteran and third-year Albany Law School student, helped 167 veterans receive free help with their legal matters. He committed more than 320 hours to the Pro Bono Society Veterans' Rights Project.

### **Law School Group**

The *Veterans Legal Assistance Project* at the Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University served more than 150 clients through 20 volunteer attorneys and 20 law students. They held two clinics in 2013.

### **Small Law Firm**

The Rochester law firm of *Ashcraft, Franklin, Young & Peters, LLP* has volunteered with the Volunteer Legal Services Project of Monroe County since 2004. Attorney *Sarah Ashcraft* has assisted indigent clients in abusive relationships. *Gregory Franklin* represents indigent clients needing legal assistance with adoptions.

### **Large Law Firm**

Ninety-nine percent of **Dechert LLP's** New York Office participated in pro bono work. The office legal staff collectively donated 21,464 hours of pro bono, with an average of 105 hours per lawyer. The firm's attorneys helped immigrant victims of human trafficking obtain citizenship, low-income New Yorkers with disabilities receive basic subsidies for food and shelter, and more than 24 women obtain U-Visas under the Violence against Women Act.

The 75,000 member New York State Bar Association is the largest voluntary state bar association in the nation. It was founded in 1876.