

United in the Pursuit of Leadership Initiatives for Tomorrow (UPLIFT)

LSNJ recently hosted its second annual United in the Pursuit of Leadership Initiatives for Tomorrow (UPLIFT) event, bringing together current and former Legal Services interns, new staff attorneys, and more experienced advocates from across the state in conversation and community.

The event is part of the Emerging Leaders for Justice Initiative (ELJI), a broader effort to identify and inspire future leaders in public interest law and racial, social, and economic justice advocacy. Attendees included current and former Deborah T. Poritz fellows and PICS (Princeton Internships in Civic Service) interns, the inaugural Melville “De” Miller, Jr.

Memorial Fund fellow, new staff attorneys, and recent law graduates.

Connections were made over a common commitment to public interest, access to justice, and racial equity. Students and recent graduates shared the inspiration for their career choices with stories of direct interactions with the U.S. immigration process, personal experiences of poverty, racism, or homelessness, and prior experiences working with low-income families in marginalized or underserved communities. Advocates spoke about their experiences as Legal Services attorneys, especially noting the value of a statewide system of support, mentoring, collaboration,

and the ability to offer these same benefits to students and pro bono volunteers.

A panel of statewide staff addressed questions submitted in advance by attendees, with topics ranging from career planning, mentorship, and networking to effective collaboration, imposter syndrome, and work-life balance.

Maura Sanders, LSNJ’s Chief Counsel of Housing, Healthcare, and Government Safety Net Programs, highlighted the “huge strength amongst this community” of new advocates and attorneys and offered, in conclusion, that what ultimately gives her hope is everyone in attendance at the event—their commitment, their passion, and how they approach the world. “All of you in this room—you are going to make things better, and that’s what fuels me and keeps me doing this work.”

Organizers aspire to keep the group connected through additional programming, social media, and a shared commitment to social justice.



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President's Message



Dawn K. Miller, Esq.

President, Legal Services of New Jersey

With the fall season upon us, I would like to share a message of gratitude to our incredible community of advocates, volunteers, and friends. Your support of Legal Services' work, mission, and clients is needed, appreciated, and deeply impactful.

In September, LSNJ's Poverty Research Institute (PRI) released the 2022 New Jersey True Poverty Tracker, a comprehensive report on populations experiencing deprivation in New Jersey. The PRI report provides a stark reminder and important benchmark of the economic situation prevailing in New Jersey even before the pandemic:

- In 2019, nearly 2.9 million New Jerseyans—or 33.3% of residents—experienced deprivation, or “true poverty.” This includes 42% of children in New Jersey.
- Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino residents experienced deprivation at double the rate of their non-Hispanic white and Asian neighbors.
- Households with children—particularly those headed by single women—experienced the highest rates of true poverty, including 83% of households headed by single Hispanic women and 77% of households headed by single Black women.

In the years since, the pandemic has exacerbated these inequities. For low-income and other vulnerable New Jerseyans, the pandemic continues to pose new and compounding challenges, from eviction to health crises. And as many pandemic-related moratoriums, assistance programs, and protections expire, New Jersey's most vulnerable face a new wave of hardship in bankruptcy, debt collection, and foreclosure. Meanwhile, rising costs have made basic necessities even harder to afford.

Across the state, Legal Services advocates and volunteers continue to step up to meet an unprecedented need for civil legal services. We are pleased to announce a new expungement project and partnership with DLA Piper, which expands LSNJ's efforts to ensure that New Jerseyans do not face barriers in areas like housing, custody, or employment as a consequence of former involvement in the justice system. We also proudly celebrate the second annual United in the Pursuit of Leadership Initiatives for Tomorrow (UPLIFT) event, which brought together current and former interns, new staff attorneys, and experienced advocates from our statewide Legal Services system in conversation, community, and a shared commitment to public interest work.

As we work to meet our clients' needs and tackle new and evolving challenges, I thank you again for your support and hope you will stay involved with Legal Services in the coming months—as a volunteer, on social media, by donating to our annual Campaign for Justice, and by joining us as we commemorate the 55th anniversary of Legal Services in New Jersey on December 8th at the Addison Park in Aberdeen. I hope to see you there!

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"Prior to coming to law school, I've worked with displaced people in a lot of different capacities, so I came to law school to do immigration work. And I think everyone deserves representation and should have access to free representation."

- Hayley Schultz

"I got into public interest and immigration law specifically because I have spent the last few years going through the immigration process with some family members and it just illustrated how difficult and complex it is, and the need for attorneys to help people through it."

- Andra Lehotay de Leon



"I grew up in Newark, so I've always, there's always been an opportunity for me to organize. I've done a lot of work in the community ... so I want to take that to a professional level, get some professional skills that can also aid in that sort of organizing work I do."

- Nicholas Ayala-Auffant

Join Us
in commemorating

55

YEARS OF ADVANCING JUSTICE

New Jersey Legal Services
55th Anniversary Dinner

Thursday, December 8

Cocktail Reception: 5:30 p.m.
Dinner & Program: 7:00 p.m.

The Addison Park

150 Highway 35
Aberdeen, New Jersey 07735

\$175 per person
RSVP by November 21



In advance of this special commemoration, LSNJ has produced a new video series that presents oral history clips by decade. Videos include reflections from early staff members, such as Rafael Aviles, Carl Bisgaier, Gerry Brennan, Pat Budd, Felipe Chavana, David Dugan, Ken Goldman, Ann Gorman, Bill Matri-cian, Paul Mullin, Jose Ortiz, Connie Pascale, Olga Pomar, Maura Sanders, and Stanley Sheats. Together, these highlights offer an overview of the breadth of work in the rich history of New Jersey's Legal Services system. Click on any of the links to view these videos on our YouTube channel.

Legal Services in the 1970s

Early housing, family, and workers' rights cases, legal right publications, and the politics of advocacy efforts in Camden.

Legal Services in the 1980s

The development of LSNJ's training program, landlord-tenant and replacement housing efforts in Newark and Mt. Laurel, federal restrictions on Legal Services work, and the dynamics of new local offices.

Legal Services in the 1990s

The continued housing and landlord-tenant advocacy, growth of the South Jersey program, and the creation of the Anti-Poverty Network.

Legal Services in the 2000s

The merger of local offices into regional programs and several milepost cases in Camden and Newark.

Legal Services in the 2010s

The Mount Holly v. Mt. Holly Gardens Citizens in Action, Inc. case.



New Jersey
Legal Services 1966-2021





Lee M. Perlman



In celebration of National Pro Bono Week, LSNJ's Pro Bono Initiative recognizes Lee M. Perlman and his legal team for their outstanding contributions to the pro bono program and their remarkable service provided on behalf of Legal Services clients. From his Cherry Hill law office, Perlman and his team help consumers and businesses with bankruptcies, and financial and debt restructurings.

Perlman never refuses to help and has been accepting referrals from our office since 2015. He has assisted dozens of clients, many of whom he welcomed during the pandemic. Understanding the difficult impact of the pandemic on our most vulnerable clients, Perlman graciously offered to help every single client we referred to him in the South Jersey area. He continues to accept client referrals,

working both in person and remotely, when feasible, and provides assistance locally with our regional program South Jersey Legal Services.

In addition to his legal expertise and savvy, Perlman is known for his patience with Legal Services clients. He possesses a deep understanding of the circumstances facing low-income clients, particularly those with mental and physical disabilities. We often get feedback from clients extending personal thanks to Perlman and his office for their empathy, professionalism, and persistence, in addition to extremely valuable expert legal assistance.

"We would not be able to provide pro bono assistance to our clients without the help of people like Lee Perlman and his dedicated staff," says LSNJ Vice President Akil Roper.

"I've always felt since I started practicing that it's important to incorporate pro bono work into your practice."

- Lee M. Perlman

Annual Campaign for Justice

Our annual Campaign for Justice to raise funds for and awareness of the “justice gap” that affects low-income New Jersey residents will be starting soon. Please look for our campaign brochure and other communications throughout the fall. We hope you will invest in access to justice irrespective of a person’s income and make a tax-deductible donation to the 2022 Campaign for Justice!

Our Clients Speak

80-year-old Jacquelin grew up in Jersey City, where she attended public school and completed two years of high school before leaving school to pursue work. Her last full-time administrative job of 25 years ended in 1987, when she was 61. She then worked as a bus attendant for five years until a knee injury forced her retirement.

By the time Jacquelin moved to a senior residence five years ago, her home of 28 years had already gone into foreclosure. She was awarded it in her divorce, but had been unable to keep up with the payments. She con-

tacted the Foreclosure Defense Project for help completing the paperwork to try to get the proceeds from the foreclosure sale, which, she says was a very complicated process, made even more difficult due to delays during the COVID-19 peak.

With the help of Legal Services, Jacquelin received \$35,000, which she is holding in a savings account until the taxes are sorted out.

“I really don’t think I could have done it without them. With the pandemic at that specific time, it was a lot of work that they went through. ... I really appreciate them so, so much.”





www.LSNJLAW.org – A legal information website to help you learn more about your civil legal rights in New Jersey and access materials to help you represent yourself pro se.

www.LSNJ.org – An organizational website where you can learn about the work of Legal Services.

www.PROBONONJ.org – A site where attorneys can learn about and sign up for pro bono opportunities.

www.NJEJLA.org – The New Jersey Equal Justice Library and Archive is an educational resource that includes a history of Legal Services in New Jersey, interviews with current and former staff, and tributes to major contributors to social justice.

POVERTY to JUSTICE

A Quarterly Report from
Legal Services of New Jersey

To be added to the mailing list
for this newsletter, email
development@lsnj.org.

Poverty to Justice quarterly newsletter includes updates on our work, our clients, and our volunteers as we move together toward the shared mission of justice.



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