

## Eakeley, Van Ness to Be Inducted Into NJEJLA Circle Of Honor at June Equal Justice Awards Reception



Two giants of equal justice will be added to the New Jersey Equal Justice Library and Archive (NJEJLA) Circle of Honor at the upcoming awards reception at the Grounds for Sculpture in Hamilton Township on Tuesday, June 7. The 2022 inductees are Douglas

S. Eakeley, a member of the LSNJ Board of Trustees and former board chair of the Legal Services Corporation, and Stanley C. Van Ness (posthumously), who was New Jersey's first Public Advocate.

The Circle Of Honor "memorializes those who have made extraordinary achievements in advancing equal justice, and whose efforts and lives stand as enduring paradigms for others to emulate," according to the NJEJLA website, [www.njejla.org/circleofhonor](http://www.njejla.org/circleofhonor). "Each inductee has played a role

in bending the moral arc of the universe toward justice."

Special presentations will also be made to New Jersey Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor Marin, former New Jersey Senator Christopher "Kip" Bateman, and the New Jersey Bankruptcy Lawyers Foundation for their support of Legal Services.


Equal Justice Medals will be awarded to extraordinary pro bono contributors, and the inaugural presentation of the Melville "De" Miller, Jr. Memorial fellowship will be made.

PLEASE JOIN US for this annual event.

*Join Us*

## LSNJ Equal Justice Awards Reception



**Tuesday, June 7, 2022**   
**Grounds for Sculpture (GFS)**  
**80 Sculptors Way, Hamilton Township, NJ**

Light Fare: 5:30 p.m.  
Awards Ceremony: 7:00 p.m.  
Cost: \$75 per person  
(Includes access to the GFS for the day)  
Register online at [www.lsnj.org/EJA](http://www.lsnj.org/EJA)

## President's Message

On the heels of women's History Month, we take a moment to reflect upon and celebrate the extraordinary achievements, strength, and resilience of the women of legal services, in New Jersey and beyond.\*



*Dawn K. Miller, Esq.  
President, LSNJ*

Women have helped define the origins and evolution of legal services, despite persisting racial and gender biases, barriers, and inequities in the legal profession. Indeed, many historians trace the roots of legal aid in the U.S. to abolitionist organizations and Progressive-era women's activism, including women "lay" lawyers and others who were social workers in women's unions, clubs, organizations, settlement houses, and more.

Though very few women could then vote, serve on juries, receive a formal legal education, or join the professional Bar, there is a rich history of women providing legal assistance, particularly to other women, in cities across the U.S. prior to and around the turn of the 20th century. As chief attorney of the Chicago Legal

\* "Legal aid" and "legal services" are used interchangeably in this article.

Aid Bureau, Marguerite Raeder Garipey championed a holistic approach to legal aid through which social workers and lawyers together tackled the social problems at the root of civil legal issues. By 1901, Rosalie Loew served

as chief attorney at the New York Legal Aid Society, widely regarded as the first legal aid organization in the U.S. In Los Angeles, Charlotte Holt, Mary Kenney, and other women activists campaigned for a legal aid society for women and children, leading to the foundation of the Los Angeles Legal Aid Society in 1908.

As more women graduated from law school, they entered legal aid in greater numbers; today, women constitute a majority of legal services staff. Yet, according to a 2020 report by the Legal Services Corporation (LSC), while women made up 75% of the full-time staff of Legal Services organizations nationally, only 45% of executive directors were women.

Proudly, New Jersey's Legal Services community includes women of many notable honors and "firsts." Two of six Legal

Services programs have female executive directors. LSNJ has, for the first time in its 55-year history, both a woman president and majority-women management team. LSNJ's former Board Chair, Deborah Poritz, was the first woman to serve as Chief Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court. LSNJ's current board chair, Cynthia Jacob, is former president of the NJ State Bar Association; vice chair Karol Corbin Walker, the first Black woman to serve as president of the NJSBA and president of the Federal Bar of New Jersey; and Virginia A. Long (co-vice chair) is former justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court. At LSNJ and across our regional programs, we honor and celebrate all of the women leading pioneering statewide advocacy and litigation efforts, and all those who support the incredible work being done at Legal Services organizations every day.

In the midst of a persistent pandemic, that has disproportionately harmed poor women and women of color, LSNJ will continue to advocate for the rights, benefits, and agency of women across New Jersey and the country. We are proud to continue the legacy of so many women before us, fighting for policies that uplift and empower us all.

### The Honorable Jaynee LaVecchia

Welcome to Justice LaVecchia, who joined the Legal Services of New Jersey Board of Trustees in March. "I was honored when Dawn Miller contacted me about serving on the Board of Legal Services now that I have returned to private practice," says LaVecchia. "LSNJ serves a cause that captured both my mind and my heart: helping the poor among us with equal access to justice. It was easy to say 'yes' to Dawn's inquiry."

LaVecchia is a partner with McCarter & English, Newark, where her extensive knowledge of the appellate process and regulatory experience inform trial strategy and provide valuable insight into the complexities of state agencies. She also handles internal investigations and serves as a mediator or arbitrator.

Nominated by Governor Christine Todd Whitman, LaVecchia served for more than 21 years on the New Jersey Supreme Court. During her tenure, she presided over hundreds of cases and authored numerous opinions on critical issues impacting New Jersey's most prominent industries. Before her nomination to the Supreme Court, LaVecchia served

as the New Jersey Commissioner of Banking and Insurance, overseeing thousands of insurance companies, banks, and credit unions. Prior to that, she held various leadership positions, including Deputy Chief Counsel in the Office of Counsel to Governor Thomas H. Kean, Chief Administrative Law Judge in New Jersey's Office of Administrative Law, and Director of the Division of Law within the Department of Law and Public Safety.

As the longest-serving female justice in New Jersey history, LaVecchia has received numerous awards and honors. The Douglass College and Rutgers School of Law graduate is a member of the Rutgers University Hall of Distinguished Alumni and recipient of the New Jersey Women of Achievement Award and the Rutgers Law School Distinguished Alumni Award. She is also an elected member of the American Law Institute and a Fellow of the American Bar Association.

"Try as we might, and as hard as the justice system itself tries as well, there is a justice gap that regrettably persists here in New Jersey and around the nation. There will always be more to do."



*"I am proud to join in and serve LSNJ's legal community and to work, as part of its board, in the struggle for the goal of equal justice for all."*



## Looking for Pro Bono Opportunities in Bankruptcy, Tax, or Expungement?

LSNJ offers pro bono volunteer and training opportunities in a wide range of legal areas. Recently, a training on expungement law for pro bono attorneys was held virtually with over 30 lawyers in attendance, providing

2.0 continuing legal education credits to those who agreed to accept at least one expungement matter from Legal Services in the upcoming year. Coming soon are trainings in bankruptcy and state tax law. (See the article on page 5

for more information about this exciting new venture.) To learn more or to register and begin taking cases, visit [www.probononj.org](http://www.probononj.org) or visit our exhibition table at one of the upcoming conferences listed below. We hope to see you there!

### Stop By Our Booth to Learn More About Pro Bono and How to Meet Madden Requirements—Your Way

#### Bankruptcy Bar Conference, May 6, Pines Manor, Edison

The William H. Gindin Bankruptcy Bench Bar Conference will cover areas like Subchapter V, Recent Bankruptcy Case Decisions, Mortgage Forbearance Agreements, The Changing Supreme Court, COVID-19 Defenses to Litigation, etc. Learn more and register at <https://afbnj.org/william-h-gindin-bench-bar-conference-friday-may-6-2022/#!event-register/2022/3/13/2022-william-h-gindin-bench-bar-conference>.

#### 2022 State Bar Annual Meeting and Convention, May 18–20, Borgata Hotel, Atlantic City

The premier annual event of the New Jersey State Bar Association, including the NJSBA annual meeting with installation of new officers, and educational and networking events for judges, lawyers, and law clerks. Learn more at <https://tcms.njsba.com/PersonifyEbusiness/Default.aspx?TabID=14336>.



*LSNJ's Eric LeBoeuf and Janet Ashley*

# Tax Legal Assistance Project (TLAP) Provides Educational Materials and Helps New Jersey Residents File Federal Tax Returns



Andy (not real name) incurred significant debt because he had not withheld enough money for taxes as a self-employed individual. His difficulties in making ends meet were compounded by medical problems, and he ultimately became homeless. The “offer in compromise” (an agreement between a taxpayer and the IRS that settles a taxpayer’s tax liabilities for less than the full amount owed) filed on his behalf was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and, while his request was pending, Andy secured a temporary job out of necessity. The resulting income rendered him potentially ineligible for a tax debt forgiveness program. A TLAP attorney advocated on his behalf, successfully arguing that extraordinary circumstances prevented him from being able to count on these funds into the future. Not only was the job a temporary one, but all of his discretionary income was needed to secure stable housing and transportation, as well as pay back loans he had incurred while he had no income. The argument was accepted by the IRS and Andy’s debt was forgiven, allowing him to obtain the “fresh start” that is the goal of the program.

LSNJ’s Tax Legal Assistance Project (TLAP), funded in part by the IRS Low Income Taxpayer Clinic program, has been educating taxpayers, representing clients in tax controversies, and reporting on systemic problems to ensure the fairness and integrity of the tax system since 2007. Thousands of individuals have been helped since its beginning with over 300 taxpayers assisted in 2021. Many more benefited from the information available on LSNJ’s public

website, [www.lsnjlaw.org](http://www.lsnjlaw.org), LSNJ’s legal education newsletter, *Looking Out For Your Legal Rights*, and other assistance provided. “Understanding Your 2021 Taxes,” the lead story in this year’s *Looking Out* tax issue, included information regarding tax terminology, filing returns, free filing resources, how to avoid tax preparer fraud, information about the CARES ACT, and issues related to economic stimulus payments. The article can be found in the January-February

2022 issue of *Looking Out For Your Legal Rights* and on the LSNJLAW<sup>SM</sup> website at [www.lsnjlaw.org/Taxes/Current-Tax-FAQs/Pages/2021-Tax.aspx](http://www.lsnjlaw.org/Taxes/Current-Tax-FAQs/Pages/2021-Tax.aspx).

In addition, during the 2022 tax filing season from February 1 to April 18, LSNJ’s social media posts reached more than 2,000 people, with special emphasis on the child tax credit and free tax preparation services. Virtual outreach presentations in partnership

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# New Law Brings Hope in the Fight Against Criminal Record Discrimination in Housing

New Jersey's Fair Chance Housing Act (FCHA), signed into law in the fall and effective as of January 2022, is a welcome step in removing barriers for individuals with criminal records seeking a place to live in New Jersey. It goes beyond the traditional "ban the box" law to provide important additional protections for people with records of justice involvement, and its passing is important in light of systemic housing barriers that have historically discriminated against Black people.

The new law prohibits landlords from discriminating against prospective tenants on the basis of past criminal records, limiting



the situations in which landlords can inquire about or consider a potential tenant's criminal history both before and after a conditional offer of tenancy. It also requires landlords to provide an opportunity for the applicant to provide evidence of inaccuracies, rehabilitation, or factors that weigh favorably in review of the offenses, and information about how to file a complaint.

*"For far too long, far too many have faced unnecessary barriers to fair housing simply because of a past record of criminal justice involvement," says LSNJ Vice President Akil Roper. "This new law is a great step in providing fair access to a crucial fundamental right for many people and families in New Jersey."*

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## TLAP Educational Materials

*Continued from page 5*

with public libraries and other partner organizations reached even more.

Building on this record of federal tax advocacy, LSNJ is pleased to report that we will

soon be expanding our services to state tax matters as well. This expansion has been ignited by the adoption of amendments to 1:21-3(b), which permit supervised law students to provide pro

bono legal services in state tax matters. More information can be found in the Notice to the Bar at [www.njcourts.gov/notices/2022/n220330a.pdf](http://www.njcourts.gov/notices/2022/n220330a.pdf).



*"In addition to providing individual representation in the area of state taxes, we look forward to working with low-income New Jersey taxpayers to conduct outreach, provide training, and develop supporting materials."*

TLAP Chief Attorney Marcia Suarez

## Our Clients Speak



After years of trying to manage his type 2 diabetes symptoms, 63-year-old Arthur is now legally blind, receives kidney dialysis three times a week, and, in 2019, suffered a stroke. When he contacted Legal Services in 2020

for assistance with a reverse mortgage, he was at risk of losing the title to his home in a matter of weeks. Legal Services con-

nected Arthur with a caring professional who visited his home to help him complete paperwork.

“Dealing with bureaucracy is almost beyond me at this point,” he says. “I have been on dialysis for five years, and the average life

expectancy for a male on dialysis is eight years. So, I am just trying to eke out an existence for the next few years.” Arthur was approved for a reverse mortgage with life expectancy set-aside (LESA), which sets aside sufficient funds to cover property costs (property taxes, homeowners insurance, dues) for the expected remainder of the borrower’s lifetime, so he will be able to live in his home for the remainder of his life. Watch Arthur’s video and others at <https://www.lsnj.org/ClientsVideosStories.aspx>.



### LSNJ now has client access and hearing rooms

LSNJ recently added five new client access and hearing rooms to our redesigned first floor to help serve clients and other community members who lack internet access. Our centrally located Edison office is easily accessible by mass transit. The public access rooms are set up for virtual hearings and client interviews,

## Other Legal Services News

with health and safety protocols including Plexiglas separators, air filtration systems, and ample space for social distancing.

### Collaborating to reach a national audience

LSNJ’s Disability Rights Initiative recently collaborated with Dr. Alyssa Scher of Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick on an article, “Diagnosing COVID’s Effects on Social Security Disability Programs.” RWJUH New Brunswick is one of our Legal Assistance for Medical Patients (LAMP) sites where advo-

cates work closely with Scher and others to address the civil legal concerns of hospital patients. The article, co-authored by LSNJ’s Kevin Liebkemann and Scher, was published by the National Organization of Social Security Claimants’ Representatives (NOSSCR), a specialized bar association for attorneys and advocates who represent Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income claimants. As a result, Liebkemann and Scher will present on the topic at the May national NOSSCR 2022 Conference, in Austin, Texas.



[www.LSNJLAW.org](http://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](http://www.LSNJ.org) – An organizational website where you can learn about the work of Legal Services.

[www.PROBONONJ.org](http://www.PROBONONJ.org) – A site where attorneys can learn about and sign up for pro bono opportunities.

[www.NJEJLA.org](http://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](mailto: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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