

UPLIFT Fosters Mentorship and Collaboration



On July 25, LSNJ held its annual United in the Pursuit of Leadership Initiatives for Tomorrow (UPLIFT) networking event at the Stage House Tavern in Somerset. Part of the Emerging Leaders for Justice Initiative, this event fosters mentorship and collaboration among current and former Legal Services fellows and interns, newer Legal Services attorneys, and experienced advocates. Now in its fourth year, returning participants have the opportunity to form deeper connections and reflect upon how their

internship helped shape their career paths.

Two attendees, Kimly Tran and Allison Pagliuca (above), returned for their second year as Poritz fellows. Stephen Northington, who interned at LSNJ and served as a 2023 Poritz fellow, announced that he accepted a full-time law graduate position with Central Jersey Legal Services. Raquiba Huq (right), LSNJ senior vice president, recalled the beginning of her career with New Jersey Legal Services as a law school Poritz fellow.



More about UPLIFT on page 7



Dawn K. Miller, Esq.
President, Legal Services of New Jersey

As we continue to work to ensure access to civil legal assistance for all who need it in New Jersey, we are encouraged by the incredible support of our volunteer lawyers, law firm sponsors and partners, student volunteers and interns, and so many others, including, of course, our dedicated and expert staff.

Highlighted in this newsletter are LSNJ's ongoing efforts to reduce racial inequality in housing; expand pro bono training opportuni-

ties; and bring students, young attorneys, and more senior Legal Services advocates together in community, mentorship, and commitment to the public interest. It has been deeply inspiring to witness the growth of our annual UPLIFT event—now in its fourth year! While I have had the immense pleasure and privilege of working within Legal Services for nearly all my career, I find myself motivated, energized, and reinvigorated by the commitment, perspective, ideas, and enthusiasm of our interns and new staff—the future of Legal Services in New Jersey. While we have much work to do to fully close the justice gap in our state, I know our critical mission is in capable hands.

To all our supporters: Thank you so much. We cannot carry on this work without you and are deeply grateful for your past and continued support! We hope you will stay tuned for the launch of our 2024 Campaign for Justice this fall and save the date for our 2025 Equal Justice Awards, scheduled for the evening of April 29, 2025 at The Palace at Somerset Park. As always, this event is a meaningful and moving tribute to volunteers and contributors across the state, and a powerful reminder that the quest for justice for all New Jerseyans is a collective, mutual, and ongoing effort.

Save the Date!

***2025 Equal Justice
Awards Reception***

Tuesday, April 29

The Palace at Somerset Park

Helen French Joins LSNJ

We are pleased to welcome Helen French as our new director of development. Helen brings a wealth of experience in fund development and has worked with both New Jersey based and national organizations, including Girl Scouts, Associate Alumnae of Douglass College, Planned Parenthood, and the Ms. Foundation for Women. Immediately prior to accepting this position, she worked for the National Association of Social Workers as a member of the senior management team in the New Jersey Chapter.

"I am thrilled to work with such a robust organization as Legal Services of New Jersey. For over 55 years our experienced staff has worked tirelessly on behalf of low-income clients. I can't wait to work with our stakeholders and volunteers to strengthen our mission and programs."



Left to Right: Helen French (LSNJ Director of Development), Maryann Flanagan Sutherland (LSNJ Vice President), Claudine Langrin (LSNJ Executive Vice President), Karol Corbin Walker (LSNJ Board Vice Chair and NJSBA Honoree), Dawn Miller (LSNJ President), and Marjorie Perry (LSNJ Board Member)

Congratulations to LSNJ Board of Trustees Vice Chair and NJSBA **2024 Medal of Honor Recipient Karol Corbin Walker**. A true trailblazer, Corbin Walker's dedication to the law, community, and volunteerism is unparalleled. We thank her for her years of service to Legal Services of New Jersey and congratulate her on this prestigious award.

Fair Chance in Housing Act a Focus of Governor's Conference on Housing

LSNJ Senior Vice President Akil Roper joined co-panelists Renee Koubiadis (Department of Community Affairs), Sundeep Iyer (Division of Civil Rights), Diego Arias (Fair Share Housing) and moderator Teresa Tilton in a discussion about the Fair Chance in Housing Act at the New Jersey Governor's Conference on Housing and Economic Development in September. Implementation strategies and the disproportionate impact of conviction record screenings on communities of color were among the topics addressed during the panel discussion.

Today, nearly one-third of the adult working age population in the United States has an arrest or conviction record. Many people have been denied housing because of their records, regardless of whether they pose any risk of threat to their communities. New Jersey's Fair Chance in Housing Act (FCHA) helps remedy this form of discrimination by establishing a process for consideration of conviction histories and limiting their use during the housing application process.

We thank the Division of Civil Rights for their aggressive enforcement of New Jersey's anti-discrimination laws, particularly in providing a fair chance for housing for those with records of past justice involvement. We are proud to partner with DCR in the fight against discrimination, in its many forms.

- Akil Roper



Left to right: Renee Koubiadis (DCA Senior Policy Advisor), Sundeep Iyer (Director of DCR), Akil Roper (LSNJ Senior Vice President), and Teresa Tilton (NJ Association of Realtors)

Legal Services helps client with return of foster care child support overpayment

Santiago had already raised four children when his youngest was born. The baby was removed from his mother shortly after birth and placed in foster care, where he remained for four years. New Jersey’s Department of Children and Families (DCF) collected child support from Santiago throughout his son’s time in foster care, even as his health declined and he retired from his government job of 14 years. Each month, Santiago’s Social Security check was garnished \$394, leaving him in a precarious financial position as he sought to gain custody of his son.

When Santiago finally regained custody, the payments should have

stopped. But, due to an agency error, the garnishments continued—even increased—for the next seven months until Legal Services intervened. DCF ultimately returned the overpayment of nearly \$3,000.

ICYMI: A video titled “The Price of Reunification: Foster Care Child Support” was showcased at the annual Family Unification Day celebration over the summer, highlighting Santiago and another parent who became indebted to the child support program. Scan the QR code to watch this video.

“I paid my mortgage for my house and I needed that money that they took from me.”





LSNJ Offers Buffet of Fall Trainings for Pro Bono Volunteers

This fall, LSNJ offered its pro bono volunteers an array of trainings in a number of impactful civil legal areas. Such trainings help ensure that clients have well-trained advocates by their side for their challenging legal problems, while also providing unique CLE and professional development opportunities for individual volunteers and pro bono programs.

“Our trainings provide a great way for pro bono volunteers to learn from poverty law specialists in a variety of civil legal areas impacting our clients,” says Janet Ashley-Naouli, LSNJ Pro Bono Administrator.

On September 10 and 17, we held our consumer law training, inviting pro bono volunteers and covering topics as: Fair Debt Collection Practices Act basics, introduction to credit card and installment loan law, and NJ Consumer Fraud Act and assignee liability.

On September 12, our in-person domestic violence training covered an overview of the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act and the final restraining order process, interviewing clients, and trial preparation. In October, there will be additional training opportunities in family law.

Looking ahead, we will hold our bankruptcy law training series in early December and hope to provide more training opportunities for our pro bono volunteers during the winter months and beyond.

To register and begin taking cases, visit www.PROBONONJ.com.



As an introductory exercise at the UPLIFT event, the group was asked **What inspires you to continue the Legal Services mission?**

Colleagues in the mission

Serving clients

Individual & community impact

Anger at injustice

Collaborative work atmosphere

Newer generations of interns and attorneys

I feel like I benefit as much from this work as much as our clients do, if not more. So I'm just really thankful to be in this position as a budding, aspiring legal aid attorney.

- Alexa Saylan, Poritz Fellow, CJLS

This internship definitely affirmed my interest in a potential career in law.

- Doris Lee, Undergraduate Princeton PICS Intern

Public interest law and the services it provides are so crucial to so many underserved people, and it is amazing how [New Jersey Legal Services] aims to provide these services free of charge to those most in need.

- Annie Akbar, Undergraduate Princeton PICS Intern

Fighting the war on poverty is no joke, and it's really easy to get discouraged. I take a lot of inspiration in what I think of as the stubborn optimism of my colleagues, coming in—day in, day out—and doing the work to serve communities that need help.

- John (JT) Burger, Staff Attorney, LSNJ



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
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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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