



LAW SERVICES NEWS

SUMMER 2024 NEWSLETTER OF NASSAU SUFFOLK LAW SERVICES

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Victoria A. Osk, Esq.



Nassau Suffolk Law Services (NSLS) provides a broad range of free legal services to low-income people and families in need across the Long Island community. Our devoted staff, working with all of the support we have from the community, continues to provide services for the disadvantaged. We strive to be a part of and known in the community that we serve.

We assist and aid anyone in dire need of legal services. Whether it's access to healthcare, advocating for the disabled, preventing homelessness, or any other civil legal matters.

To further our mission, we continue to engage in outreach endeavors to expand our impact across Long Island. We have partnered with local organizations and legislators to increase our presence in our community by tabling at both Nassau and Suffolk County Veteran's Stand Down events, the Suffolk County Women in the Court's first Legal Resource Fair, Huntington's Juneteenth celebration, both the Huntington and Greenport Pride Parade and many more.

We continuously seek to develop and expand services to meet community needs. As we continue to deal with the aftermath of the pandemic, there has been an increased need for housing preservation and homelessness prevention. Thankfully, **Governor Kathy Hochul** and the **New York State Legislature** have provided us with the critical resources to respond by increasing services in this area across Long Island. In Nassau County, our daily presence in the courts is a crucial and substantial resource for tenants seeking our services. Our increased involvement in housing matters in both counties proves our determination and commitment to helping others and being a stable resource.

Our growth could not be accomplished without the support of the community, the courts, the legislators, **Governor Hochul**, and all our other stakeholders. In addition to thanking our staff, we are grateful for those who work endlessly in conjunction with us and our ambitions to serve all of Long Island. We sincerely thank **District Administrative Judge of Suffolk County, Andrew A. Crecca** for his assistance in receiving an Access to Justice grant to expand our Community Legal Help Project by updating our technology and adding another Suffolk location to meet with residents- Amityville Public Library. We would also like to thank the Governor and the New York State Legislature for supporting funding for the Eviction Defense Project, Home Owner Protection Project, Disability Advocacy Project, Veterans Rights Project, supporting the IOLA fund, in addition to all other funding that is supported on a state level.

Your continued support of the work we do is greatly appreciated. Together we can truly make a difference for our neighbors in need.

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Contributors:

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**SEE HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR SPRING 2024 GALA,
SEE PAGE 10. BIG NSLS ANNOUNCEMENT ON PAGE 19.**



EDUCATION DISABILITY RIGHTS PROJECT SUCCESS STORIES

The Education Disability Rights Project (EDRP) staff attorney **Danielle Leake** assisted the family of an 8th-grade student with an auditory processing disorder, executive functioning deficits, speech delays, and certain social skills deficits. The student struggled immensely during the COVID-19 pandemic when schools were only providing remote instruction, as his disabilities did not allow him to access virtual learning. As a result, he fell behind in his work and was unable to improve when he returned to in-person learning. His school district did not offer him any help and instead wanted to place him in a more restrictive educational environment. As he would be going into high school the following year, the school district wanted to change his diploma designation from "Regents" to "Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential" ("SACC"). This would have had dire consequences for the student's future. For example, his parents wanted to ensure he would be able to attend college—a SACC would not have allowed him to do that. Upon returning to school, the student also faced bullying from other students because of the way he spoke and pronounced certain words, due to his disability. Two incidents were particularly troubling – one involved another student kicking him in the ear and another involved a different student pouring coffee into his bookbag, which destroyed all his belongings, including his school-issued chrome book. **Attorney Leake** counseled the parents on the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) process and the filing of DASA complaints; the parents hoped that these complaints would cause the school to prevent their son from being further victimized.

Attorney Leake attended multiple Committee on Special Education (CSE) meetings to advocate for an appropriate placement, but the CSE insisted on a more restrictive environment that would not offer a path to college. Based on the school's resistance, **Attorney Leake** drafted a Due Process Complaint, demanding compensatory services for the time the student was on remote instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic and also prospective tuition at a private school. Due to our efforts, the school district agreed to pay the student's private school tuition for the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years.

We are happy to report that at his new school, the student receives one-on-one academic support from his teachers. Social skills therapy has enabled him to make friends and be involved in his community. The student is anticipated to receive a Regents high school diploma upon graduation, allowing him to attend a number of different colleges. He has also been able to explore a potential music career by recording his own songs for various class projects. Congratulations, **Danielle**, on a life-changing result for your client!

Advocacy Tip!

Under the McKinney Vento Act, unhoused students must have equal access to free appropriate education. An unhoused student can attend school in the district where the student presently lives, ("district of current location") or in the district where the student lived before becoming unhoused, ("district of origin"). School districts are responsible for providing transportation timely to all students, including unhoused children and youth. Every district must have a designated local liaison for homeless children and youth to assist them.

**New Education Disability
Advocacy Project Brochures!**
Scan the QR codes below



English



Spanish



Danielle Leake

Staff Attorney
Education Disability Rights Project

More about the Education Disability Rights Project...

The Education and Disability Rights Project (EDRP) is a bi-county project that represents students with disabilities between the ages of 5-21 in Special Education matters, including attendance at Committee on Special Education (CSE) meetings, Resolution Sessions and Impartial Hearings. In addition, the EDRP assists students in issues pertaining to residency and homelessness and helps adults with developmental disabilities to secure eligibility and services through the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). Suffolk Residents can call (631) 232-2400. Nassau Residents can call (516) 292-8100.



SENIOR CITIZEN LAW PROJECT SUCCESS STORIES



Pictured: Client's daughter's emotional support dog smelling the flowers.

Staff Attorney John Ferro in the Senior Citizen Law Project was contacted by a client residing in a co-op with a no-pet policy. The client's daughter, who lives in another county, has an emotional support dog to aid with her anxiety disorder. The client's daughter was prevented from visiting her mother due to the co-op's no-pet policy. Though the client provided proof to the co-op that the dog was an emotional support dog rather than a pet, the co-op still would not allow the client's daughter to bring the dog onto the premises. **Attorney Ferro** requested a reasonable accommodation from the co-op so that her daughter could visit with her emotional support dog.

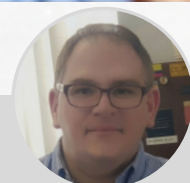
Attorney Ferro negotiated a settlement agreement with the co-op's counsel allowing the client's daughter to be accompanied by her emotional support dog when she visits her mother. **Nice work, John!**

In September 2022, the Senior Citizen Law Project was contacted by a client about a Social Security retirement problem. The client was originally from Honduras. In November 2018, the Social Security Administration (SSA) stopped the client's retirement benefits without providing any explanation. As the case developed, NSLS discovered that the benefits were stopped because of an expired Employment

Authorization Document (EAD). An EAD must be renewed by U.S. aliens residing in the United States yearly; these renewals are done through the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS). CIS often approves renewals of EADs late, even for those individuals who submit early renewal requests. These delays can leave a client without a current EAD and cause the SSA to erroneously conclude that the client is unlawfully present in the U.S., even if the client has lived here for decades. Although our client, who has Temporary Protected Status (TPS), had made a timely application to renew the EAD, the CIS did not issue a renewal before the expiration date.

Staff Attorney Dan Okrent in the Senior Citizen Law Project, represented this client and filed a Reconsideration request in October 2022. Over the course of the next year, **Attorney Okrent** visited the SSA's local office repeatedly and also wrote to the Jamaica Payment Center regarding his client's benefits all without a response. Suspecting that the benefit termination was related to an EAD problem, **Attorney Okrent** sent a copy of the client's renewed EAD to the SSA Payment Center in July 2023. The client had received the EAD from CIS in July 2023 and it was valid from 1/1/23 to 6/30/24.

Despite **Attorney Okrent's** many efforts to resolve this error, the client then received a letter from the SSA in October 2023, which stated that his benefits could not be paid at that time. Unfortunately, the letter from SSA did not state a specific reason for their denial. In October 2023, Dan immediately filed an appeal of this determination. The agency never responded to Dan's appeal. Frustrated by the SSA's continued inaction on the case, in December, 2023, Dan contacted the SSA Public Affairs Specialist asking for intervention. This bold move by Dan finally resulted in a swift and successful conclusion for his client. On December 19, 2023, the client received a letter from the SSA awarding him \$43,867 in retroactive benefits. The retroactive benefits were for the period of November 2018 through November 2023. Normally, when there is an unusually high amount of retroactive benefits, the SSA will issue these benefits in two to three installments. However, our client's benefits were paid in one lump sum. We're also happy to report that in January, 2024, the client's monthly Social Security retirement benefits were finally reinstated. **Congratulations to Dan for his skilled perseverance on this case which resulted in a great outcome for his client!**



John Ferro, Esq.

Staff Attorney
Senior Citizen Law Project



Daniel Okrent, Esq.

Staff Attorney
Senior Citizen Law Project

More about the Senior Citizen Law Project...

The Senior Citizen Law Project provides legal representation, advice and referrals to Nassau County seniors in matters involving housing, health care and social security. The Project also assists with wills, power of attorney and health care proxy forms, pooled trusts, Medicaid planning, consumer debt and utility shut-offs. With specific funding from the Nassau County Office for the Aging, the Project assists Nassau County seniors age 60 and older who have a legal issue which meets our priority guidelines. Nassau Residents can call (516) 292-8100.



CIVIL RIGHTS PROJECT SUCCESS STORIES

Our **Civil Rights Project (CRP)** was contacted by a 70-year-old man who was incarcerated for most of his life. Despite his lengthy incarceration, our client did everything possible to better himself. He was a mentor and leader during his incarceration which in turn earned him a proclamation from the New York State Assembly for his work with other prisoners.

After being released by the system with little to no skills, our client was desperate to find permanent housing. Without a job or a retirement fund, the public housing system was his only choice for housing stability. Our client contacted the Community Development Long Island (CDLI) to apply for a Section 8 voucher but was quickly denied due to his criminal background.

After being denied Section 8 housing, our client contacted NSLS's **CRP Staff Attorney Ellen Hoil**. **Attorney Hoil**, continuously contacted the CDLI through multiple emails, phone calls, and letters informing them we were advocating for our client. **Attorney Hoil** quickly succeeded in having his denial re-examined and overturned. Several studies have demonstrated that housing promotes stability, improves connections to health and behavioral health services, reduces recidivism, and ends institutional cycling. Our client has since found a place to call home with his Section 8 voucher. With the motivation to turn his life around, contacting NSLS was his ultimate lifeline. **Great work, Ellen!**

Mr. F was denied employment as a sports official by the Department of Education due to his criminal background check. Mr. F worked with **Staff Attorney Daniel Smith** and **Supervising Attorney John Batanchiev** of the Civil Rights Project to work to resolve this issue. **Attorney Smith** assisted Mr. F in requesting a RAP sheet (record of arrests and prosecutions). Upon receiving the RAP sheet, we discovered that he had two open criminal cases to the surprise of Mr. F. The open criminal cases were in California and Georgia. After doing some research, we determined that the Georgia criminal case was very recently dismissed and sealed but had not been updated in his background check nor his RAP sheet. We also discovered that the California open criminal case was a day after another arrest for the same offense. The original arrest showed he was incarcerated and released two days later. Based on this information he would have been incarcerated when the second arrest for the same offense would have occurred. **Attorney Batanchiev and Attorney Smith** successfully demonstrated to the Department of Education that the second arrest must have been a mistake and that he did not have an open criminal matter in California. With this new information, the Department of Education approved Mr. F's clearance to be a sports official. **Congratulations, Danny and John, on your diligent efforts to secure a win for Mr. F!**

Scan for CRP Brochures



English



Spanish



Ellen Hoil, Esq.

Staff Attorney
Civil Rights Project



Daniel Smith, Esq.

Staff Attorney
Disability and Health Related Unit



John Batanchiev, Esq.

Supervising Attorney
Civil Rights Project

More about the Civil Rights Project...

The Civil Rights Project provides legal assistance to people who need help with reintegrating into the community after facing criminal charges. We cover such topics and issues as employment discrimination, Section 8 issues, certificates of relief from civil disability/certificates of good conduct, denial of a professional license, denial of employment due to prior neglect/abuse findings, housing, public benefits, and consumer debt. We also assist transgender, non-conforming, and non-binary people overcome the hurdle of name changes and changes to sex designations. Nassau residents can call 516-292-8100. Suffolk residents can call 631-232-2400.



NASSAU COMMUNITY LEGAL HELP PROJECT SUCCESS STORIES

Mr. X came to the Resource Center at District Court, Nassau County, where the Community Legal Help Project (CLHP) sets up shop every Thursday. Mr. X is a tenant who did his own Order to Show Cause (OSC) which had been denied. Even though Mr. X had attached a copy of the paid-in-full check, the judge wanted him to provide proof that he paid the arrears according to the stipulation he had signed months earlier. Mr. X did not pay according to the Stipulation of Settlement, however, before he was to be evicted, he did bring his account up to date.

The **CHLP Staff Attorney and Coordinator, Roberta Scoll**, helped Mr. X prepare a new OSC, this time attaching, not just a copy of the canceled check, but in the interim he had received the latest rent ledger showing he only owed the current month's rent, which was also attached to the new OSC.

The next week, he saw **Attorney Scoll** in Court, and gave her a big hug and thanks as his case was dismissed. **Congratulations, Roberta!**

Attorney (s) will be available for private sessions relating to general court questions, debt, landlord/tenant matters, and litigation.

District Court Resource Center	Every Thursday 10AM-1PM 99 Main Street, Lower Level Hempstead, New York 11550
Long Beach Library	Every 1st Wednesday of the month 1PM-3PM 111 W. Park Avenue Long Beach, New York 11561
Farmingdale Library	Every 2nd Wednesday of the month 1PM-3PM 116 Merrits Road Farmingdale, NY 11735
Hicksville Library	Every 3rd Wednesday of the month 1PM-2:30PM 169 Jerusalem Ave. Hicksville, NY 11801
Franklin Square Library	Every 4th Wednesday of the month 1PM-2:30PM 19 Lincoln Rd. Franklin Square, NY 11010

Advocacy Tip!

What is a Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)? An individual appointed by the court to represent an infant or an adult who is mentally or physically unable to speak for themselves. The GAL can also stand in place of a parent who is unable to appear in court.

DO YOU NEED HELP WITH A LEGAL PROBLEM?

The **Community Legal Help Project** offers free legal information to Nassau and Suffolk residents.



Scan to Download
CLHP Flyers in
English and Spanish



Roberta Scoll

Staff Attorney and Coordinator
Nassau Community Legal Help Project

More about Community Legal Help Project...

The Community Legal Help Project (CLHP) is a partnership of legal services providers created by the NYS Permanent Commission on Access to Justice and the Suffolk County Access to Justice Committee. The CLHP's network of non-profit partners and pro bono volunteers currently provides legal information and referrals, and limited-scope representation through a phone line and brief in-person consultations at public libraries. Nassau residents can contact (516) 281-7422 and Suffolk residents can contact (631) 822-3272.

WE HEAR FROM OUR COMMUNITY YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

"I wanted to thank you for your life-changing work on behalf of my 11 year old son with disabilities. Your kindness and dedication helping children with disabilities is commendable. Your support and professionalism changed the trajectory for my son in his most challenging first year of middle school. Without your help, he would have been forced to leave public school and he would never have been able to get the help he desperately needs."

- **Former client of Tracey Discepolo, Esq.**
(Education and Disability Rights Project)

"There's no sufficient way to express or show my profound gratitude for all that you have done for me. Thank you so very much for your compassionate, understanding and non-judgmental humanity in helping me to obtain section 8 housing. Unquestionably, I would not have been able to put an end to decades of homelessness, living in shelters and various other dreadful forms of communal living arrangements without you and the supporting staff of Nassau/Suffolk Law Service. So again, I conclude with a sincerely heartfelt "thank you."

- **Former client of Ellen Hoil, Esq.**
(Civil Rights Project)

"Mr. Zadrán really helped me a lot. Not only did he save me money, he saved me my dignity for me and my family."

- **Former client of Jameel Zadrán, Esq.**
(Civil Unit)

"Thank you so much. I really appreciate it. It's been weighing so heavy on my mind that I was going to go outside and my car would be gone, and it's the only thing I have. I am deeply grateful for all your help and everything that you've done. God bless you."

- **Former client of Maria DeGennaro, Esq.**
(Consumer Debt Project)

"Christopher Santoro helped me keep my home of 56 years from foreclosure. I have never thought that I would be able to get the help I received from Mr. Santoro. Thank your committee for employing such a wonderful, caring person."

- **Former client of Christopher Santoro, Esq.**
(Foreclosure Prevention Unit)

"Thank you so much for helping me. You are very professional in your work. Thank you from the bottom of my heart, God bless you always."

- **Former client of Helen Wrobel, Esq.**
(Consumer Debt Project)

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<https://tinyurl.com/NSLSLegalLessons>



DONATE TODAY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF YOUR NEIGHBORS IN NEED

Please consider contributing to Nassau Suffolk Law Services on National Non-Profit Day, **August 17th, 2024**. By supporting our work, you will assist us in providing free civil legal services. We are here to provide Long Islanders with crucial support whether involving relief through access to healthcare, preventing homelessness, securing disability rights, and many other essential matters.

All donations of \$200 or more will be featured on our social media outlets displaying you/your firm/your business's logo and your personalized message of support of the work we do. Our team can create the ad for you or your Marketing team can create the ad. Your donation will assist us in assisting Long Islanders in need and August 17, 2024, National Non-Profit Day is the perfect day to show your support for Equal Justice Under Law. Also, we hope you will join our dedicated recurring monthly donors and continue to be a source of strength throughout the year.

When you give, you are helping our Long Island neighbors in need get through their civil legal battles. We, the beautiful community we live in, and our clients are extremely grateful for your support of the work we do. Our National Non-Profit Day Campaign will run through September 30th.

Many thanks to Nassau Suffolk Law Services' recurring monthly donors:

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Your support means the world to us.

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Help Those In Need**

www.nslawservices.org/donate



PRO BONO SUCCESS STORIES



Jeanne Ellen Forster, Esq.

Disabled Senior Can Be At Ease Now That Her Affairs Are in Order

A 61-year-old disabled woman contacted the **Volunteer Lawyer's Project (VLP)** to request assistance in creating a will, power of attorney (POA), and health care proxy. Although the client's sole income consisted of Supplement Security Income, she did have some items of value that she wanted to ensure were left to her three adult children and grandchildren in a will. In addition, she wanted to have her affairs in order by having a healthcare proxy and power of attorney drafted in the event she was unable to make financial and healthcare decisions on her own. **VLP Staff Attorney and Coordinator Reisa Brafman** recognized that this client was homebound due to her disability and would need a volunteer attorney to meet with the client at her home to sign the will, health care proxy and POA. **Attorney Brafman** successfully recruited new **VLP pro bono attorney Jeanne Ellen Forster** to assist this client with her legal needs in her home. The client shared that "she was very happy with the attorney. The attorney was accommodating by coming to my home. Everything was great and the service was good." Many thanks to **Jeanne Ellen Forster, Esq.** for offering her legal expertise and services free of charge and for going to the client's home in light of the circumstances. Great job to **VLP staff Paralegal Eva Elibert, Paralegal Stephanie Gerland, and Attorney Reisa Brafman** for their dedication and support in coordinating an attorney for this client.



Stuart Gelberg, Esq.

Long Time Volunteers Assist Client With Life-Changing Bankruptcy

The client was a 76-year-old woman whose sole income was approximately \$1,100 per month from Social Security Retirement. She was grieving the recent loss of her son, who died in her arms and passed away several months ago. At the height of her grief, the client discovered that her son had accrued a substantial amount of debt in her name. She believed that her son was paying all the bills, however, he was using her credit card to pay for his expenses in addition to the bills. The client felt stressed and overwhelmed by this situation as she was getting sued and had a collection matter pending in court. She also received numerous calls and letters from creditors and dreaded picking up the mail. The amount of debt that her son incurred was considerable. The total debt was approximately \$116,712 with over \$33,451 in credit card debt. The other debt included fees for EZ pass tolls and parking tickets, a loan, and money owed related to automobiles. In addition, the client had an automobile in her name that was repossessed. In light of this, the client said that she was unable to get through the day without crying from all the distress.

The client shared that she reached out to several resources and did not hear back from anyone. The client eventually called the **Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP)** for guidance concerning whether filing Chapter 7 Bankruptcy would be the best option for her. VLP referred the client to a pro bono attorney for a bankruptcy clinic appointment. **The clinic attorney and long-time volunteer, Stuart Gelberg**, advised the client that she was eligible to file for bankruptcy and she should proceed with filing. In light of the clinic attorney's recommendation, VLP referred the client to **volunteer attorney, Scott Schneider**, to represent her in a Chapter 7 Bankruptcy proceeding from initial consultation through discharge. **Attorney Schneider** successfully obtained the Chapter 7 Bankruptcy discharge for the client and discharged all of her debts. The client said that she was "finally able to breathe again" and while sharing sentiments about Attorney Schneider, "I never met a human being like him. He was amazing, kind, gentle, and considerate. He took care of everything."

Both **Stuart and Scott** are longtime volunteers with our program and contribute to the success and service of our community. We are grateful for the work of **VLP Paralegal Eva Elibert, VLP Paralegal Stephanie Gerland, and VLP Pro Bono Coordinator and Staff Attorney Reisa Brafman** on this case.



Scott Schneider, Esq.

Suffolk County Pro Bono Attorneys of the Month



Jeannie M. Henry, Esq.
June 2024

The Suffolk County Pro Bono Project and the Suffolk County Bar Association Pro Bono Foundation proudly recognize **Jeannie M. Henry, Esq.** and **Stuart P. Gelberg, Esq.** for their contributions to the Pro Bono Project and its clients. Scan the QR code to read their profiles.



Stuart P. Gelberg, Esq.
July 2024

VOLUNTEER LAWYERS

We need you

Nassau County

Volunteer Lawyers Project

The Volunteer Lawyers Project is an innovative pro bono program to expand the availability of legal services to Nassau County residents in need. The Project provides an opportunity for attorneys to represent clients and volunteer their time and expertise by providing free legal services. The Volunteer Lawyers Project needs pro bono assistance in the areas of Chapter 7 Bankruptcy, Divorce, Article 17A Guardianships, Health Care Proxies, Name Changes, Power of Attorney, and Wills.

Contact: Reisa Brafman, Esq., 516-292-8100 ext. 3380, rbrafman@nsls.legal

Bankruptcy Clinics through the Volunteer Lawyers Project

Currently, clinic appointments are one-on-one with attorneys consulting with clients in person, by phone, or virtually. Volunteer attorneys provide guidance to those considering bankruptcy, screening for referral to pro bono attorneys for filing of Chapter 7 petitions. This is a limited engagement, though participating attorneys may also be referred cases.

Contact: Reisa Brafman, Esq., 516-292-8100 ext. 3380, rbrafman@nsls.legal

Community Legal Help Project

The Community Legal Help Project recently expanded into Nassau County. We are looking for attorneys to provide pro bono half-hour consultations with Nassau County Residents. The areas of law most in need are immigration, family, matrimonial, elder, and bankruptcy.

Contact: Roberta Scoll, Esq., 516-292-8100 ext. 3115, rscoll@nsls.legal

Suffolk County

Pro Bono Project

The Pro Bono Project is an innovative pro bono program to expand the availability of legal services to Suffolk County residents in need. The Project provides an opportunity for attorneys to represent clients and volunteer their time and expertise by providing free legal services. The Pro Bono Project needs pro bono assistance in the areas of Chapter 7 Bankruptcy, Divorce, Article 17A Guardianships, Health Care Proxies, Name Changes, Power of Attorneys, and Wills.

Contact: Sharon Campo, Esq., 631-232-2400 ext. 3368, scampo@nsls.legal

Community Legal Help Project

The Community Legal Help Project's (CLHP) network of non-profit partners and pro bono volunteers currently provides legal information and referrals, and limited-scope representation through a phone line and brief in-person consultations at public libraries. Attorneys with a background in immigration, family, elder and/or matrimonial law are needed to assist the community. Volunteer attorneys can dedicate their time monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly, or at their leisure.

Contact: Rashika Hettiarachchi, Esq., 631-232-2400 ext. 3391, rhettiarachchi@nsls.legal

**To learn more, visit
nslawservices.org/volunteer**



The Suffolk County Pro Bono Project is now on Paladin! [Please take a look at our current volunteer attorney opportunities and connect with us!](#)



NSLS is an Attorney Emeritus Program Host Organization. If you are a retired attorney, [register and join us today!](#)



2024 Commitment to Justice Reception

Compassion and Justice for All

On May 22nd, 2024, this year's Spring Commitment to Justice Reception was held at Cold Spring Country Club in Huntington. This year's theme was Compassion and Justice For All. All had a great time as we celebrated the work of NSLS and toasted this year's amazing honorees:

Gina Pirozzi of **G. Pirozzi Consulting** and longtime NSLS Advisory Council Member who was this year's recipient of the Barbara J. Mehrman Commitment to Justice Award and **Theresa Regnante**, President and CEO of **United Way of Long Island**, who was this year's recipient of the Community Partner in Justice Award

We are committed to helping Long Island's most vulnerable populations and commend our staff of attorneys, paralegals, social workers, and support staff who work tirelessly to assist those in need.

We are extremely grateful to our supporters who continue to be by NSLS' side. We are Long Islanders assisting Long Islanders to ensure our communities are provided equal justice under the law.

We gratefully acknowledge the special support from Bond, Schoeneck, & King PLLC, USI Insurance Services, PSEG LI, Salenger, Sack, Kimmel and Bavaro LLP, Satty, Levine & Ciacco, CPAS, P.C., as well as all of our generous sponsors and donors. All funds raised assist us in providing the critical legal programs that NSLS provides free of charge to low-income and disabled individuals in the Long Island community. The fundraiser is organized by dedicated volunteers, the NSLS Advisory Council, and Cathy Lucidi, NSLS Director of Community Relations, who led the NSLS staff of volunteers.



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NSLS ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER
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COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE HONOREE



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UNITED WAY OF LONG ISLAND
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IN JUSTICE HONOREE



THANK YOU TO NSLS COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE GUEST SPEAKER:



DAYANA TERRY & SONS
NSLS CLIENT OF THE CIVIL UNIT
AND GALA GUEST SPEAKER
SEE PAGE FOR EXCERPT OF HER SPEECH

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Touro University Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center

GENERAL DONATIONS:

Josephine & Bob Beck

Ellen Birch

Candy Bonder

Isabel Buse

John Castellano, Esq.

Halpern Legal Clinic

Karen Corley

Douglas J. Good, Esq.

William Hill

Laurie Hindley

James K Hogan, PLLC

Jennifer Ian

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Joseph Mocniak

Daniel Reilly

Hon. Ira Warshawsky

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Robin Abramowitz, Esq.

Paola Arango, Esq.

Kierstin Bartolotta, Esq.

Ellen Birch

Brandow Law

Law Offices of John Campo

Silvia Celluci-Sepe

Virginia Conroy, Esq.

Donna DeVita

Twisted Cow Distillery

Cheryl Fratello, Esq.

Wendy Hodor, Esq.

iHeartMedia

Jeffrey M. Kimmel, Esq.

A. Thomas Levin, Esq.

Long Island Ducks

Carmine Lucidi

Cathy Lucidi

Lucidi Technical Solutions, LLP

Diane McClernon, Esq.

Carolyn McQuade, Esq.

Cory Morris, Esq.

Mark Peterson, Esq.

Gina Pirozzi

Retro Fitness Ronkonkoma

Shannon Quinn

Christina Rosas, Esq.

Courtney Spellman, Esq.

Leslie Tayne, Esq.

D.J. and Henry Thode

Twisted Cow Distillery

Carrie Vasiluth, Esq.

Erika Verill, Esq.

Susan West

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Scan QR Code to
Watch our Gala
Video



Nassau Suffolk Law Services Summer 2024 Newsletter



2024 Commitment to Justice Reception

Speech from NSLS Client Speaker Dayana Terry

My name is Dayana Terry, and I'd like to thank everyone for having me here today. I am honored that you chose me as your client speaker. This is my first time speaking in front of a large crowd, but I didn't hesitate to say yes to the opportunity...I hope that my story will inspire someone in this room today. Maybe it will inspire you to push through a difficult time. Maybe it will inspire you to help someone who is struggling. Maybe it will inspire you to ask for help if you need it. Although I was born in Southampton, I was raised in the Bronx. New York City can be a rough place to grow up, but as they say, if you can make it there, you can make it anywhere. I'm grateful I grew up in the Bronx because it taught me survival skills that I've needed in my life to this day. Survival isn't a word that I thought would be central to my story, but through my experiences, I've relied on those survival skills that I learned in my early years.

Growing up I didn't attend school much. I didn't like it, and I found myself in unnecessary trouble. My mother tried to keep me in school, but I didn't go. I was placed in multiple juvenile detention centers starting at age 12. That was definitely a transition for me because it was my first time being away from my family. It was my first experience of being unsettled and not feeling at home---a theme that would continue in my life.

[B]etween the ages of 16 - 18 years old I was in and out of schools and retail jobs trying to obtain my GED, working and babysitting, which had me exhausted. At the age of 19, I got pregnant with my oldest son Zamarion who truly inspired me and gave me the drive, passion, and ambition to be the best mom that I can be. Because I now had to raise my son, I was unable to complete school, but it didn't stop me from working and providing. Zamarion was always very advanced for his age and always had a question AND an answer for you. At 23, I had my son Zyaire, and although it was a blessing to give Zamarion a little brother, it [was] overwhelming to try and balance it all. I moved back to Southampton and stayed with [my] family for about six months. I then rented out my cousin's house for almost a year, but as you all know, family and business don't work well sometimes. My boys and I went to a shelter for 4 months. During our time in the shelter, I enrolled the boys in school and maintained a job. I would search for apartments every day either by calling or going [from] place to place. I was finally able to find an apartment. The boys and I were so excited, but unfortunately, after living there for 6 months, the landlord raised the rent above what DSS would allow for my family household. The next few years continued in this pattern of moving in with family, finding a place on my own that became too expensive to live in, spending time in the shelter, and jobs upon jobs. During this time, I left with my boys to go live in Virginia with \$40 to my name. In both New York and Virginia, I worked retail jobs, warehouse jobs, cleaning jobs, and restaurant jobs---I've even sold food on the weekends. I worked as hard as I [] could, striving to provide for my family and be the best single parent I could be. However, each time I felt myself getting ahead, [getting] my family settled, [making] my boys smile at our good luck, it [] seemed like something would happen, and it was back to square one.

So back to Southampton, [we] went, at first living with family, and then [returning] to the shelter with my boys. We were in 3 different shelters in one year. About 4 months into being in the shelter I started working at Little Flower Children Family Services. Finally, I was able to start a career journey. I was so excited! I felt like I had experience for this job, not in the sense of actually working in the field, but LIFE EXPERIENCE. I can relate to the Residents because I experienced what they were going through. I think everything happens for a reason, and I believe I had to experience detention centers at an early age to be able to give back to the youth.

You may not know this, but living in a shelter is not free. Toward the end of the year in the shelter, I was told that I had to start paying \$2700 a month for rent. I could not believe it! We left. After a couple of months with family, I received a call about an apartment I had applied for. I think it was one of the most exciting moments for me and my boys. After everything we have been through, GOD blessed us with a brand-new apartment. We started off with an air mattress and a couch that was given to us. We didn't care, we were just happy to have our own place. Our first meal was sitting crisscross apple sauce on the floor. It was the best meal and feeling ever, after all we had gone through.

Things were looking up! But then, COVID hit. I started falling behind on rent. I applied for ERAP, which is the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. ERAP helped with the rental arrears. Then my mother, son, and I were in a car accident which put me out of work for 4 months. I was behind financially and received an eviction notice. I didn't know what to do because ERAP had already paid. In my paperwork, I came across Nassau Suffolk Law Services, and that's when I met my attorney, Courtney Spellman. Courtney assisted me in every way to help me with the proper resources. We worked with Family Service League, who helped me reapply for ERAP. For months Courtney and I were back and forth with ERAP, filing appeals and trying to get a positive response. Through this time, there were many dates in court, and NSLS would defend me, even when the landlord's attorney would argue that the ERAP stay should be lifted. I credit NSLS with [preventing] me from being evicted during this time. Courtney then suggested applying for a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher, which I did. In between waiting for ERAP and Section 8, I got a second job in the school as a teacher's aide, and I also took the exam to become a teacher's assistant, which I passed. I have one more training course to complete before receiving my certificate. After months of still waiting for ERAP I decided to go to DSS because the rent was getting so backed up. DSS assisted me [---] a major relief for my family and me. Courtney and I were so excited because this looked like it was the end of a long journey. NSLS was with me during every step of the eviction proceeding until the rental arrears were paid, and the eviction was finally withdrawn.

About 4 months after applying for Section 8 they called me in to retrieve my housing choice voucher. I was so overwhelmed with joy, I cried real tears in that office, because I practically struggled all my life and my children's life. To be able to have stability was such a gift. It is a blessing I don't take for granted. Thank you, Nassau Suffolk Law Services, for pointing me towards section 8, because it is the first time I've felt confident that we are not one unfortunate incident away from going back to the shelter.

We have since upgraded to a 3-bedroom apartment, and everyone now has their own space. I even have my own bathroom, thank God, because boys will always be boys. We're in the same place, and it's such a blessing we don't have to start over again. Even though I was a little rebel when I was young, I am raising children who are respectful, compassionate, protective, helpful, humble, strong, grateful, and thankful.



Dayana Terry and her sons during her speech.

I am proud of the men they are becoming. I am grateful for all my struggles, obstacles, and adversity. It takes a lot of strength, discipline, and resilience to find success and stability. I am no longer just surviving, I am thriving.

I want to thank everyone here in this room for your support, especially Nassau Suffolk Law Services. I pray my story inspires people to never give up no matter how hard life may get. There's always light at the end of the tunnel. Always keep your faith in GOD and yourself. Self-love is the best love. Thank you everyone.



LAW SERVICES **PROFILE IN COMMITMENT**

NSLS employees show their commitment to Law Services by “Doing What’s Legally Possible to Create a Just World” every day but, for many, it doesn’t stop there. Many staff members continue to show their commitment to helping others in their personal lives as well. We hope you enjoy this feature in our newsletter as much as we enjoy sharing it.



Larry Tuthill, Esq.

Larry Tuthill, Esq., began his career at Nassau Suffolk Law Services in 1990 as an attorney in the Civil Unit. His primary responsibility was representing low-income and disabled tenants in District Court when the tenants were at risk of eviction or had other housing legal issues. Through his work in the Civil Unit, he prevented numerous clients and their families from becoming homeless.

A few years later Larry transferred into the HIV/AIDS Project, a project that represents those who have an HIV+ diagnosis with various legal issues. During his tenure with the HIV/AIDS Project, he assisted clients in Central Islip and Riverhead Family Court and further represented clients in divorce cases in Riverhead Supreme Court. At that time, he discovered he especially enjoyed helping this vulnerable population with their various child support orders, orders of protection, and visitation matters. He did most of the family court legal work and became an expert in this field. Soon after, Nassau Suffolk Law Services received funding to create a Domestic Violence Project. Larry quickly applied for the attorney position, and of course, due to his vast amount of experience, he was given the position.

In 2022, Larry was promoted to Supervising Attorney of the Domestic Violence Project. He currently supervises two attorneys and one paralegal. The unit represents over 250 clients per year in obtaining Orders of Protection, as well as Custody and Support Orders.

Larry is also very involved with community projects and currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Southold/Peconic Civic Association. He has also previously served on the Community Action Southold Town as the Board President, the Economic Opportunity Council Board, and the North Fork Community Theatre Board as the Vice President.

Larry was previously honored as a champion for children and families living in Suffolk by the Suffolk County Advisory Board on Child Protection and the Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy’s Task Force to Prevent Family Violence. In November 2023, Larry was honored with the Leadership in Law Award (Associate Category) by Long Island Business News. Thank you for all your hard work and dedication, Larry!

LAW SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY



**Suffolk County Bar Association
Installation Dinner on June 6th,
2024**

Nassau Suffolk Law Services, **Kiersten Bartolotta, Esq.** (Pro Bono Coordinator), **Sharon Campo, Esq.** (Supervising Attorney for Volunteers and Community Projects), and **Victoria Osk, Esq.** (Executive Director)

**Easter Egg Hunt Sponsored
by NY State Senator Monica
Martinez on
March 30th, 2024**

NSLS Staff **Maria Sanchez** (CLHP), **Nancy Rangel** (Legal Secretary) joined by **State Senator Monica Martinez** at the event.



On January 22nd, 2024, Nassau Suffolk Law Services participated in the statewide Disability Advocacy Program (DAP) lobby day in Albany, NY.

Disability Advocacy Project (DAP) Supervising Attorney **Sarah Kupferberg** joined DAP advocates from around the state to discuss the program and advocate for its continued funding. Sarah met with several NY State Lawmakers from Long Island as well as senior members including **Senator Alexis Weik** (District 8); **Senator Jack Martins** (District 7); **Senator Dean Murray** (District 3); and **Assemblywoman Taylor Darling** (District 18).



**Comsewogue Resource
Fair on May 4th, 2024**

Nassau Suffolk Law Services staff members **Amanda Gordon, Esq.** (Civil Unit) and **Kimberly Bolk, Esq.** (ICAN Unit) representing NSLS at the Comsewogue Resource Fair.

**Family Festival at the
Brentwood High School
on March 1st, 2024**

Staff Attorney **Heather Davis** (Civil Unit) and **Maria Sanchez** (Community Legal Help Project Paralegal) represented NSLS at the Family Festival.



**Lecture on Traverse Hearings at the Judges Institute in
Westchester on January 10th, 2024**

NSLS Staff Attorney and Coordinator, **Roberta Scoll, Esq.** (far right), with **Jaime Ezratty, Esq.**, **Hon. William A. Hohausser**, **Hon. Richard J. Montelione**, **Evelyn Kalenscher, Esq.** (Volunteer Attorney), discussing Traverse Hearings at the Judges Institute



**Long Island Pride Celebration in Huntington on
June 9th, 2024**

Nassau Suffolk Law Services, **Erika Verrill, Esq.** (Supervising Attorney), **Ellen Hoil, Esq.** (Civil Rights Project) and **Amanda Gordon, Esq.** (Civil Unit)



**Huntington Unity Fair on
April 6th, 2024**

Sarah Schlenker (NSLS Social Worker), State Senator **Mario Mattera**, and **Donna Ciampa, Esq.** (Staff Attorney-Education Debt Consumer Assistance Project)

**Huntington Juneteenth
Festival on June 22nd,
2024**

NSLS Staff Members **Bob Scanlon** (Civil Rights Project), **Maria Sanchez** (CLHP), and **Sarah Schlenker** (Social Worker) joined by **Ken-Patrick Johnson**, Chair of the Town of Huntington African-American Task Force and **Kevin Thorbourne**, Town of Huntington Director of Human Services and Minority Affairs.



LAW SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY



**Central Islip Civic Council Outreach
on May 17th, 2024**

Staff Attorney **Donna Ciampa, Esq.** (Education Debt Consumer Advocacy Project), **Christopher Santoro, Esq.** (Foreclosure Prevention Unit), and **Ankit Mehta, Esq.** (Foreclosure Prevention Unit) joined **Madeline Mullane, Esq.** (Director of Pro Bono at the Nassau Bar Foundation), **Joan Minniti** (Central Islip Civic Council) and **Lisa Milas, Esq.** (Empire Justice Center) at the clinic to give free legal advice about Foreclosure!



**Parkinson's Wellness Fair
on April 16th, 2024**

Pictured L to R: NSLS Staff Attorney and Coordinator, **Roberta Scoll, Esq.** (CLHP), **Dan Okrent, Esq.** (Senior Citizen Law Project) and **Donna Ciampa, Esq.** (Education Debt Consumer Advocacy Project)

**Stony Brook University
Women's History Event on
March 21st, 2024**

Sharon Campo, Esq. (Supervising Attorney) and **Hannah Fitzpatrick** (Paralegal) discussed their journey working for a non-profit law-firm with Stony Brook first year students.



Pictured: **Katie McCoy** (Stony Brook Undergraduate College Advisor), **Sharon Campo, Esq.** (Supervising Attorney), **Hannah Fitzpatrick** (Paralegal), **Lori Glubiak** (Stony Brook Assistant Director of Academic Learning Communities)



**North Fork Pride festival
in Greenport Village on
June 22nd, 2024**

NSLS **Ellen Hoil, Esq.** (Civil Rights Project), **Patricia Dinis** (Compliance Specialist), **Dakota King** (Family Law Unit) and volunteer **Jordan Manning**, celebrate pride month at the pride festival.



Pictured L to R: NSLS **Maria Sanchez** (CLHP), **Victoria Osk, Esq.** (Executive Director), **Rezvanul Islam, Esq.** (Deputy Executive Director), **Donna Famiglietti** (Executive Assistant), **Roberta Scoll, Esq.** (CLHP) and **Rudy Carmenaty** from Nassau County DSS

**7th annual "Access to Justice" Pro Bono Dinner on
March 4th, 2024**

Through collaboration with the Nassau County Bar Association and their Access to Justice Committee, the Safe Center LI, and Nassau Suffolk Law Services, the 7th annual "Access to Justice" Pro Bono Dinner was a success!



Kiersten Bartolotta, Esq.
(Pro Bono Coordinator)

NSLS **Sharon Campo, Esq.** (Supervising Attorney for Volunteers and Community Projects) and **Kiersten Bartolotta, Esq.** (Pro Bono Coordinator) along with client speaker, **Helen Copper-Stewart, Pro Bono** distinguished honorees, judges and community partners

**The Suffolk Pro Bono Project
Attorney Recognition Luncheon on May 13th, 2024**

NSLS pro bono attorneys were recognized for their amazing pro bono work. We are grateful for all attorneys who generously offer their legal services or take on pro bono cases.

**Nassau County Office for the
Aging 48th Annual Older
Americans Conference &
Luncheon on May 17th, 2024**

Senior Citizen Law Project Staff Attorney, **John Ferro, Esq.**, Senior Citizen Law Project Staff Attorney, **Dan Okrent, Esq.** and Supervising Attorney, **Lynn Iacona, Esq.** gave a legal training on "Planning for Your Future: Navigating Legal Documents."



**Lawyers Assistance Program
Walk-a-thon on April 6th, 2024**

Nassau Suffolk Law Services staff members were delighted to participate in the Lawyer Assistance Program Walkathon on April 6th, where we raised over \$500 for a great cause!

"Doing What's Legally Possible to Create a Just World Since 1966."

LAW SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS

HAPPY MILESTONE EMPLOYMENT ANNIVERSARY

Milestones celebrated in January - June 2024. Law Services would like to congratulate and thank the following staff for their years of dedicated service:



Cathy Lucidi
Director of Community Relations



Carrie Vasiluth, Esq.
Staff Attorney



Darlene Rosch, Esq.
Staff Attorney



Erika Verrill, Esq.
Supervising Attorney



Wanda Taveras
Secretary



— HAPPY — Retirement

Hannah Abrams, Esq.

Hannah retired in June 2024 after working with Nassau Suffolk Law Services for 18 years. The staff and clients of Nassau Suffolk Law Services appreciate Hannah's dedication to her work and wish her a Happy Retirement.



We're hiring! Do you want to work for a justice-centered organization? Check out our current openings at nslawservices.org/employment-opportunities.



NSLS WELCOMES

NEW EMPLOYEES IN 2024 (JANUARY - JUNE)

Kiersten Bartolotta Pro Bono Coordinator;
Pro Bono Project (Islandia)

Maria Brito Receptionist/Secretary;
Administration (Islandia)

Vinicio Cabrera Law Graduate; Civil Unit
(Hempstead)

Benjamin Goldberg Staff Attorney; *Disability & Health Related Units (Hempstead)*

Jenny Park Staff Attorney; *Adult Care Facility Project (Islandia)*

Dylan Reid Staff Attorney; *Civil Unit (Hempstead)*

Irene Satchwell Staff Attorney; *Public Benefits Unit (Hempstead)*

STAFF NEWS

JANUARY TO JUNE 2024

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to the following employees on their recent promotions:

Erika Verrill, Esq.
Supervising Attorney
Islandia

Courtney Spellman, Esq.
Supervising Attorney
Riverhead Civil Unit

Michelle Moreno
Secretary
Community Legal Help Project



Pictured: Paola Arango, Esq. and unit staff at her goodbye luncheon. Thank you for your more than 8 years of dedicated service.

We would like to wish the following former employees good luck with their future endeavors:

Paola Arango, Esq.
Danny Hernandez, Esq.
Jacob Buckheit

Best of Luck

LAW SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL NEWS

Congratulations

New Advisory Council Officers Elected

On June 26th, 2024, at the annual Advisory Council Thank You Luncheon, new officers were voted in Congratulations to:



Chair: Shannon Quinn

Shannon is a marketing manager at **Hansen & Rosasco, LLP** in Hauppauge, NY.



Vice Chair: Lidia Szczepanowski, Esq.

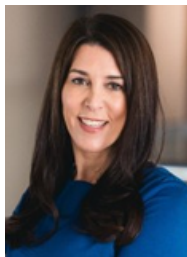
Lidia is the founder and owner of **Lidia Szczepanowski, Esq. – Attorney at Law** (AskLidiaTheLawyer.com) in Commack, NY, and is a senior counsel attorney at **Brown, Altman & DiLeo LLP** in Melville, NY.



Secretary: Cynthia Doerler, MPA

Cynthia is the Executive Director of the **Suffolk County Bar Association** and the **Suffolk Academy of Law**.

Congratulations to Nassau Suffolk Law Services Advisory Council Member, **Leslie Tayne, Esq.**, of Tayne Law Group who was also honored as The Herald's Top Lawyer of Year in the Debt Resolution Category.



Congratulations to Nassau Suffolk Law Services Advisory Council Member, **Bradley Siegel, Esq.** of the Siegel Law Firm for being listed as a New York Metro area Superlawyer for 6 years in a row.



Congratulations and Thank You to Advisory Council Member Jeffrey Kimmel

Nassau Suffolk Law Services Advisory Council Member **Jeffrey Kimmel, Esq.**, Managing partner and CEO of Salenger, Sack, Kimmel and Bavaro, LLP was recently honored at the Top Business Leaders of Nassau County Networking Awards held on June 20, 2024.



Jeffrey Kimmel and his wife Connie Kimmel, NSLS Sharon Campo, Esq. (Supervising Attorney) and Kiersten Bartolotta (Pro Bono Coordinator)



Jeffrey Kimmel was also honored as The Herald's Top Lawyer of the Year in the Medical Malpractice Category. Congratulations on all your amazing accomplishments.

Special Thanks to The Herald and Richner Communications

Law Services would also like to thank Jeffery Kimmel for introducing Nassau Suffolk Law Services to **Stuart Richner** of **The Herald** and **Richner Communications**. On June 24, 2024 Stuart Richner presented **Cathy Lucidi**, Director of Community Relations and **Rezwanul Islam**, Deputy Director of Law Services with a \$2,500 check in support of the work we do. Special thanks to The Herald and Richner Communications for this very generous donation and for the great tour of their printing facility.



Photo taken by: Rachel Leoutsakos
Marketing Specialist
Salenger Sack, Kimmel & Bavaro, LLP

Pictured from left to right: Rezwanul Islam, Stuart Richner, Jeffrey Kimmel, Esq., Cathy Lucidi, Amy Amato, Executive Director of Corporate Relations & Events, The Herald and Lori Pedone, Corporate Sales & Events Director, The Herald

"Doing What's Legally Possible to Create a Just World Since 1966."

Formerly Known as Nassau Suffolk Law Services



LEGAL SERVICES
OF LONG ISLAND

Where Dignity
Meets Justice

Name Change
Coming Soon...

Nassau Suffolk Law Services
1757 Veterans Memorial Hwy #50,
Islandia, New York 11749

Formerly Known as Nassau Suffolk Law Services



OPEN HOUSE

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2024 | 4 PM - 6:30

1757 Veterans Highway, Suite 50 Islandia, NY 11749

Join us as we celebrate our new name and come get a tour of our newly renovated Islandia Office. Light Fall refreshments and beverages will be served.

RSVP to Cathy Lucidi at
clucidi@nsls.legal by
October 30th, 2024.

