

Lawyers are strongly encouraged to provide
pro bono legal services to benefit poor persons.

- Rules of Professional Conduct

VOLUNTEERS OF LEGAL SERVICE

VOLLS

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF SERVICE

1984 – 2009

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Introduction

Welcome to the 25th Anniversary Celebration for Volunteers of Legal Service! Since Law Day 1984, when City Bar President Louis A. Craco announced the formation of VOLS to respond to a crisis in legal services cutbacks by coordinating and increasing pro bono opportunities for New York's leading firms, VOLS has been at the forefront of private lawyers' pro bono work in New York City. The VOLS pledge effort originally led by Cyrus R. Vance, which asked subscribing firms to set and then meet or exceed a goal of at least an average of 30 hours of pro bono work per attorney per year, was the first of its kind. That pledge inspired subscribing firms to commit formally to increase their pro bono efforts, and served as a model for many other law firm pledges that have followed thereafter.

The number of law firms subscribing to the VOLS pledge has steadily increased over the years. Last year, the 43 subscribing firms who fulfilled their VOLS pledges crossed the staggering barrier of over one million hours (1,117,907, to be precise) of free legal services to the poor. This enormous contribution provides a great reason to celebrate!

VOLS' programmatic activity has steadily expanded, too. Longstanding important programs supporting the elderly, incarcerated mothers, men and women with HIV/AIDS and low-income microentrepreneurs have been supplemented in recent years with new programs for children – initially through our hospitals projects and more recently through our schools project – and, just in the last few months, a critically important new program for workers appealing denials of the unemployment benefits they need to hold their lives and families together until they can find new jobs. We have also added new resources to support our volunteer lawyers, offering expert consultations on immigration law, the family law rights of incarcerated mothers, housing, public benefits, and unemployment insurance benefits. We hope this added expertise will make it even easier for volunteer lawyers to have the confidence to take on representations of tremendously needy clients in unfamiliar-seeming legal contexts.

All of this success is directly attributable to the leadership, vision, energy and charm of Bill Dean, who has been the soul of VOLS for nearly its entire existence, with the tremendous and unstinting support of Sara Effron, Oscar Straus and the rest of the VOLS staff, supported by an energetic and enthusiastic Board of Directors. The law firms that work with VOLS and the clients they serve are lucky to have had the benefit of such wonderful and selfless colleagues.

In this extraordinary year, when lawyers and firms are responding to the economic downturn by asking themselves who they are and want to be, the continued outpouring of pro bono work has provided a heartening affirmation that this work is at the core of the culture and the souls of our City's great firms. This work needs to continue, and firms need to increase their support even in the face of continued commercial pressures, to take account of the current extra need for free legal assistance for New York's poorest residents. The statistics— a New York City jobless rate on the verge of crossing into double digits, the highest poverty rate in decades, and expectations of continued severe retraction of funding and opportunities for the 40 percent of our neighbors living in or near poverty—compel a resolute display of support for these fellow residents from our City's leading firms and corporate legal departments.

Many sincere thanks to the 43 participating law firms we formally recognize at our Anniversary Celebration— for all that you have done, and all that you will continue to do.

John S. Kiernan,
Board Chair

Pro Bono: A Professional and Ethical Obligation

Pro bono does not exist in a vacuum. Pro bono work is about helping poor people.

About one in five New Yorkers, and a third of New York City's children, live in poverty. In all, over 1.7 million New Yorkers live below the poverty line. (For 2009, the federal poverty guideline for a family of four is \$22,050.) Another 1.6 million "near-poor" residents live in the city, with household incomes between 100 and 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.

An immense justice gap exists for poor people— "chasm" might be the more appropriate word. In New York City, the most dramatic example of the justice gap is found in Housing Court where more than 90 percent of tenants have no legal representation.

As lawyers, we are privileged members of society. We are well-educated, articulate and know how to get things done in a complex world. We have been granted a monopoly in terms of exclusive access to the courts to represent clients and to practice law. With this grant of authority comes a commensurate responsibility. We have a professional obligation to perform pro bono work on behalf of poor people.

Lawyers have a professional obligation to do pro bono work and law firms have an obligation to encourage their lawyers to do such work. This duty is reflected in the Rules of Professional Conduct promulgated by the Appellate Divisions of the Supreme Court of the State of New York. Rule 6.1 provides: "Voluntary Pro Bono Service. Lawyers are strongly encouraged to provide pro bono legal services to benefit poor persons."

And we have an ethical obligation to do pro bono work. The ethical obligation is central to the teachings of all religions and secular philosophies. "Justice, justice shall ye pursue all the days of your life." (Deuteronomy.) It is found in the values imparted to us by our parents; by our finest teachers; by the people we admire most in life; in our great works of literature.

It is found in the inscriptions on our court buildings: "Equal Justice Under Law." (U.S. Supreme Court.) "The true administration of justice is the firmest pillar of good government." (Supreme Court, New York County.) "Justice is denied no one...Equal and exact justice to all men of whatever state or persuasion." (Criminal Court, New York County.)

In undertaking pro bono work, younger lawyers gain valuable hands-on experience, assume greater responsibilities, gain confidence, grow professionally and become directly involved in trouble-shooting, problem-solving and decision-making. For all lawyers, regardless of age or experience, pro bono work is a source of immense personal and professional satisfaction.

Pro bono serves as a beacon of opportunity for lawyers, both to help others and to enrich our own lives. We at VOLS relish the epiphanies lawyers experience in their pro bono work.

VOLS Mission

The mission of VOLS is to develop projects to provide pro bono civil legal services to benefit poor people in New York City. We identify areas of legal need, create projects to meet these needs, and recruit, train and mentor volunteer lawyers to provide the needed legal services. By providing pro bono legal services to poor people in our city, we strive to fulfill the highest aspirations of the legal profession.

VOLS projects serve these vulnerable New York City populations: Children, the elderly poor, claimants denied unemployment insurance benefits, incarcerated mothers, and persons with HIV/AIDS. Legal services also are provided to low-income microentrepreneurs on business law matters, and we conduct active outreach to the New York City legal community to encourage pro bono work by lawyers.

Poor people are most in need of legal assistance in the areas of housing, public benefits, family law, immigration, and special education— fundamental issues relating to shelter, income, family, legal status and education. Through the VOLS program, poor people are provided pro bono legal assistance on these and other critical legal problems.

In several of our projects, we match law firms with institutions— hospitals, schools and economic development agencies. In a match, a law firm agrees to accept pro bono cases from the entity with which it has been matched by VOLS. There are many advantages to this arrangement. Pre-screened pro bono cases identified by the matched institution come directly to the law firm on a regular basis. The law firm and matched partner develop close and productive working relations. The firm develops areas of pro bono expertise and so can handle a larger number of cases expeditiously.

In addition, lawyers at the firm work as a team on the project, sharing experiences and information. Participating lawyers feel part of a collegial undertaking, instead of doing pro bono work in isolation. A law firm sees tangible results from its pro bono program, instead of dispersing its energies and efforts in many directions at once. Finally, pro bono projects that are identified as law firm undertakings encourage lawyers, who might otherwise be reluctant to initiate pro bono matters on their own, to participate on a project in which the firm has a proprietary interest.

“My dear,” said Mr. Micawber, “Copperfield,” for so he had been accustomed to call me of late, “has a heart to feel for the distresses of his fellow creatures when they are behind a cloud...”

- *Charles Dickens*

VOLS Program

CHILDREN

HOSPITAL-BASED CHILDREN'S PROJECT

In this project, lawyers work with doctors, nurses and social workers at hospitals as part of a team to improve health outcomes for poor children through the provision of pro bono legal services. For example, a child under medical treatment for asthma, whose asthma may be triggered by conditions in the family's apartment, will have a lawyer available to obtain needed improvements from the landlord.

VOLS recruits both hospitals and law firms to the project, trains and mentors the volunteer lawyers, and provides ongoing project coordination. The project operates at seven hospitals.

The project sites and matched law firms are:

Bellevue Hospital Center (Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison);

The Children's Hospital at Montefiore (Cravath, Swaine & Moore);

Harlem Hospital Center (Dewey & LeBoeuf);

Metropolitan Hospital Center (Patterson, Belknap, Webb & Tyler);

Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital of New York-Presbyterian (Cravath);

**New York-Presbyterian Hospital, Weill-Cornell Campus
(White & Case); and**

**New York University Medical Center (Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman
and Proskauer Rose).**

VOLS introduces the Children's Project to doctors at Grand Rounds, and conducts legal information sessions to assist the medical staff in identifying cases for referral to lawyers.

Many cases involve substandard housing. Here is a letter sent to a landlord by John M. Aerni, a partner at Dewey & LeBoeuf, matched by VOLS with Harlem Hospital Center, to enlist the landlord in efforts to remedy these conditions:

Three of Ms. ____’s children have severe asthma and one of her children also has elevated blood lead levels...We are asking for the opportunity to work constructively with you to improve the conditions in the apartment and avoid protracted legal proceedings. Remedying the violations and substandard conditions...is critical to improving the health of Ms. ____’s children, and we would prefer to devote all of your and our resources to those ends, as opposed to expensive and time-consuming litigation. We are asking you to join with us– instead of fighting against us– to combat the scourge of asthma that is ravaging the children of Harlem.

In case after case reported by Dewey & LeBoeuf, the legal issue is identified as being “substandard housing conditions” and the outcome described as “conditions remedied”; a lawyer’s understated way of saying, “we are making a huge difference in the lives of our clients.”

Lawyers at Patterson, Belknap, Webb & Tyler, matched by VOLS with Metropolitan Hospital Center, leave their midtown offices to call upon their clients to see first-hand the apartment conditions lived-in by the families they are representing. In one case, a landlord was given photographs of housing conditions taken on such a visit, “the worst we have encountered,” the lawyers wrote the landlord, with a demand that the problem be addressed immediately. The lawyers later met with this landlord at the apartment, along with a roofer, interior workmen and the building superintendent. As a result, living conditions have vastly improved for the family with young children living there.

In 2008, 98 families were served by lawyers in the VOLS hospital-based Children’s Project. 143 volunteer lawyers– both corporate lawyers and litigators, both partners and associates– and 34 legal assistants participated.

How good life is when you do something
that is good and just.

- *Alyosha in The Brothers Karamazov*

IN THIS PROJECT, THREE GREAT PROFESSIONS WORK TOGETHER

doctors say...

“On behalf of our patients and their families, it is a pleasure for me to thank VOLS and the many attorneys at White & Case who have contributed to the care of our patients at the New York-Presbyterian Komansky Center for Children’s Health. Caring for the children who come to our clinic can take many forms. We are all familiar with the contributions of physicians, nurses and social workers, but many may not be aware of the vital contributions of VOLS attorneys to our health care team. In addition to facing the challenge of coping with acute and chronic disease, many of our patients and families also must face major life crises that often require legal services they cannot afford.

“Over the years, our VOLS attorneys have assisted families of children with asthma in securing needed improvements in their apartments that have helped children breathe easier. They have also helped restore health care benefits that were wrongfully terminated, assisted parents in obtaining appropriate educational placements, and have assisted with immigration related issues. These are just a few examples of the excellent service VOLS provides to our patients and their families. It is very clear that we could not do what we do as physicians, nurses or social workers without the generous assistance of the lawyers from the VOLS program. We look forward to your continued membership on our health care team.”

*Dr. Gerald M. Loughlin, Professor and Chairman,
Department of Pediatrics, New York-Presbyterian Hospital*

“Since 2003, the relationship between the Harlem Children’s Zone Asthma Initiative, VOLS and Dewey & LeBoeuf has helped more than 200 families achieve numerous housing, financial, and educational benefits that have improved health outcomes of children in Harlem. What began as a pilot to provide housing advocacy services in landlord-tenant disputes, gradually expanded to include a broad spectrum of social and legal services. By integrating inpatient and outpatient pediatric social work services, primary and specialty care pediatrics, a community-based childhood asthma program, and local elementary schools, Dewey & LeBoeuf and Harlem Hospital Center forged a bond to help eradicate the impacts that substandard housing have on child health.”

*Dr. Benjamin Ortiz, Medical Director,
Harlem Children’s Zone Asthma Initiative*

social workers say...

“NYU Langone Medical Center has been involved with the VOLS Children’s Project for many years and we have been so grateful for the pro bono legal services that have been provided to our children and their families. The scope of issues that have been addressed– assisting to improve housing, advocacy for entitlement programs and educational programs, and immigration issues– are only a few examples of the many areas these families need to have addressed. Families in crisis, such as having a child with a life threatening illness, can be very disruptive and overwhelming. Families have found comfort with the VOLS Children’s Project because it has provided them with needed legal assistance. The positive resolutions that have been achieved by the project and the dedicated attorneys, have improved the quality of life for the children and their families. We, the entire staff at the medical center and the families we serve, do not know what we would do without all of you in these difficult times. Thank you.”

*Dennis Sklenar, LCSW,
New York University Langone Medical Center*

“When I was asked to attend an initial discussion at the end of 2001 regarding how the VOLS program could help the pediatric HIV center at New York–Presbyterian Hospital, I felt it would be helpful to have an on-site attorney to help with permanency planning issues that the parents of our patients face. I did not realize the breadth of assistance that Jim Stillwaggon and his team of lawyers from White & Case was able to offer us. He and his colleagues have conducted a multi-year project helping adolescents who were about to lose their SSI benefits due to age retain their financial support; assisted a patient at danger in his home country due to his sexual orientation to obtain a green card; and have been available by phone to answer many legal questions which arise daily in a busy clinic populated by chronically ill patients, the majority of whom are under the poverty level. The VOLS Children’s Project has since expanded to the entire pediatric department.”

*Harriet S. Plaskon, LCSW, Family Center for Special Studies,
New York-Presbyterian Hospital*

“John Aerni and his colleagues at Dewey & LeBoeuf have provided an invaluable service to our families here at Harlem Hospital. Many of these family legal matters would never have been resolved if the Dewey & LeBoeuf lawyers had not intervened on behalf of the families. The legal team made the families feel comfortable by demonstrating concern around their issues and the lawyers resolved the legal matters in a timely fashion.

We at the Asthma Initiative at Harlem Hospital/Columbia University say: Thank you, Dewey & LeBoeuf. Our families applaud and admire your firm for its services.”

*Yvonne Pradier, Social Worker Manager
Harlem Hospital Center*

lawyers say...

Following the successful representation of a teenage girl with an advanced case of lupus at an administrative hearing to obtain Social Security Income benefits: “The personal satisfaction I had from working on this case is unparalleled.”

Aditya Khanna, Cravath, Swaine & Moore

A partner: “I enjoy the experience of working with younger lawyers at my firm who are helping families— to see them learn what they can accomplish with diligence, enthusiasm and their newly acquired legal skills.”

Gloria Phares, Patterson, Belknap, Webb & Tyler

A partner who is the father of three young children: “I love these cases. For me, they are more rewarding than high impact cases. To hear the relief in a client’s voice when we achieve a successful outcome is very rewarding. The resilience of the children we serve is amazing. They have serious medical problems on top of living in poverty. And yet they laugh and smile. When I recruit for this project, I tell the lawyers at my firm, ‘Here is an opportunity for you to make a real difference in a family’s life.’”

Peter W. Tomlinson, Patterson, Belknap

At the request of a nurse practitioner at a matched hospital, a lawyer visited an apartment and found mold and water leaks. He met with the mother, father and uncle. He arranged with the landlord to make repairs and was present on a weekend to ensure that the repairs were properly carried out. “This was a great family. Very welcoming. I would speak with them regularly. I learned that the father works on Fulton Street in a Chinese takeout place. To save money, everyday he bicycles from uptown Manhattan to work. Years ago, when my own family came from Pakistan to New York, we lived in a housing project on Coney Island, so I very much identify with this family.”

Muhammad Fairidi, Patterson, Belknap

A corporate lawyer who represented a family, one of whose four children is a teenage girl with leukemia: “The mother, who had to leave her job to take care of her daughter, was very impressive, so organized, so involved in the care of her family, so courageous. We were able to obtain Social Security Insurance benefits for the daughter. Then I helped another family to secure an appropriate special education placement for their son and assisted them on arranging transportation for the boy from home to school and back. These cases have helped me to be more confident as a lawyer, to solve problems on my own and deal with clients and adversaries. It makes me feel good to have made a difference in the lives of these families.”

Gordon Cruess, Cravath

“There is little you do as a corporate lawyer that draws you into emotional dramas. I think these cases bring out the best of your talents and skills. I worked on a housing matter with the family of a teenage boy who was very ill. This young man held the family together— a kind, mature, loving spirit. I would meet with him at the hospital. He was going through so much with his illness and the added burden of wanting to make sure his mom and dad were taken care of. Sadly, he died, but we are continuing to represent the family. As the father of four young children myself, working on these cases means a lot to me.”

Clyde Tinnen, Cravath

“All parents want safe, healthy housing for their children. It is difficult for parents to avail themselves of the law on their own. Dealing with a landlord is a formidable task. The skills I have acquired through my pro bono work— client contact, strategizing, representation— are applicable to the commercial work I do at my firm. I wouldn’t trade this work for the world.”

Emily L. Saffitz, Dewey & LeBoeuf

Every one of us is given the gift of life, and what a strange gift it is. If it is preserved jealously and selfishly it impoverishes and saddens, but if it is spent for others it enriches and beautifies.

- Ignazio Silone, Bread and Wine

CHILDREN

SCHOOL-BASED CHILDREN'S PROJECT

In this project, VOLS matches law firms with schools to address civil legal problems facing families that threaten to disrupt the education of their children. As examples of such legal problems, an eviction can lead to children having to withdraw from the school they are attending— a calamity for the child and family. Or an interruption in public benefits can cause deep distress in the life of a family which will adversely impact on the education of their children.

The VOLS School Project works at these six schools:

Bronx Lab School, a high school in the Gun Hill section of the Bronx, matched by VOLS with WilmerHale;

The Bushwick Campus, four high schools in Brooklyn on a single campus, matched with Simpson Thacher & Bartlett;

Dream Charter School, an elementary school in East Harlem, matched with Baker & McKenzie;

KIPP Academy, a middle school in the Mott Haven/Morrisania section of the Bronx, matched with Debevoise & Plimpton;

Public School 11, an elementary school in Chelsea, matched with Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel; and

Public School 146, an elementary school in East Harlem, matched with Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson.

In selecting sites, VOLS is on the lookout for schools where there will be a strong commitment to the project, and a welcome extended to the lawyers to integrate the project into the fabric of the school, so that the lawyers become a part of the team working to improve the chances for success for the children. Volunteer lawyers and VOLS staff conduct sessions with parents and school administrators to explain the project and discuss legal issues.

In 2008, 86 families were served by lawyers in the VOLS school-based Children's Project. 121 lawyers and 28 legal assistants participated.

school staff say...

“In neighborhoods like Bushwick, families working to help their children achieve a better future sometimes end up distracted and overwhelmed by issues beyond their control. These challenges can force parents to de-prioritize the very things that will enable their children to fulfill their potential. Furthermore, immigrant and low-income families often lack the resources or know-how to navigate the network of services available to them. And, unfortunately, many schools also lack the resources to meet all the challenges their families face. It is therefore incredibly valuable to have VOLS and lawyers from Simpson Thacher & Bartlett working right in our building where we can easily direct families to obtain support addressing complex problems beyond our staff members’ capacity. Our experience with VOLS has been 100% positive. The lawyers are responsive, professional and have proven to be remarkably effective in helping families with issues ranging from accessing public benefits to avoiding eviction. VOLS makes it possible for many of our families to achieve the foundation of stability necessary for their children to remain focused and successful in school.”

Mark P. Rush, Principal, The Bushwick School for Social Justice

“P.S. 146 is a unique school in East Harlem with a very diverse population of impoverished, physically challenged, homeless and immigrant children. I speak for my colleagues when I say that we are all grateful to VOLS and the lawyers at Fried, Frank. We have known many children over the years who weren’t able to attend school or focus on academics because of legal issues affecting their families. Now our children have access to expert advice regarding problems with immigration, health issues, public benefits, housing and custody issues. Our families have also been empowered, receiving invaluable lessons about advocacy and learning to petition institutions on their own behalf.”

Helaine Eisenberg, LCSW, Public School 146

“As a social worker in the South Bronx, I have often witnessed the joy, compassion and despair of our families. VOLS and the lawyers at Debevoise & Plimpton have allowed our families to see light in the face of darkness. Our families are treated with dignity and compassion. The partnership with Debevoise has been an amazing experience – helping families to remain in their homes, assistance on immigration issues, and letting families know that there are people who care about them and are committed to helping make their lives just a little bit easier. The KIPP Academy family would like to thank VOLS and the Debevoise lawyers for their dedication and hard work on behalf of our families.”

Itzel Inniss, Social Worker, KIPP Academy

lawyers say...

“Helping poor families is incredibly rewarding. They have no one to pay attention to their legal problems. We are very responsive to their needs. We call them back promptly. Our clients are amazed by this attention and concern and are deeply grateful.”

Jessica J. Glass, Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel

“The kids at the school where we work are proud of what they are doing. They take learning seriously. It is the same with their teachers and social workers. I like the variety of the cases we work on: Immigration, housing, family law, guardianship and wills. I meet with our parent-clients at the school, at the firm, or sometimes at a Starbucks in the Bronx.”

Brita M. Siepker, Debevoise & Plimpton

“I feel great about the project and participating in it. The families with legal problems I’ve helped probably would never have looked for or gotten legal representation. A recent immigration case is a prime example of why what we do is so important. The student realized his predicament only when he was about to graduate from high school and apply to college. If it hadn’t been for our legal clinic at the Bushwick Campus, where his immigration problem was identified, the door to legalizing his status might have closed forever. Now there is a possibility of achieving this. The support and guidance of Liz Markuci [Director of the VOLS Immigration Project] has been invaluable.”

Lisa Freeman, Simpson, Thacher & Bartlett

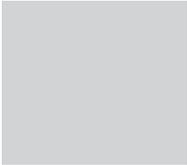
A partner who supervises this project at his firm: “My mother taught in a New York City public school and my son, through Teach for America, is a teacher in Philadelphia. We are matched by VOLS with a community school not far from where I live. Helping children is very gratifying for us at the firm.”

Alan R. Friedman, Kramer Levin

“At our initial meeting, we explain to parents why we are doing this work. As lawyers, we say, we have a professional obligation to provide legal services to people in need. I enjoy one-on-one client contact and legal counseling. I am very much aware of the enormous impact that we are having on our clients who live very stressful lives.”

Daniel Z. Sinrod, Debevoise & Plimpton

“These families are desperate to secure their basic rights to shelter, something that obviously impacts their children’s ability to succeed in school.



Some of our clients live under terrible conditions, with rodent infestation, cold air coming through broken window frames, open wires. The work we lawyers do is a valuable life lesson for us. We see the power of what a lawyer can accomplish very concretely.”

Jennifer Coher, Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson

THE ELDERLY POOR

In the VOLS Elderly Project, pro bono legal services are provided to poor persons living in Manhattan who are over the age of 60. VOLS conducts monthly legal clinics at twelve senior centers where seniors can discuss their legal concerns in confidence, receive legal advice and obtain referral to a volunteer lawyer for representation. We also provide services to clients from an additional 80 community-based agencies serving the elderly poor. Areas of legal assistance include wills, medical directives, powers of attorney, housing, consumer matters and Medicaid. Over 100 lawyers serve on our Elderly Project volunteer attorney roster.

In 2008, the VOLS Elderly Project provided legal services on 1596 cases. 386 of the cases were referred to volunteer lawyers. About 400 of the seniors served were homebound. Last year, the project also conducted 24 legal information sessions for seniors and senior center staff on life-planning and debt-related issues, reaching 700 seniors.

The VOLS legal clinic sites for the Elderly Project are:

EAST SIDE

The Educational Alliance Senior Program - 197 East Broadway
University Settlement Senior Center - 189 Allen Street
Community Lounge for Senior Citizens - 155 East 22nd Street
The Carter Burden Center for the Aging - 1484 First Avenue
The Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Senior Center - 415 East 93rd Street

WEST SIDE

Our Lady of Pompei Church- 25 Carmine Street
Hudson Guild-Fulton Center Senior Services - 119 Ninth Avenue
Encore Community Services Senior Center - 239 West 49th Street
Goddard Riverside Senior Center - 593 Columbus Avenue
Abyssinian Development's Abby Towers Residence - 50 West 131st Street
Central Harlem Senior Services - 120 West 140th Street
Riverstone Senior Life Services - 99 Fort Washington Avenue

senior center staff say...

“Whether giving advice and direction to staff through phone consultations, presentations and informational emails, or meeting with clients in their homes, or through monthly legal clinics, VOLS has provided invaluable assistance and has been instrumental in enabling clients to remain where they most want to be— in their homes...Oscar Straus [Director of the VOLS Elderly Project] has always been available to assist clients and answer questions from staff regarding clients. If there’s one thing that stands out and that everyone agrees is significant, it is the fact that whenever they call the VOLS Elderly Project with a question, or to seek advice, they always receive a call back. Not only is there a return call, but they get to speak to Oscar – that encourages them to persevere. This optimism and belief that even the most entrenched bureaucracies can be responsive has been as important to us as the actual advice and guidance that we receive.”

*William J. Dionne, Executive Director,
The Carter Burden Center for the Aging*

“Before the VOLS Elderly Project, at Abyssinian Towers, and in the surrounding Harlem community, there was no such service available. Now seniors can have lawyers prepare for them basic life planning documents. Seniors have told me that the Elderly Project is ‘a blessing,’ ‘a godsend.’ Seniors now have a clear understanding about what life planning entails.”

*Cynthia Scarborough, Senior Service Coordinator,
Abyssinian Towers*

“We are very appreciative of VOLS and the work that it does for our seniors. These seniors are generally low income and would not be able to afford an attorney. Often their legal problems have to do with housing or debt issues. Not only are the lawyers helpful to our seniors, but the project has been a wonderful resource to my case work staff who have questions about issues that they are working on with clients. We are grateful to VOLS for providing this wonderful service.”

*Amy Loewenberg, Director of Senior Services,
The Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Senior Center*

“In Washington Heights we serve a large Hispanic population. I can’t imagine surviving without the VOLS Elderly Project and the wonderful work of Oscar Straus, Nelson Gutiérrez and the volunteer lawyers. We receive help for our clients on eviction issues, debt issues, credit card problems, and life planning issues. For our clients, lawyers have not been a part of their lives. Now lawyers bring them comfort and assurance. ‘Check with VOLS’ is the refrain here when a legal issue arises.”

*Rebecca Carel, Executive Director,
Riverstone Senior Life Services*

lawyers say...

“About half the clients I work with are Spanish-speaking. In one recent case, I worked with two homebound elderly sisters, 92 and 93 years old. I do like two or three visits with clients, but after the first meeting I was contacted by the family because the older sister was in the hospital – she had had a heart attack over the weekend. I was able to go to the hospital on a Sunday and we completed a power of attorney on the spot. She made it through, thankfully, and I kept working with the family.”

Daniel Gomez, Verizon Corporation

“I chose to work with the elderly because they’re a particularly vulnerable group in society. It’s delightful to receive thank you notes. I’ve received several. That doesn’t happen in my normal practice. I can tell that the people we work with are deeply touched.”

Michael Bretholz, Davis Polk & Wardwell

“I work with elderly people for personal reasons. Both of my parents worked when I was a child, so I have the fondest memories of wonderful days spent with my grandmothers. This project allows me to interact with folks, to help them think through legal issues, which often have emotional repercussions. Although my clients may have few possessions, they still have to consider who among their family members or friends should receive a valued object.”

Norberto Quintana, Davis Polk

Our great and glorious masterpiece is to live appropriately.

- Montaigne

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ADVOCACY PROJECT

In this, our 25th anniversary year, VOLS is launching the Unemployment Insurance Advocacy Project to provide pro bono legal services to claimants who have been denied unemployment insurance benefits. Lawyers participating in the project will represent clients at hearings before administrative law judges and may appeal adverse rulings to the Unemployment Insurance Appeal Board.

At a time of widespread economic distress, this project provides an opportunity for lawyers to relieve some of the anguish and suffering being experienced by many of our fellow New Yorkers. Participating lawyers will assist individuals who find themselves jobless, some unable to meet basic living expenses, like rent.

At hearings following denial of benefits by the New York State Department of Labor, unrepresented claimants prevail only 25 percent of the time. When represented at a hearing, a claimant's success rate more than doubles.

Both transactional lawyers and litigators will participate in the project. VOLS will screen cases and provide training and experienced mentors to assist participants. The Unemployment Insurance Appeal Board, which oversees the hearing and appeal process, has pledged its full cooperation in support of the project.

What is the use of justice if it doesn't hammer out
a shield for innocent people?

- Jean Girardoux, Tiger at the Gates

INCARCERATED MOTHERS

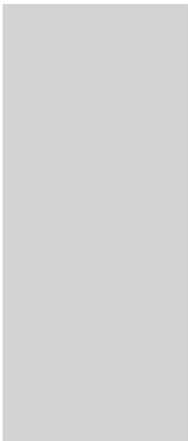
Lawyers participating in the VOLS Incarcerated Mothers Law Project provide one-on-one legal counseling to mothers on child custody and visiting issues at the city's jail on Rikers Island and at two state medium security prisons— Taconic Correctional Facility located in Bedford Hills and Bayview Correctional Facility located at 550 West 20th Street in Manhattan. Over 5,000 children have a mother incarcerated in a New York state prison.

In 2008, 152 mothers in jail or prison received individual legal counseling from pro bono lawyers in this project. A total of 347 individual legal visits with mothers were conducted by lawyers, since many of the mothers are seen multiple times because of the complexity of their cases.

Additional mothers attended group legal information sessions conducted by lawyers. These sessions focus on helping incarcerated mothers know their rights and understand their responsibilities as parents. Topics include involuntary and voluntary foster care placement; kinship foster care; reunification; participation in permanency planning hearings; termination of parental rights; conditional surrenders; legal standards for establishing custody and visitation; and guardianship.

Mothers have a strong desire to continue their relationships with their children while incarcerated. For many such mothers, visits with their children are infrequent or non-existent. There are serious legal consequences to this separation. Mothers face great obstacles to making visits happen. They need forceful legal advocates to work on their behalf.

lawyers say...



“We serve as advocates for a constantly overlooked and underserved population. While these women have broken the law, imprisonment is a sentence that punishes not only the wrongdoer, but their children as well. I do this work for the mothers whose children provide them with a reason to keep going and to stay out of prison once they are released. Preventing contact between an incarcerated mother and her child is devastating and depressing. I like to hope that the work we do with these women and their families contributes to breaking the cycle of incarceration that so often pervades generations of families. And I know that our presence in these correctional facilities serves as a beacon of hope for all the women incarcerated there. I cannot think of a more essential and fulfilling experience.”

Jennifer Diana, Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel

A partner at her firm: “As a mother, I can so identify with these mothers who work hard to maintain or re-establish relations with their children. I have worked with scores of incarcerated mothers and know that they have a deep love for their children. We assist on custody, visitation and guardianship issues. We help mothers to become connected with family members. We help mothers to find their own voice- to re-establish communication with their own families.”

Sharon Katz, Davis Polk & Wardwell

“I am drawn to this work, both as a practicing lawyer and as someone with a social work degree. Also, my mom was a pediatrician who worked with foster care children. Our clients are thankful for small things, like a visit from their child or a photograph, or a telephone conversation with their children. Sometimes the news that we must deliver is not great - like parental rights have been terminated. From relationships with their children, these mothers derive much of value and a sense of worth and self.”

Daphnée Saget Woodley, Dewey & LeBoeuf

clients say...

An incarcerated mother had not seen her son in nearly eight years. Her volunteer lawyer, after meeting with the mother in prison, successfully advocated with the father on the desirability of reuniting mother and son. After receiving a visit from her son, the mother wrote her lawyer: “I want to thank you so, so much for working hard on my case and never giving up on me or my child. I really appreciate everything you have done to bring me my son into my life. You have made me a happy woman and you have accomplished to make my dream come true reuniting mother and child to have the chance to see each other.”

“I would like to express my appreciation to you for assisting me in locating my family...We are working on rebuilding our relationship.”

“I want to thank you so much for all of your help. I did get my visit with my son on July 4th. I’m still in shock! I can’t believe how grown my son is. I just kept staring at him in amazement! That was truly a blessing to see him.”

“I want to take time to thank you for not leaving/giving up on me. I know I can be very...What’s that word you used? (Yeah, that!). But you found it somewhere deep within you to push past that and move forward with me. No one in my life has ever thought enough of me to stick it out with me and because of your dedication, I’ve learned patience and self-control.”

PERSONS WITH HIV/AIDS

Over twenty years ago, in response to the growing AIDS epidemic in New York City, the VOLS AIDS Project was formed to greater involve trusts and estates lawyers in providing pro bono legal services to people with AIDS.

Initially, the VOLS AIDS Project served those who were very ill and facing imminent death. Due to dramatic changes in the course and treatment of AIDS, far fewer people are being treated in hospitals. Now our services are provided in out-patient and community-based settings, although volunteer lawyers continue to assist persons who are homebound or in the hospital, when needed. Lifetime planning remains the major focus of the project.

The VOLS HIV/AIDS Project serves these sites:

AIDS Service Center NYC (Simpson Thacher & Bartlett);

GMHC Department of Advocacy (Proskauer Rose);

New York-Presbyterian Hospital's Center for Special Studies (Sullivan & Cromwell); and

South Brooklyn Legal Services (Katten Muchin Rosenman).

A partner at a participating law firm, upon ending his service as a VOLS board member, wrote:

“I, and other Members of our firm, will continue to participate actively and passionately in the VOLS AIDS project. With gratitude to VOLS for having given trusts and estates lawyers like ourselves a unique opportunity to apply our skills pro bono publico.”

Help the poor.

- From Chekhov's Last Will and Testament

LOW-INCOME MICROENTREPRENEURS

The VOLS Microenterprise Project provides pro bono legal assistance to low-income microentrepreneurs. Many such people have a skill in a particular area—food preparation, clothing design, operating a beauty salon, child care, writing—and have the entrepreneurial spirit to start their own business, but have little practical knowledge about setting up a business. Many are looking to gradually expand a home based business. The availability of legal advice is very helpful to persons of low-income and limited business experience.

VOLS recruits law firms for this project; matches the law firms with non profit economic development agencies in New York City working with microentrepreneurs; and provides ongoing project coordination. The agencies identify low-income microentrepreneurs needing legal assistance and volunteer lawyers provide one on one representation on business related issues and make presentations to groups of microentrepreneurs on basic legal issues, such as the appropriate structure for a business, or leasing commercial space.

The microentrepreneurs served by the project reflect the diversity of the city's population. They are native-born and immigrants to the United States. Some are supplementing their salary through microenterprise activity, while others will be totally dependent on income from such activity. Some have been recently laid off from their jobs. Being financially vulnerable, they are in no position to fail. Working with lawyers can greatly increase the chances for success.

In 2008, 190 microentrepreneurs were served by 214 lawyers from 18 law firms and one corporation.

To all mankind they were addressed, these cries for help
still ringing in our ears! But at this place, at this moment of
time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not.

- Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*

OUR PARTNERS IN THE VOLS MICROENTERPRISE PROJECT

LAW FIRMS

Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft

Chadbourne & Parke

Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton

Debevoise & Plimpton

Dorsey & Whitney

Hughes Hubbard & Reed

Katten Muchin Rosenman

Kaye Scholer

Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel

JPMorgan Chase Law Department

Nixon Peabody

Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe

Patterson, Belknap, Webb & Tyler

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES

Pace University Small Business, *Citywide*

NYC Business Solutions, *Bronx*

Acción New York, *Citywide*

Business Outreach Center Network,
*Chinatown, Hunts Point, Jackson Heights,
Harlem, South Brooklyn and Staten Island*

Project Enterprise, *Harlem and
East New York*

Brooklyn Economic Development Corp.

NYC Business Solutions at Science, Industry
and Business Library of the New York
Public Library

Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE)

Brooklyn Cooperative Federal Credit Union

Business Outreach Center Network

NYC Business Solutions, *Brooklyn*

Field Center for Entrepreneurs at
Baruch College

CAMBA Economic Development
Corporation, *Central Brooklyn*

LAW FIRMS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES

Simpson Thacher & Bartlett

NYC Business Solutions, *Manhattan*

Stroock & Stroock & Lavan

Pratt Area Community Council
Fort Greene, Clinton Hill and Bedford Stuyvesant

Sullivan & Cromwell

Renaissance Economic Development
Corporation, *Lower East Side and Flushing*

Weil, Gotshal & Manges

St. Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation
Corporation, *Williamsburg-Greenpoint*

White & Case

South Bronx Overall Economic
Development Corporation

WilmerHale

NYC Business Solutions, *Brooklyn*

lawyers say...

“Our clients are excited about their business ideas. They are like sponges soaking up information, taking-in everything you tell them. Whether working with microentrepreneurs on legal issues on a one-on-one basis, or making presentations to groups of microentrepreneurs on the topic, “Starting and Operating a Business,” I find them great to work with. These microentrepreneurs will have a positive economic impact on their Brooklyn communities. Everyone at my firm— partners, associates and paralegals— enjoy working on this project.”

Michael Mueller, Nixon Peabody

“My client is a plumber working with his father. He very much wanted to obtain a master plumber’s license. To obtain the license would be a real step up for him. We did obtain the license and then he identified a commercial space in the Bronx and we reviewed the lease for him, proposing various changes which the landlord accepted. We also helped him set up as a business entity.”

Brian Ferry, Simpson Thacher & Bartlett

“I helped my client select an appropriate business structure for his Internet start-up company. There were also intellectual property issues concerning the website. I also worked with the seller— an Ethiopian— of Ethiopian honey wine, developing a standard form of contract for use with his

distributors, and provided legal assistance to protect the brand name. It is exciting to work with clients like this. They are high energy people, challenging to keep up with.”

Julia Koben, Simpson Thacher

“Two friends had a public relations company. I drafted contracts and provided assistance on intellectual property issues. This was a good learning experience for me in terms of solving legal problems and in the area of human relations.”

Makiko Harunari, Simpson Thacher

“My clients have been Spanish-speaking. One, whose family is from Ecuador, owns a clothing store. The premises were flooded. I assisted her in working out a financial settlement with the landlord concerning the flooding and then worked on a renewal of the lease. She is a fabulous client. She emailed me in Spanish– I will translate the message for you: I wanted to thank you for all your time, support and tell you that I will never have the words to express my gratitude for your attention to my problems and that all your help makes me believe that human beings who are willing to help others still exist.”

Joshua Kalish, Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton

“I have represented eight microentrepreneurs, largely on intellectual property issues. Some clients are sophisticated, some have never been in business before. Some have a great idea and are enthusiastic to start a business, others have been laid off and are looking for a source of income. With start ups, the sense of enthusiasm is contagious. For existing businesses, it is exciting to help take them to the next level. As a junior associate, I am always trying to learn as much as I can. This is a great way to do that.”

David B. Sherman, Katten Muchin Rosenman

“I work with Spanish language immigrants who are aspiring microentrepreneurs. One client I assisted sells DVDs and CDs. She wanted to lease space in the Jackson Heights subway station. This involved working with her to put together a business plan and numerous other documents for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. We communicated with each other in Spanish. She comes from Ecuador and I was born in Cuba and lived in Colombia prior to coming to the United States. Here was an opportunity for me to help someone out and have direct client exposure which is not always possible in the high profile deals at my firm.”

Dalman Garcia, Cleary, Gottlieb

Outreach to the Legal Community

Through lawyer recruitment and training, the web, and print publications, VOLS staff promotes pro bono activity, both for its own projects and for those of other organizations. We also work to promote access to justice and work with coalitions on poverty law issues. Here are some examples:

LAWYER RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

- VOLS encourages lawyer participation by recruiting law firms to take the VOLS Pro Bono Pledge. VOLS training events are posted online in the “New York City Legal Services and Pro Bono Training Calendar” at www.probono.net/ny/calendar. The VOLS Elderly Project trains lawyers on life planning and housing repair issues. The VOLS Incarcerated Mothers Law Project conducts training on family law issues. The Unemployment Insurance Advocacy Project trains lawyers to represent claimants at hearings. VOLS staff provides training on immigration issues.

- The VOLS website, www.volsprobono.org, provides information on our projects and how lawyers can become involved.

- The VOLS Children’s Project Practice area on Pro Bono Net, www.probono.net/ny/children, contains training materials and project forms that are shared among firms participating in the project.

- VOLS participates in a collaborative project with the Department of Pro Bono Affairs of the New York State Bar Association, the New York City Bar Association and Pro Bono Net in the *New York State Pro Bono Opportunities Guide*, a searchable database of pro bono opportunities statewide, available at www.volsprobono.org/volunteer.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

- LawHelp/NY (www.lawhelp.org/ny), an on-line legal information system, enables low-income persons and their advocates to identify legal services providers and access legal information and self-help materials in one centralized place. VOLS was a founding member of the LawHelp consortium which oversees the project. The consortium is a collaboration among the City Bar Justice Center, The Legal Aid Society of New York, Legal Services NYC, Pro Bono Net, the New York State Bar Association, the Empire Justice Center, Legal Assistance of Western New York, Legal Services of the Hudson Valley, the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York, and Nassau/Suffolk Law Services.

COALITIONS AND BAR COMMITTEES

- The VOLS hospital-based Children's Project is a member of the national Medical Legal Partnership Network and VOLS is a member of the New York State Coalition of Medical-Legal Partnerships.
- VOLS is a member of the Unemployment Insurance Coalition, a group of advocates and lawyers who practice in this area.
- A VOLS staff member serves on the Steering Committee of the Abyssinian Development Corporation's Neighborhood NORC (Naturally Occurring Retirement Community) and on the NORC Advisory Committee of the Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Senior Center.
- VOLS staff members serve on the New York City Bar Association Committee on Legal Problems of the Elderly and on the Committee on Pro Bono and Legal Services.

VOLS PUBLICATIONS

- *Pro Bono Forum*, the VOLS newsletter.
- The VOLS Elderly Project publishes *A Guide to Burial Assistance and Funeral Planning for New Yorkers in Need*. The guide contains burial assistance information for social workers who work with elderly poor New Yorkers, and for friends and families of poor persons who have died. It is available on the VOLS website.
- Over a nineteen-year period, from 1987-2006, Bill Dean's column, "Pro Bono Digest," appeared 146 times in the *New York Legal Journal*. The column highlighted the wide range of pro bono opportunities available to lawyers in New York City. Selected columns appear on the VOLS website.

Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little.

- Edmund Burke

VOLS Pro Bono Pledge

Law firms with which we work are asked to take the VOLS Pro Bono Pledge to meet, or exceed, the VOLS annual goal of providing at least an average of 30 hours of qualifying pro bono work per attorney. The VOLS definition of qualifying pro bono work, with a few exceptions, is limited to providing free civil legal services to poor people, or to organizations serving poor people.

VOLS conducts an annual pro bono survey of our participating law firms. In 2008, the law firms taking the VOLS Pro Bono Pledge contributed a total of 1,117,907 hours of free legal services to poor people, or to organizations assisting the poor, through participation in the projects of public interest and legal services organizations, including VOLS projects.

These 43 law firms have both taken and fulfilled the VOLS Pro Bono Pledge:

ARNOLD & PORTER	LATHAM & WATKINS
CADWALADER, WICKERSHAM & TAFT	MANATT, PHELPS & PHILLIPS
CAHILL GORDON & REINDEL	MILBANK, TWEED, HADLEY & McCLOY
CHADBOURNE & PARKE	MORRISON & FOERSTER
CLEARY, GOTTlieb, STEEN & HAMILTON	NIXON PEABODY
CLIFFORD CHANCE US	O'MELVENY & MYERS
COVINGTON & BURLING	ORRICK, HERRINGTON & SUTCLIFFE
CRAWATH, SWAINE & MOORE	PATTERSON, BELKNAP, WEBB & TYLER
DAVIS POLK & WARDWELL	PAUL, WEISS, RIFKIND, WHARTON & GARRISON
DEBEVOISE & PLIMPTON	PILLSBURY WINTHROP SHAW PITTMAN
DEWEY & LeBOEUF	PROSKAUER ROSE
DLA PIPER RUDNICK GRAY CARY US	SCHULTE ROTH & ZABEL
DORSEY & WHITNEY	SHEARMAN & STERLING
FRIED, FRANK, HARRIS, SHRIVER & JACOBSON	SIMPSON THACHER & BARTLETT
GOODWIN PROCTER	SKADDEN, ARPS, SLATE, MEAGHER & FLOM
HOLLAND & KNIGHT	STROOCK & STROOCK & LAVAN
HUGHES HUBBARD & REED	SULLIVAN & CROMWELL
HUNTON & WILLIAMS	WEIL, GOTSHAL & MANGES
KATTEN MUCHIN ROSENMAN	WHITE & CASE
KAYE SCHOLER	WILLKIE FARR & GALLAGHER
KELLEY, DRYE & WARREN	WILMER CUTLER PICKERING HALE & DORR
KRAMER LEVIN NAFTALIS & FRANKEL	

Conclusion

This 25th anniversary publication of Volunteers of Legal Service is dedicated to the men and women of the New York City bar who, in addition to meeting their private practice and personal commitments, undertake “pro bono publico” legal representation, thereby fulfilling their obligation as lawyers, as set forth in the Rules of Professional Conduct.

And it is dedicated to the public-spirited law firms and corporate law departments in New York City who encourage their lawyers to do pro bono work.

Through the work of VOLS in the years ahead, it is hoped that many more lawyers will join the ranks of those who perform pro bono service. May all members of our profession heed the words of Hippocrates, writing of the obligations of another of the great professions: “Sometimes give your services for nothing, calling to mind a previous benefaction or present satisfaction. And if there be an opportunity of serving one who is a stranger in financial straits, give full assistance to all such... For where there is love of man, there is also love of the art.”

I find there is no worthy pursuit but the idea of
doing some good for the world.

- Keats

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“And only now when I am living, or at least trying” (Pierre’s modesty made him correct himself) “to live for others, only now have I understood all the happiness of life.”

- *Tolstoy, War and Peace*