



Law Services News

DSS Leaves the Disabled Out in the Cold

Last month we reported on several scenarios where homeless clients and families were improperly denied shelter. This is a prevalent problem involving both Nassau and Suffolk's Department of Social Services leaving individuals and families figuratively and literally out in the cold. This problem is noticeably acute as it applies to applicants with mental illnesses with varying degrees of disability. Such disabilities tend not to be outwardly evident and leave those applicants unable to articulate their limitations,



making an already burdensome application process almost

impossible to navigate.

Under the law, DSS is required to assess an individual's need for treatment of physical and mental health impairments at the time of application. Additionally, DSS is required to conduct such an assessment prior to denying an application for emergency housing. However, these legal obligations are often ignored. As such, applicants who

(Continued on page 2)

Senior Citizens Project Works to Protect Elderly in Nassau County

Nassau County seniors are fortunate to have a free legal team available to them when they are faced with adversity. NSLS's Senior Citizen Project serves Nassau County seniors over 60 years of age thanks to designated funding from the Nassau County Office for the Aging.

In a recent case, a senior sought our assistance because her son brought a contempt action in court for her failure to make rental payments. The parents had made an agreement with their son which gave them a life estate in a portion of the two family home. The parents were required to make monthly payments to contribute toward the upkeep of the home, but after the father died, the mother could not afford the payments to her son. The woman sought our assistance to defend the contempt proceeding and **Daniel Okrent**, staff attorney, represented her in court. The judge ruled that the mother was not in contempt and that the son had "used this contempt proceeding as an end run around a landlord-tenant proceed-

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"Doing What's Legally Possible to Create A Just World"

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

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are unaware of, are unable to communicate, or refuse to recognize their disability, slip through the cracks. Instead of receiving reasonable accommodations during the process to facilitate their application in light of their disabilities, these applicants tend to be viewed as difficult and uncooperative. Many are turned away or denied emergency services unless they are fortunate enough to get NSLS involved. The following cases are illustrative of this problem.

Ms. B, who suffers from schizophrenia, paranoia, and bipolar disorder, applied for and was denied emergency housing numerous times over a four month period after being evicted from her apartment. Each time she was unable to complete her application due to her mental impairments and DSS incorrectly believed that she had an existing housing resource available. At no time was the client assessed by DSS for mental or physical limitations and, after being homeless for four months and before NSLS could fully intervene, Ms. B was hospitalized due to her mental illness.

A second client, Mr. S, was sleeping in parks, busses and open spaces throughout the county. In addition to his mental illness, he was unable to read or write and was unable to complete the required DSS application for emergency housing. DSS did not assess Mr. S.'s mental and physical limitations nor did he receive collateral assistance to complete the application before being turned away without written notice or emergency housing. Only after a Law Services staff attorney requested collateral assistance for the applicant as a reasonable accommodation to his disabilities, was Mr. S successful in applying for emergency housing.

Mr. A was a middle aged Spanish speaking applicant who had suffered three strokes prior to his application for emergency housing. The strokes rendered him cognitively impaired and limited both his memory and verbal skills. The

client went to the DSS five times seeking emergency assistance, and each time DSS advised him to withdraw his application and in his confusion, he complied. At no point during any of his applications was Mr. A ever assessed by DSS to determine his physical or mental health impairments. It wasn't until an attorney and social worker from NSLS accompanied Mr. A to the Department of Social Services, that he was able to successfully obtain emergency housing and public assistance. (See Law Services News Fall 2018, p. 2)

Unfortunately, these three cases are only a small sampling of the many clients who we see because their mental or physical impairments are not properly assessed hindering their ability to formally apply for emergency assistance. We suspect there are many other disabled applicants who do not have the ability to seek out legal assistance. *by Justin Wax Jacobs, Esq. Staff Attorney, Welfare Unit*

Suffolk DSS Revises its Shelter Payment Policy

The Suffolk County Department of Social Services has changed its instructions to case workers when DSS proposes to discharge a recipient of temporary housing assistance for failing to pay their share of their shelter obligation.



According to a checklist that it had provided to case workers, DSS advised them that a resident's first occurrence of failing to pay their shelter obligation can result in the discontinuance of temporary housing assistance (THA) until compliance. The second failure could also result in the discontinuance of THA until compliance, but compliance on the second failure meant payment of the all the money due for the missed shelter obligation (i.e. the arrears). However we noted that this instruction was incorrect and contrary to 16 ADM-11.

Since our office brought this error to its attention, Suffolk DSS has changed its checklist and instructions to its case workers. The form has been revised to indicate that a resident can comply, in the first instance of failure, to pay their cost of shelter by merely agreeing to make the payment in the future. With respect to the second failure, the household would not be eligible for THA until they demonstrate compliance by paying their share of the shelter cost, but not the arrears.

MORE WELFARE NEWS...The Appellate Division, Second Department reversed a fair hearing decision in the Matter of Pearl v. Imhof which had affirmed a determination by the Nassau County Department of Social Services to discontinue the petitioner's public assistance. The Court decided that the notice was defective in that it did not include any specific instances of the recipient's "willful refusal without good cause" to cooperate with the employment training program. The decision held that "because the notice lacked specificity and failed to adequately advise the petitioner of the issues which were the subject of the hearing, the notice violated the petitioner's right to due process of law." The case upholds the premise that due process requires a clear and concise notice to give a recipient/applicant a fair opportunity to understand, cure or defend DSS' claims against them. Congratulations to Douglas Ruff, Director of Litigation!



“Code Blue” for the Homeless During the Cold Winter Months Pursuant to New York State's Executive Order, homeless individuals and families should be protected from inclement winter weather where temperatures decline to 32 degrees or below. The order should ensure that homeless individuals are directed to shelter "during inclement winter weather which can cause hypothermia, serious injury and death." It also requires homeless shelters to extend their hours of operations so that those without shelter can remain indoors, and other DSS reasons for shelter denial should be waived. Please call NSLS if you are having issues with shelter in these circumstances.

Congratulations to all our amazing pro bono attorneys!!

Barry Smolowitz photography

It was wonderful to see a packed house at the Pro Bono Luncheon honoring all of our Suffolk pro bono attorneys on October 17, 2018 at the Suffolk County Bar Association. We are very grateful to the Suffolk County Bar Association and the Suffolk County Bar Pro Bono Foundation for hosting and underwriting the luncheon. We extend congratulations as well to our special honorees, Leif Rubinstein and Joseph Mauro for their commitment and generosity to the Pro Bono mission. Thanks also to Judge C. Randall Hinrichs for his attendance and inspiring words.



Veterans Rights Project Gets a Boost!

We are very grateful for the financial support received by a New York State Senate majority initiative which will be used to expand our Veterans Rights Project! With additional staff, we will be better able to assist our veterans community on Long Island and give back to those who have served.



Pictured above is staff of the Veterans Rights Project from left to right: Susanna Laruccia, Dinesh Gangapersad, and Catherine Mendolia.

Disabled Veterans Struggle with Child Support

Collection measures for child support can be very harsh and include garnishment of disability benefits and license suspension. But many disabled clients are at a loss in dealing with the arrears obligation since the old child support order often predates their disability and their current financial circumstance has been greatly altered. They do not have the means to pay nor the capacity to modify the order in court without legal assistance.

In one such case, a disabled veteran sought the assistance of our Veterans Rights Project because his driver's license was suspended for failure to pay child support arrears which accrued in 1996. Veterans Rights Project attorney, **Catherine P. Mendolia**, assisted the veteran with challenging the suspension because the veteran's income was far below the federal *self-support reserve* amount. Her efforts succeeded and the veteran's license privileges were restored.

In another case, a disabled veteran was dealing with a different type of child support issue. The veteran and his former spouse had two children together. The veteran had full custody of one child and the veteran's former spouse had custody of the other child. His only income was disability benefits and he was ordered to pay child support for the child that was not in his custody while the other custodial parent was not ordered to pay him child support. The veteran's attorney, Ms. Mendolia, filed a petition seeking support for the child in which the veteran had full custody. The matter between the parties was settled vacating each party's child support obligation.

In another matter, a disabled veteran was paying child support for two children and when the oldest child turned 21 years old, the veteran sought a downward modification of the support obligation. Mendolia represented the vet-

eran in court and settled the matter reducing the veteran's ongoing child support obligation and agreeing to monthly arrears payments on behalf of the veteran over a period of four years. After consistent payments, the veterans remaining arrears would be forgiven. Great work Catherine!



(Continued from page 1) *Senior Citizens*

ing... and is urged to reflect upon his own actions in this matter." Attorney volunteer Erika Verrill assisted in the case.

In another matter, a 69 year old Social Security recipient received a notice of termination from Social Security that he owed \$218,700 due to alleged fraud by the claimant's doctors and original lawyers. He had been awarded SSD in 2006 based on PTSD and physical injuries suffered from the incident. But subsequent to the decision, his doctors and lawyers were convicted in a fraud scheme for falsifying evidence to obtain SSD for their clients. Although the claimant was not charged with fraud, it was assumed that his award was based on false evidence and testimony. Mr. Okrent represented the elderly client in this dispute maintaining that the claim for SSD was honest and true and that his lawyers had not submitted any false evidence regarding his claim. Based on the claimant's current physicians' testimony and the claimant's own persuasive testimony, he received a fully favorable decision back to his original date of disability. The overpayment was erased and the claimant received a retroactive check for the 2 years of interrupted retirement payments. Great work, Dan!

Heartwarming Foreclosure Successes

In a recent case, our Foreclosure Unit teamed up with our Social Work Unit to assist a disabled client whose home was threatened by foreclosure. The client is a teacher who is currently living on Workers Compensation due to severe injuries that resulted in her becoming paraplegic. She was faced with serious financial hardship affecting her ability to maintain the house after her husband's passing. Patricia Caruso, one of our Foreclosure attorneys, represented the client at her settlement conferences and helped her apply for a modified payment plan. As a result of Vivian Storm's motion for summary judgment and Patricia Caruso's advocacy, the bank offered the homeowner an affordable settlement which will enable her to stay in her familiar surroundings and keep her emotional support dogs. This was indeed a heartwarming ending to a traumatic chain of events.

NSLS Clients Tell Their Foreclosure Story

Our deepest gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. V. who testified on September 24, 2018 at the Court of Appeals in Albany in support of Civil Legal Services initiatives in New York. The couple told their



compelling foreclosure story at the Statewide Civil Legal Services Hearing before a panel of judges which included Chief Judge Janet DeFiore. They spoke about the unfortunate circumstances they faced as they attempted to build their American dream. Experiencing a series of foreclosure scams, misrepresentations, and bad banking practices, they almost lost their home. Thanks to the efforts of Vivian Storm, NSLS staff attorney, who litigated their case and coordinated assistance for a loan modification, the family was able save their home and forge ahead with their plans for the future!

HEAP UPDATE

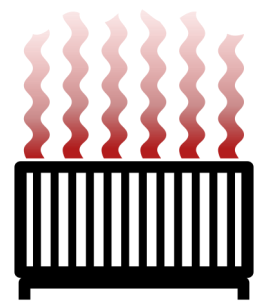
As the winter months are upon us, here is what you should know about HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program)

- Regular HEAP Opened Nov 13, 2018
- Emergency HEAP starts Jan. 2, 2018
- Heating Equipment and Repair opened November 5, 2018
- SNAP and PA recipients may qualify for Autopay HEAP, to be credited in December or January. Call HEAP to verify autopay.

Renters may be also be eligible for small HEAP benefit of \$35/\$30/\$21, even if heat is included in the rent and not paid for separately

HEAP and Food Stamps are interrelated: It is important to remember that the receipt of a HEAP payment will impact a person's Food Stamps (SNAP) budget positively in the following year, so even if the HEAP payment is nominal, it is worth it to apply. HEAP is now available even in non-HEAP season, as a nominal [HEAP benefit](#) of \$21 available to SNAP recipients in order to maximize the SNAP benefit. According to a recent fair hearing decision, **DSS is required to evaluate SNAP recipients for the Advanced HEAP benefit prior to determining the SNAP benefit amount, when the shelter verification form indicates that heat and utilities are included in the rent.**

Apply at www.mybenefits.ny.gov



[The Nassau DA Creates Elder Abuse Team.](#)

The team, made up of 15 agencies and individuals, will handle the abuse cases affecting Nassau County's elderly population. The selected group includes **Dan Okrent** of NSLS Sr. Citizen Project and **Susanna Laruccia** of our Veterans Rights Project. The multi-disciplinary team will meet monthly to tackle cases and issues while strategizing to seek systemic solutions to the problems of abuse among our elderly.

Nursing Home’s Claim Against Surviving Daughter is Defeated

Sharon Campo represented a disabled client who was being sued for her father’s nursing home bill after he passed away. The client, who was supported by her own disability benefits, had hastily signed a nursing home contract upon her father’s admission, agreeing to assume her father’s financial obligations to the home. The father had passed away one month after admission to the home. Upon his death, the nursing home proceeded to apply for retroactive Medicaid benefits and the client was cooperative and actively involved in collecting the necessary financial documents required for the application.



Included in these documents were the father’s pension and bank information. Born in Lithuania, he had a small pension from the country’s pension plan and a bank statement from Lithuania. The client had the documents translated and the currency values estimated. Medicaid denied the application, having misread the bank documents and incorrectly estimating the account balance at \$17,000. The father’s pension actually amounted to about \$600 a month and it had been spent monthly by the daughter on his necessary expenses. The nursing home attorneys did not immediately appeal the Medicaid denial but instead sued the daughter for \$19,000.

Ms. Campo was retained by the client and her strategy was to convince the nursing home’s counsel to pursue the open Medicaid case due to the obvious mistake in financial calculations. Upon review, Medicaid reevaluated the application and agreed the father had been Medicaid-eligible which would cover the majority of the nursing home bill. Ms. Campo also convinced the nursing home to drop the claim for the remaining balance.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

You now have the ability to support Nassau Suffolk Law Services by making a donation online! Go to our website: www.nslawservices.org/donation.shtml and show your support for the critical legal services we provide. You can also use the online donation form to email your friends and family directly and invite them to join us as a supporter! Or, you can mail this form with your donation to **Nassau/Suffolk Law Services, One Helen Keller Way, 5th Flr. Hempstead, NY 11550, Attn: Maureen**. Thank you for helping us continue to “Do What’s Legally Possible to Create a Just World”

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Did You Know??

NSLS Helps Homeowners in Foreclosure

NSLS' Foreclosure Prevention legal team at NSLS has been successful in securing almost \$1 million in Mortgage Assistance Program (MAP) Funding to assist homeowners facing foreclosure! Thanks to New York's MAP, which is funded by the New York State Attorney General and administered by the Center for New York City Neighborhoods, this invaluable financial assistance has helped numerous clients to keep their homes and is used to reinstate delinquent mortgages and modifications, satisfy tax arrears, and make down payments for modifications. **As of February 1, 2019, the NYS-MAP program will no longer be accepting loan applications for amounts greater than \$40,000.**



Property Tax Savings for Seniors and People with Disabilities

There are two types of property tax exemptions which apply to senior citizens age 65 and over: 1) the Enhanced STAR and 2) the low-income senior citizen tax exemption, which is also known as the RPL 467 exemption. The latter refers to New York State Real Property Law Section 467 and has stricter income requirements.

In prior years, if a taxpayer filed an application for the RPL 467 exemption, the taxpayer did not have to file a separate application for the Enhanced STAR. Beginning this year, taxpayers must file separate applications for each exemption. There is no need to re-apply for the Enhanced STAR each year. However, for the RPL 467 exemption, the taxpayer has to re-apply each year, and there are separate forms for initial applications and renewals.

In prior years, enrolling in the Income Verification Program (IVP) was an option. Beginning this year, IVP enrollment is mandatory for all applicants for the Enhanced STAR. In the first year that you apply for the Enhanced STAR, your local assessor will review your income to determine if you are eligible for the Enhanced STAR. In subsequent years, the NYS Tax Department will review your income and will notify your local assessor as to whether you qualify for the exemption. However, the NYS Tax Department will not disclose the amount of your income to your local assessor.

For this year, in **Nassau County, the filing deadline for both exemptions is January 2, 2019.** Exemption applications for Nassau County residents are filed with the Nassau County Department of Assessment, which is located at 240 Old Country Road in Mineola. The phone number is 516-571-1500. In most of New York State, the filing deadline is **March 1, 2019.** In Suffolk County, exemption applications for Suffolk County residents are filed with the local assessor in each town. If you live in Suffolk County, check with your town assessor for the filing deadline in your town.

We also recommend that you not simply mail exemption applications in the regular mail because sometimes applications are lost or the assessor may later claim non-receipt of your application. If the application deadline is missed, then you may not get the exemption for that year. This may result in the loss of thousands of dollars in exemptions. To prevent this misfortune, we recommend that you hand-deliver exemption applications to the assessor's office, if possible. Take a photocopy of the completed application with you. Have the assessor's office date/time-stamp your photocopy of the application as proof of delivery. Retain this date/time-stamped copy for your records. If you must mail the application, we recommend that you mail it by certified mail, return receipt requested. Be sure to keep a photocopy of the completed application for your records, and staple the return receipt to your photocopy when the return receipt arrives in the mail.

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2018 FALL COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE



EQUAL JUSTICE WILL PREVAIL

Pro Bono Attorney of the Month— Nassau



Michael L. Pfeifer is the principal of Pfeifer Law, PLLC. His practice has concentrated in the areas of elder law, special needs planning and estate planning for over 25 years. He was honored as Pro Bono Attorney of the Month for his great passion and dedication in providing direct pro bono legal services to the community through his volunteer work with the Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP) and the Seniors Unit of Nassau Suffolk Law Services.

Since he first volunteered in 1987, Mr. Pfeifer has represented dozens of clients in Article 17A guardianships as well as wills, trusts and estate planning matters. Most recently, he has offered his pro bono services to the VLP and Senior's Unit to help initiate the new Advance Directives Pilot Project. This initiative provides low income, disabled and senior clients with pro bono assistance to execute wills, powers of attorney and health care proxies. These crucial services empower vulnerable individuals with the ability to choose who will make decisions for them, and often avoids the necessity of a costly guardianship proceeding down the road. Most importantly, advance directives give these challenged clients the dignity of self-determination and peace of mind.

Since our recent launch of this new pilot program, several attorneys have already generously offered to join the pro bono panel. Mr. Pfeifer screens income eligible clients to determine their planning needs, and serves as an expert consultant and mentor. Clients are then referred to volunteer attorneys for representation. All interested attorneys are welcomed. Attorneys wishing to develop skills in this area will be assigned an experienced mentor and offered training materials. As always, we cover professional liability, offer free CLE credit and recognition at our yearly reception.

Mr. Pfeifer's first professional exposure to public interest law was during a law school internship at Nassau Suffolk Law Services. During this time, he showed tremendous dedication and compassion toward the many clients he served. Throughout the years of private practice that followed, Mr. Pfeifer has been committed to donating a significant amount of his time toward the underserved. His mild mannered, soft spoken approach is comforting to his clients, and belies his fierce determination to advocating on their behalf. He has assisted not only in direct representation on elder law and guardianship matters, but has mentored many young attorneys who went on to become experts in these areas of law.

Mr. Pfeifer urges other attorneys to join him in his mission. "It is immensely gratifying that my legal work can give comfort, peace of mind and dignity to this population of clients. Empowering someone to direct their own affairs can be transformative. On a strictly practical level, providing legal services to a low income client can mean the difference between their ability to pay next month's rent or putting food on the table."

Susan Biller, Pro Bono Coordinator of the Volunteer Lawyer's Project, states: "We are grateful to Michael for his patience and perseverance. He recognized a need in the community, and took it upon himself to offer his services to the VLP to address that need. His willingness to mentor newer attorneys allows us to grow our program of volunteer attorneys and thus help many more clients."

*The Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP) is a joint effort of Nassau Suffolk Law Services and the Nassau County Bar Association, who, for many years, have joined resources toward the goal of providing free legal assistance to Nassau County residents who are dealing with economic hardship. Because there is no funding for the general provision of **matrimonial, guardianship or bankruptcy representation**, the demand for pro bono assistance is the greatest in these areas. The VLP also provides significant legal assistance in the area of landlord/tenant defense thanks to support from the Nassau Bar Foundation's We Care Fund. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Susan Biller, Esq. 516-292-8100, ext. 3136. Contact Roberta Scoll at 516 292-8100 to volunteer in the Attorney of the Day Landlord Tenant Project.*

The WE CARE FUND OF THE NASSAU COUNTY BAR FOUNDATION AWARDED NSLS A GRANT IN 2018! We are very grateful for the support!



PRO BONO ATTORNEYS OF THE MONTH-Suffolk



Michael J. Renna is a volunteer in the recently launched 17-A Guardianship Project of the Suffolk Pro Bono Project. Mr. Renna's background and compassion for those with developmental disabilities makes him an excellent resource for the 17-A Project. The work he's done and the contribu-

tions he continues to make for this new project, have earned him this distinction. Michael Renna is not only an attorney, but also a NYS Certified School Psychologist.

In late 2016, Mr. Renna learned that the Suffolk Pro Bono Project (PBP) was creating a new program in which low income parents of developmentally disabled young adult children could receive free legal assistance to petition Suffolk Surrogate's Court for guardianship of their children. Mr. Renna knew, given his background, that he would be a great fit. In January of 2017, he attended a related CLE program that the PBP and Suffolk Academy of Law had sponsored to ensure he was well versed on the finer points of the 17-A petition process. Immediately thereafter, he took on his first pro bono client, Ms. S.

Ms. S., was a widow with a son on the autism spectrum who was about to turn 18. Two years earlier, the boy's father had passed away after a prolonged illness. Although Ms. S. and her husband previously had discussed and intended to start the 17-A guardianship process, her husband's subsequent illness and passing derailed those plans. With her husband gone, Ms. S. felt an even more pressing need to put guardian and back-up guardian arrangements in place for her son. However, the loss of her husband's income during his prolonged illness and subsequent death depleted her savings and left her with a fraction of the income she once counted on. Paying a private attorney to prepare the petition simply was not possible. Fortunately, a social worker in the boy's school had learned of the new 17-A Pro Bono Project and urged Ms. S. to apply.

Expressing her gratitude for the Pro Bono Project and her assigned attorney, Ms. S. recalls, "Mr. Renna was phenomenal. He knew what needed to be done and was really good when working with my son." Mr. Renna is also pleased that The Project has created a vehicle in which someone with his specific skills can give back. "There's a great need out there for pro bono assistance in this area," he reports. "Sacrificing some time helping a family in need is individually rewarding and good for the profession."



Margarett Williams has earned this distinction a second time due to her consistent dedication to the Project over the past six years. Ms. Williams is the Director of Employer Relations at Touro College Jacob D.

Fuchsberg Law Center. Despite the many demands of her position at Touro, she routinely handles multiple pro bono matrimonial referrals at a time. She also mentors the Project's new attorneys whenever called upon to do so.

After graduating from Touro in 2005, Ms. Williams briefly practiced employment law at a small firm before deciding to join Winkler, Kurtz, Winkler and Kuhn. It is there that she first became exposed to matrimonial and family law. She credits Jim Winkler, her mentor at the firm, for inspiring her to do pro bono work with the Project. Ms. Williams returned to Touro Law Center in 2008. Upon arriving there she made it clear that continuing her matrimonial pro bono work was extremely important to her. "I've always felt it's important as an attorney that I give back by helping those who can't afford to hire a lawyer," Ms. Williams said. She also finds that her pro bono work enhances the service she provides her Touro students. "It gives extra credibility to my counseling because I'm still working with clients and I'm still in court." The relationships she's made with opposing counsel in her pro bono cases has also led to internships, externships and post-graduate employment for several of her students. It's her recent experiences with Touro students that make Ms. Williams hopeful for the future of pro bono. "Students in law school these days seem to have more community service experience and greater enthusiasm for volunteering than I've ever seen before," she noted. "It's really interesting how many of them have this pre-formed sensibility of the need to give back once they're out and practicing." The Pro Bono Project is extremely grateful for Ms. Williams's efforts to promote pro bono at Touro, for the example she has set for her students by regularly assisting the Project, and for the zealous and effective representation she has provided each of her pro bono clients.

*The Suffolk Pro Bono Project is a joint effort of Nassau Suffolk Law Services, the Suffolk County Bar Association and the Suffolk County Pro Bono Foundation, who, for many years, have joined resources toward the goal of providing free legal assistance to Suffolk County residents who are dealing with economic hardship. The provision of pro bono services is prioritized based on financial need. We focus on cases where free legal service are non-existent or inadequate, most frequently in matters of matrimonial or bankruptcy representation. The Project has also recently launched initiatives in which pro bono attorneys provide pro se assistance: SSI/SSD application assistance, 17a Guardianships and Citizenship Applications. If you would like to volunteer, please contact **Carolyn McQuade, Esq.** 631 232-2400 x 3325.*



LAW SERVICES IN OUR COMMUNITY



Law Services continues its strong ties within the community in an effort to collaborate with various agencies and ensure that low income Long Islanders receive the services they so desperately need. If you happen to see any of our Law Services' staff at a community event, please stop by to introduce yourself and say hello. We'd love to meet you, and as always we thank you for your support!



Pictured above from left to right: Maria Dosso, Director of Communications and Volunteer Services, Michael Kramer, CEO Corporate Source, Jim Denson, NSLS paralegal and NDEAM Champion, Jeffrey Seigel, NSLS Executive Director

Jim Denson, NSLS paralegal, has been working with disabled clients for 27 years! He was recently recognized for his outstanding commitment while overcoming his physical challenges. He was selected by the Corporate Source as the NDEAM (Disability Employment Awareness Month) Champion winner as a testament to his "accomplishments, tenure and tenacity." <https://thecorporatesource.org/James-Denson.html>

We are so proud of our colleague!

Veterans Rights Project in the House!

On September 26, 2018 **Susanna Laruccia, Dinesh Gan-gapersad and Catherine Mendolia** attended the Veterans



Standdown at the VA in Northport where about 300 veterans attended to learn more about community services. The staff of the Veterans Rights Project spoke to veterans, providing information about our services, and networked with other providers.

Marcia Vogel, Disability Advocate in the Education and Disabilities Rights Project, recently attended the Bridging the Gap conference hosted by the Interagency Coordinated Council of L.I. The ICC works with agencies that serve children with special needs to better advocate for families and children.

Shervon Miller, paralegal in the Foreclosure Project, addressed a group of advocates at the Nassau South St. Vincent de Paul meeting on September 22, 2018. She educated the group about the foreclosure process so that they may better assist their clients and make appropriate referrals.



Our first Pro Bono Citizenship Clinic held in our Islandia offices on October 30, 2018 was a big success! Pro bono attorneys met with low income legal permanent residents to assist them with

their citizenship applications. Attorneys and/or prospective clients who would like to learn more can call 631 232-2400.



Maria Dosso, Director of Communications and Volunteer Services, participated in PSEG'S Energy Forum held on November 16, 2018. She trained the participants on utility law and outlined the

energy benefits available to low income clients in need.



To receive an electronic version of this newsletter as well as *Legal Lessons*, please sign up with your email on our website at www.nslawservices.org

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The NSLS staff and pro bono partners recently bid goodbye to **Ellen Krakow**, Coordinator of the Suffolk Pro bono Project. Ellen recently announced her retirement after five years of dedicated service working to promote the pro bono mission. During her tenure Ellen was responsible for launching several new initiatives including the 17 Guardianship Project, the SSI/SSD Application Project and the Citizenship Project. We are saddened to see her leave but know that she is embarking on this new part of her life with the same vigor and love of adventure. **Carolyn McQuade** will be assuming the responsibilities of our growing pro bono program.



We are proud to announce that **Cathy Lucidi** recently received a promotion and is now the Director of Community Relations. Most of the advocacy community knows her as the voice behind the Legal Support Center for Advocates and she will continue in that role as well as leading our Advisory Council and coordinating community outreach and events. Congratulations!

We are sorry to report the recent passing of **Burt Seelig** who was a dedicated volunteer in the Pro Bono Unit for several years. He did phone screenings for applicants of pro bono services and showed up regularly to assist with the numerous calls received every week. He often was one of the last to leave the office at the end of the day! We will miss his valuable contribution, his smiling face, and positive attitude.



Congratulations to **Laurie Bloom**, past chair and current member of the NSLS Advisory Council for being awarded the Unsung Hero Award by LIBN Leadership in the Law Award on November 29 at the Crest Hollow. Director of Marketing and communication at Rivkin RadlerLLP. Laurie has been a dedicated to the mission of spreading the word about our services to the community and we are proud to have her as a partner.



Carly Somers, pictured bottom right, along with the pro bono team in Brooklyn Housing Court

Carly Somers, attorney in our Re-Entry Project, was honored this past October for the pro bono work she did during 2017 in the Brooklyn Housing Court and the Queens Consumer Debt Court. The awards dinner was sponsored by the NY County Lawyers Association, the NY State Bar Association, and the NYS Unified Court System's Office for Justice Initiative. Kudos!



Law Services Winter 2019 Training Schedule



Trainings will be held at our Islandia office: 1757 Veterans Hwy, Suite 50, Islandia. To pre-register, please call the Training Line at 631 232-2400 x 3357, fax 631 232-2489 or email Cathy Lucidi at clucidi@nsls.legal. Fee is \$35 per training. Please make check payable to Nassau Suffolk Law Services and mail your payment in advance to confirm pre-registration. Please call our offices and/or check our website www.nslawservices.org in the event of inclement weather.

General Advocacy Skills: Thursday January 31, 2019 9:30-12:30 Islandia office. For the newer advocate, an overview of the advocate’s role in serving their client in matters relating to benefits and housing. We will review the important steps to take in preparing, analyzing and evaluating a case, especially in preparation for a legal referral. We will also discuss timing for referrals, confidentiality rules, strategies, advocacy tips, and general rules when dealing with the Dept. of Social Services.

Social Security: Wednesday, February 13, 2019 9:30– 12:30 Islandia Office. An overview of the disability and financial Eligibility rules for SSI and SSD. We will discuss how an advocate can best assist their client in developing the disability case for the most successful application. We will also review post eligibility income and work incentive rules.

Training Registration Form



Name _____

Agency Affiliation _____

Phone Number _____

Email Address _____

Title of Training(s) _____

Amount Enclosed _____

Please check if payment will be sent at a later date or on the date of the Training

Please return with applicable fee to: Nassau/Suffolk Law Services, 1757 Veterans Highway, Suite 50, Islandia, N.Y. 11749
Attn: Cathy Lucidi. This form may also be faxed to Cathy at (631) 232-2489

Message from the Executive Director



We strive to provide legal services to Long Islanders in need based on the community's priorities and demand for services. As we approach the end of the year, we look back to evaluate how we have addressed those needs. The graphics below indicate that the greatest proportion of our resources are dedicated to serving housing needs followed by income maintenance, which include Welfare and Social Security benefits. We are also always acutely aware of new legal developments and the voices of clients and advocates who suggest areas of hardship that need to be addressed. We attempted to develop new initiatives to meet those needs. Communication and interaction with Long Island's network of services are very important to us and we will continue to consider your input as we moved forward in the coming years. Happy Holidays!

