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SUFFOLK COUNTY COMMEMORATES NATIONAL PRO BONO WEEK 2010 CELEBRATIONS

By Linda Novick

Suffolk County ProBonoNY Coordinator

The October 2010 Suffolk County pro bono events, scheduled to coincide with the celebration of National Pro Bono Week, were designed to have a positive impact on *all* participants involved in pro bono service. The week's festive luncheon and evening gala honored the generous service of our County's most committed pro bono practitioner. The scheduled guest speakers' event allowed inspirational thoughts of pro bono involvement to be shared with our local law students. The Suffolk County Pro Bono Veterans' Advisory Clinic afforded guidance on resolving legal issues facing our community's veterans.

Traditionally, Suffolk County's pro bono efforts are the result of several

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EIGHTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT ProBonoNY COMMITTEE PARTICIPATES IN NATIONAL PRO BONO WEEK

By Amanda Warner

Eighth Judicial District ProBonoNY Coordinator

There were multiple celebrations of National Pro Bono Week 2010 in the Eighth Judicial District.

Eight lawyers from the Buffalo law firm Damon Morey LLP provided pro bono assistance to low-income homeowners during the annual City of Buffalo Tax Foreclosure Auction Sale, October 25-27. The attorneys received training from Erie County Bar Association

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entities united to serve the legal needs of the financially disadvantaged in our community. The collaborative effort of these entities explains the energetic atmosphere felt throughout Suffolk County during National Pro Bono Week 2010.

On Monday, October 25, 2010, the Suffolk County Court's Pro Bono Action Committee and the Suffolk County Bar Association's Pro Bono Foundation honored dedicated pro bono matrimonial and guardianship mentors to fellow volunteer attorneys. **The Pro Bono Mentor Luncheon and Roundtable Discussion** was held in a conference room of the Supreme Court Building. Suffolk County Administrative Judge and Chairman of the Suffolk County Pro Bono Action Committee, the Honorable H. Patrick Leis III, presented recognition pins to 13 volunteer attorneys, as participating mentors in the Suffolk County Pro Bono Matrimonial and Article 81 Guardianship programs. Additional attendees included Suffolk County Supreme Court Justice Marion T. McNulty and several other members of

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Volunteer Lawyers Project on September 23 and began working on cases from then through October 22. The lawyers collectively represented 25 clients, saving each client's home from tax foreclosure by negotiating payment plans with City of Buffalo Corporation Counsel.

On October 27, the Eighth District ProBonoNY Committee participated in a pro bono fair, "Herd About Pro Bono at the University of Buffalo Law School." The ProBonoNY coordinator was available from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Law School lobby to talk to law students about ideal pro bono opportunities for students, law school graduates pending admission, and newly admitted attorneys. The pro bono fair was sponsored by the Buffalo Public Interest Law Project, University of Buffalo Law School Career Services Office, and the University of Buffalo Law School Student Services Office, as part of their National Pro Bono Week celebrations.

Also participating in National Pro Bono Week, the Buffalo law firm Hodgson Russ LLP held a "Pizza and Pro Bono Awareness Event and Fund-Raiser"

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the Suffolk County Pro Bono Action Committee. In addition to expressing gratitude to the mentors, the informal setting of this luncheon provided an ideal forum for Justice Leis to lead the group in an exchange of ideas regarding the further development of the program.

The matrimonial and guardianship mentor program was created to provide less experienced counsel with the invaluable benefit of one-on-one training in these areas of the law. The greatest challenge facing the expansion of the program is the realistic time constraints imposed by our mentors' busy schedules. One pragmatic approach discussed included inviting the new attorney/mentee to "shadow" the mentor at a preliminary conference, hearing, or special proceeding. After an opportunity to observe, the new recruit should feel more confident about having the qualifications to conduct a client consultation, negotiate settlement terms with opposing counsel, or present the matter to the judge.

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on October 28. Each of the firm's lawyers who attended the lunch contributed, resulting in \$400 being donated to the UB Law Buffalo Public Interest Law Program, which raises money to provide summertime fellowships to students seeking public interest opportunities. ProBonoNY Committee co-chair and Hodgson Russ partner Hugh M. Russ and the ProBonoNY coordinator had the opportunity to speak to twenty attorneys about the Committee's work with the ECBA Volunteer Lawyers Project in engaging Buffalo's large firm lawyers in pro bono work, particularly in the areas of eviction defense through the Attorney of the Morning program in Buffalo City Court and in unemployment insurance benefits matters. Lawyers were provided information about both opportunities and about VLP's CLE Program Library, which includes training programs on both subject areas.

On October 29, the Committee co-sponsored the CLE training, "The Basics of Removal Defense in Immigration

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The honorary events continued on Tuesday, October 26th, with the **Suffolk County Bar Association's Annual Pro Bono Volunteer Recognition Night**. The dinner-reception was held at the elegant Watermill Restaurant in Hauppauge. Over 70 judges and attorneys enjoyed the gracious dining, while eight Suffolk County attorneys were honored for their outstanding dedication to Suffolk County's pro bono programs. Each award recipient had provided countless hours of pro bono service in the areas of matrimonial, bankruptcy, and/or foreclosure law. All honorees had previously been named Suffolk County Pro Bono Attorney of the Month on three prior occasions. As tokens of appreciation by the members of the Suffolk County Bar Association's Pro Bono Foundation, personally engraved plaques were awarded to all recipients.

On Wednesday, October 27th, two of Suffolk County's most well-regarded attorneys, Robin S. Abramowitz, of Lazer, Aptheker, Rosella and Yedid, PC, and

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Court," with ECBA Volunteer Lawyers Project. Each of the 18 attendees earned 3.5 free CLE credits, in exchange for their commitments to handle at least one pro bono immigration case in a year's time. On Monday, November 1, the Committee co-sponsored another immigration training program, "Representing a Domestic Violence Victim in Immigration Court," also co-sponsored by the ECBA Volunteer Lawyers Project. Sixteen lawyers attended and received 2 free CLE credits in exchange for their commitments to handle at least one pro bono case in a year's time.

Also on Monday, November 1, over thirty members of the Chautauqua County legal community gathered at Supreme Court in Mayville to honor 17 Chautauqua County attorneys for their commitments to strengthening pro bono services to low-income residents over the past year. The following attorneys were

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Richard L. Stern, of Macco and Stern, LLP, were the event's guest speakers. Both attorneys have a long history as dedicated pro bono practitioners. **The Pro Bono Guest Speakers Luncheon** was held at Touro Law School Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center in Central Islip. Over 30 Touro law students listened to counsels' explanation of the benefits of pursuing pro bono service. Speaking candidly, the speakers' message was clear: "Give back to the community, because it's the right thing to do." Speaker Richard L. Stern added that "there are always people in greater need than yourselves." An interactive question-and-answer period followed. Students discussed community outreach opportunities available to law students. Some expressed their own feelings of gratification as a result of participating in Touro's pro bono clinics.

In an effort to reach out to those who served our country, the Suffolk County Court's Pro Bono Action Committee, the Suffolk County Bar Association's Pro Bono Foundation, and the Touro Law School Jacob D. Fuchsberg

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presented with certificates of appreciation by Hon. Paula L. Feroletto, Administrative Judge of the Eighth Judicial District and judicial co-chair of the District's ProBonoNY Committee, and by Hon. James Dillon, Justice of the Supreme Court: Sherry Bjork, Michael Bobseine, Philip Cala, Lydia Allen Caylor, Allison Mullen Carrow, Lydia Evans, Sue M. Evans, R. Thomas Rankin, Dale Robbins, Sandra Fisher Swanson, Sally Jaroszynski, Gregory Peterson, Robert Schnizler, Ashley Smith, Richard Sotir, Michael Sullivan, and Todd Thomas. Hon. Stephen W. Cass, Hon. Judith S. Claire, Hon. Paul Buchanan, and Hon. John T. Ward were also in attendance. The reception was sponsored by the Jamestown Bar Association, the Bar Association of Northern Chautauqua, Southern Tier Legal Services (a Division of Legal Assistance of Western New York), Legal Aid of Chautauqua Region, and the Eighth Judicial District ProBonoNY Committee. Please see the photograph taken November 1 at the Chautauqua County program on [page 9](#), below.

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Law Center hosted a **Pro Bono Veterans' Advisory Clinic**. The clinic was held at the law school, immediately following the guest speakers' luncheon. Twenty veterans were given legal advice on matters such as child custody, child support, bankruptcy, foreclosure, and specific veterans' issues, such as military benefits and disability matters. The pro bono attorneys who attended the clinic included attorneys Robin S. Abramowitz, Leif I. Rubinstein, Eric A. Sackstein, and John A. Gresham, Director of the Veterans' Rights Clinic of Touro College. Interested law students observed and assisted the attorneys during consultations.

A program evaluation revealed that most attendees felt that the advice received brought them closer to resolving their legal issues. The program's pro bono attorneys were enthusiastic about the outcome of the consultations, as well. One participating attorney described helping veterans in need as "the ultimate pro bono service." Many of Suffolk

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FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT CELEBRATES PRO BONO

By Jacqueline Haberfeld, Special Counsel, NYS Courts Access to Justice Program

National Pro Bono Week was celebrated in the First Judicial District with a festive kick-off event held on Monday, October 25, in the dramatic Rotunda of the Supreme Court building at 60 Centre Street. Consumer credit issues are flooding the courts, with half a million unrepresented litigants defending consumer-credit-based lawsuits in the courts of New York City each year. This year's pro bono week kick-off event honored the public service programs that have worked with the New York State Courts Access to Justice Program, the Mayor's Office of the City of New York, and the New York State Bar Association, as well as honoring individuals who have given of their time to help represent clients in consumer debt cases. The Honorable Jeffrey Oing, then the Supervising Judge of the New York City Civil Court, Carol Robles-Roman, Esq., Deputy Mayor for Legal Affairs, and Steven Younger, Esq., President of NYSBA, presided. In addition to honoring our partners and volunteers in our consumer debt programs, the Access

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County's pro bono attorneys have agreed to handle veteran-related matters. Since the date of the recent clinic, there has been a surge of calls by veterans in need of legal assistance. Depending on the nature of the issue, these new veterans' matters will be directed either to a volunteer pro bono attorney or to the Veterans' Rights Clinic of Touro College. The latter actively incorporates the services of law students, under close supervision of counsel, to handle matters for veterans.

As these recent events evidence, Suffolk County's pro bono entities will continue to work cohesively to increase access to legal representation for all.



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to Justice Program honored an individual volunteer in each of our Housing Court, Family Court, Guardian Ad Litem, Uncontested Divorce, and Foreclosure Programs who had gone above and beyond the service expected of our volunteers this year.

Simultaneously, a Pro Bono Expo was held in the Rotunda. This was a recruiting event that enabled participants in the recognition event, as well as passers-by, to inquire about and sign up for future participation in one of our programs. NYC Service, the voluntarism arm of the Mayor's Office, also sponsored a few tables, making a total of fifteen volunteer opportunities available to interested attorneys. Over 200 people attended the event, at which coffee and dessert were provided by the NYSBA. Approximately 70 people signed up to train and serve in the various volunteer programs.

In addition, on Wednesday, October 27, the First District held a panel discussion to consider several interesting ethical issues facing attorneys who engage in pro bono practice, including

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conflicts of interest, ghost writing, and where to go for advice regarding ethical quandaries faced by practitioners in a pro bono context. The thought-provoking panel was moderated by Jeremy Feinberg, Esq., Statewide Counsel for Ethics for the NYS Courts, and was comprised of Hon. Fern A. Fisher, Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Courts within New York City and Director of the New York State Courts Access to Justice Program, and Pery Krinsky, Esq., of the Law Office of Michael Ross, Esq., specialists in lawyers' professional responsibility. CLE credit was given in Ethics. The event was co-sponsored by the New York County Lawyers' Association and was graciously hosted by the law firm of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher and Flom.

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EIGHTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Chautauqua County Pro Bono Reception and Awards

November 1, 2010



Taken at the November 1, 2010 Chautauqua County Pro Bono Awards Reception, from left to right: Hon. John T. Ward, Hon. Judith S. Claire, Hon. Paul Buchanan, Hon. James Dillon, Todd Thomas, Sandra Fisher Swanson, Sally Jaroszynski, Lydia Allen Caylor, Allison Mullen Carrow, Philip Cala, Support Magistrate Michael Bobseine, R. Thomas Rankin, Ashley E. Smith, Richard Sotir, Mike Sullivan, Hon. Paula L. Feroletto, Hon. Stephen W. Cass.