

## LSNJ Hosts Sold Out Equal Justice Awards Reception



*Above left: Lipman-Franks Awardee NJ Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz with LSNJ President Dawn K. Miller*

*Above right: Friends and family of NJEJLA Circle of Honor Inductee Sheila Y. Oliver (L-R: Diane Hill, Charles Oliver, Sr., Renee Oliver, Sylvia Oliver, Charles Oliver, Jr.)*

*Left: NJ Solicitor General Jeremy Feigenbaum*

LSNJ hosted the 2025 Equal Justice Awards reception on April 29 at the Palace at Somerset Park—a sold out event with nearly 400 people in attendance. This annual event recognizes pro bono contributors across the state, celebrates those who have advanced equal justice for disadvantaged people, and memorializes progress toward justice for all in New Jersey.

LSNJ President Dawn K. Miller opened the program, sharing that “We come together for the Equal Justice Awards for three main purposes—First, to honor many dedicated volunteers who have given thousands of hours of free legal assistance to those who cannot afford a lawyer. Second, we recognize and celebrate those who have made meaningful contributions to the mission of Legal

Services and the pursuit of justice for low-income individuals. And, finally, to induct into our Circle of Honor one extraordinary individual whose life’s work has left a lasting impact.”

New Jersey Solicitor General Jeremy Feigenbaum offered remarks, sharing “LSNJ plays an extraordinary and important role in New

*Read more about this year’s EJA event on page 3*

## President's Message



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

Legal Services of New Jersey recently held its Equal Justice Awards Reception—an event we have proudly held nearly annually, beginning in 1983. Though we find ourselves navigating intense, deeply challenging, uncertain times, and it would have been simpler to postpone or skip this year's awards ceremony, I firmly believe that this current moment demands the contrary. We must continue to come together on occasions such as this and deliberately take time to recognize the efforts and impact of our community members who rise to meet—and challenge—this moment.

We must continue to celebrate, not in spite of the challenges we

collectively face, but because of them. Many of the institutions we have long relied on—including the Legal Services Corporation—face dire funding losses and serious direct attacks. Yet, so many in our legal community continue to lead, to serve New Jersey's most vulnerable, and to stand firmly against injustice. Their work reminds us that the rule of law does not sustain itself. It takes our collective vigilance, integrity, courage, and resilience to uphold justice, particularly when it is under attack.

Given this context, I am especially proud to celebrate this year's honorees, sponsors, and supporters—individuals, firms, corporations, elected officials, and community organizations who continue to show up, speak up, and carry our profession forward. This year, we presented Equal Justice Medals to hundreds of pro bono volunteers who, together, donated over 11,500 pro bono hours, or an estimated \$4 to \$5.5 million worth of critically needed legal services for low-income New Jerseyans! We also proudly honored Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz for her dedicated efforts to uplift underserved communities across New Jersey; recognized Michael Furey, Esq. for

28 years of service and leadership on the LSNJ Board of Trustees; and inducted the Honorable Sheila Y. Oliver, posthumously, into the NJEJLA Circle of Honor, forever memorializing her lifetime commitment to public service.

Finally, I am deeply grateful to our donors and sponsors, whose support is more essential and impactful than ever. Our organization, like so many others, faces an onslaught of funding threats and losses, at the same time that the number of New Jerseyans experiencing True Poverty continues to rise and our client community continues to experience increased need for our services. I want to extend a very special thank you to the firm Berkowitz Lichstein Kuritsky Giasullo & Gross for their generous donation in memory of Bernard "Bernie" Berkowitz, whose life and legacy should inspire us all. We join the firm in recognizing Mr. Berkowitz's lifelong commitment to philanthropy and community foundations in New Jersey and are proud to continue to advance access to justice in his name and honor.

To all: thank you very much for your ongoing support. We will continue to come together to embody what equal justice under law truly means.



## Evet Shulman Joins LSNJ

We are pleased to welcome Evett Shulman as our new director of development. Evett is a graduate of Pace University and Brooklyn College, and brings a wealth of experience in fund development to the position. She has driven mission impact and organization growth during her time with Meals on Wheels of Mercer County, managed large portfolios of individual and corporate donors at the Jewish Community Center in Staten Island, and implemented long and short-term business strategies at the American Heart Association in Monmouth and Ocean Counties. She hit the ground running with a very successful Equal Justice Awards reception and we are so excited to have her on board.



*"My role at LSNJ allows me to channel my professional efforts into advancing justice and equity for those in need. Through my work in development, I am proud to support LSNJ initiatives that create meaningful, lasting impact in communities throughout New Jersey."*

## 2025 Equal Justice Awards

### *Continued from cover*

Jersey society, representing the most vulnerable and the most marginalized among us—representing the indigent or those who are facing home foreclosure; representing immigrants who've been victims of crime; helping women trying to escape domestic violence; and assisting workers and consumers just to name a few. That work matters. Representing the most vulnerable and the most marginalized

among us is always important, and is a core tenet of what we do and who we are as lawyers."

As the program transitioned into the pro bono award portion of the evening, acceptance speeches by significant contributors and short videos highlighting the work of exceptional pro bono contributors demonstrated the depth and breadth of the work of Legal Services across the

state and the hundreds of volunteers that help make the pro bono program a success.

A full list of Major, Exceptional, and Significant contributors, as well as the hundreds of full representation pro bono volunteers is included in the program, which can be found at [lsnj.pub/EJA25](https://lsnj.pub/EJA25).

The late New Jersey Lieutenant Governor Sheila Y. Oliver was induct-





*Top left: LSNJ Board of Trustees Member Carlos M. Bollar with LSNJ President Dawn K. Miller*

*Top right: Significant Pro Bono Contributor David Culley*

*Bottom left: Retiring LSNJ Board of Trustees Member Michael K. Furey with Trustee Ross Lewin*

*Bottom right: Exceptional Pro Bono Contributor Shaun Peterson and guests from Hoagland, Longo, Moran, Dunst & Doukas*

ed into the New Jersey Equal Justice Library and Archive (NJEJLA) Circle of Honor. Accepting the award was President of the Sheila Y. Oliver Civic Center Renee Oliver. A special video in honor of Oliver can be viewed on the NJEJLA website at [NJEJLA.org/circleofhonor](https://www.njejla.org/circleofhonor).

We thank our generous sponsors (a list of which can be found at [LSNJ.org/EJA](https://www.lsnj.org/EJA)) for another successful event!

*"I highly recommend that young attorneys look into pro bono work because it's valuable to sharpen their skills in all areas of the law, but also it can go a long way for a lot of people that are in need."*

- Shaun Peterson, Esq., Hoagland, Longo, Moran, Dunst & Doukas

*2025 Exceptional Pro Bono Contributor*





**Left: Former Lieutenant Governor of New Jersey and 2025 NJEJLA COH Inductee Sheila Y. Oliver**

**Right: New Jersey Senator and Lipman-Franks Award recipient, M. Teresa Ruiz**

#### **NJEJLA CIRCLE OF HONOR INDUCTEE SHEILA YVETTE OLIVER**

served as New Jersey's Lieutenant Governor from January 2018 until her passing in August 2023. Oliver graduated cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts in sociology from Lincoln University and earned her Master of Social Work from Columbia University before launching her long and distinguished career advocating for equality and social justice. In addition to her role as Lieutenant Governor, Oliver served as Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs, where she led efforts to strengthen and expand initiatives for fair and affordable housing, community revitalization, and homelessness prevention.

*The New Jersey Equal Justice Library and Archive (NJEJLA) was launched in 2014 in order to chronicle the arc of justice in New Jersey. A major component of the NJEJLA is the Circle of Honor, heralding those who have made extraordinary achievements in advancing equal justice.*

#### **LIPMAN-FRANKS AWARDEE NEW JERSEY SENATOR M. TERESA RUIZ**

is the Senate Majority Leader and Vice-Chair of the Senate Legislative Oversight Committee. A steadfast supporter of New Jersey's Legal Services programs, Senator Ruiz is deeply aware of the need for civil legal services for the low-income community in New Jersey. The Senator received a bachelor's degree from Drew University. She was a 2010 Aspen Institute Rodel Fellow and a graduate of the Harvard Kennedy School's Senior Executives in State and Local Government Program.

*The Lipman-Franks Award is named for two esteemed state legislators, Wynona Lipman and Robert Franks, who, acting in a bipartisan fashion, played especially central roles in developing early financial support for Legal Services and in securing greater and more equal justice for the disadvantaged.*



## Meeting the Need

### The Business Case for Expanding Your Firm's Pro Bono Practice



Director of Outreach Alayna Berg, Senior Vice President Akil Roper, and Pro Bono Coordinator Janet Ashley-Naouli at the NJSBA Annual Meeting and Convention.

On May 15, LSNJ Vice President and Pro Bono Initiative (PBI) supervising attorney presented a workshop titled “Meeting the Need: The Business Case for Expanding Your Firm’s Pro Bono Practice” at the New Jersey State Bar Association’s Annual Meeting and Convention. Topics included the unprecedented need for pro bono services in New Jersey; how to expand or build a pro bono practice within a firm; the business benefits of having a dedicated pro bono practice within a firm; and how working on pro bono cases can enhance skill-building, especially for newer attorneys. Janet Ashley-Naouli, PBI administrator also attended the event, held Wednesday, May 14, through Friday, May 16, at the Borgata in Atlantic City to distribute information about pro bono opportunities with legal services and connect with potential volunteers.

*“By getting involved in a civil legal matter for a Legal Services client, you can help provide justice for someone who would otherwise be unable to afford a lawyer. The need for assistance in New Jersey remains high.”*

- Akil Roper, LSNJ Senior Vice President

*To register for pro bono trainings and begin taking cases, visit [www.PROBONONJ.com](http://www.PROBONONJ.com).*



## Berkowitz Lichtstein Kuritsky Giasullo & Gross Makes \$25,000 Contribution in Memory of Bernard “Bernie” Berkowitz



Bernard (Bernie) Berkowitz, founding member of Berkowitz, Lichtstein, Kuritsky, Giasullo & Gross, died on July 28, 2024, following a short battle with cancer at the age of 94. The Cornell Law School graduate remained active in the practice of law until a few weeks prior to his death.

Berkowitz was a member of the Bar for 67 years and earned many honors for his technical legal work, but is perhaps best

known for his pioneering work in the fields of philanthropy and charitable foundations. In 1979, while serving as chairman of the United Way of Essex County, he founded the Community Foundation of New Jersey, whose mission is to connect donors to entities and communities. The CFNJ now functions on a statewide level, has distributed in excess of \$2 billion in grants since its founding, and today helps control and direct in excess of \$1 billion in assets.

Berkowitz also served as a board member of the Valley Hospital Foundation; the Montclair Art Museum; the YMCA of the Oranges, Maplewood, West Essex, and Sussex County; the Orange Orphans Society; and Bloomfield College. He also served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Army and was awarded a bronze star for his service during the Korean War.

*We are deeply honored that Berkowitz, Lichtstein, Kuritsky, Giasullo & Gross chose to commemorate Bernard Berkowitz's legacy with such a meaningful gift. Their contribution will help LSNJ provide critical legal assistance to individuals and families throughout New Jersey who otherwise could not afford it.*

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[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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