

Congratulations to the 2022 Equal Justice Honorees!

LSNJ's Equal Justice Awards Reception was held on Tuesday, June 7, at the Grounds for Sculpture in Hamilton Township. Highlights of the event are included throughout this issue.

The New Jersey Equal Justice Library and Archive (NJEJLA) Circle of Honor heralds those who have made extraordinary achievements in advancing equal justice.



2022 inductees Stanley C. Van Ness (posthumously, shown left) and Douglas S. Eakeley joined previous inductees:

Former New Jersey Supreme Court Justice James H. Coleman, Jr.; the late Robert Del Tufo, former attorney general of New Jersey; Kenneth C. Frazier, former president and CEO of Merck and Co., Inc.; former Governor Thomas H. Kean; the late Wynona M. Lipman, New Jersey's first Black woman state senator; former New Jersey Supreme Court Chief Justice Deborah T. Poritz; Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman; Loretta Weinberg, former New Jersey Senate majority leader; and the late Robert N. Wilentz, former New Jersey Supreme Court Chief Justice. Biographies and video tributes can be viewed at www.NJEJLA.org/circleofhonor.



"The staff of LSNJ and our regional programs are working fiercely in the trenches ... but, to paraphrase Robert Frost, we have miles to go before we can sleep."

Douglas S. Eakeley, Esq.
Former Chair
Legal Services Corporation
NJEJLA Circle of Honor Inductee



"A lot of you can make a lot of money. You can do great and big things. But you take the opportunity and the time to potentially help families."

Eliana Pintor Marin
New Jersey Assemblywoman
29th Legislative District
Lipman-Franks Award Recipient



"The presence of an attorney is often the single most important factor in whether they will be successful in that legal effort ... what you do literally changes lives."

Matthew J. Platkin
Acting Attorney General
State of New Jersey
Opening Speaker



"It's not so much the wealth and how much money you have in the bank, the car you drive, but the difference you make in peoples' lives."

Christopher "Kip" Bateman, Esq.
Former New Jersey State Senator
16th Legislative District
Lipman-Franks Award Recipient

President's Message



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

It was truly wonderful to gather our Legal Services community—staff, legislators, volunteers, members of the judiciary, sponsors, and countless friends of Legal Services—at our June 7 Equal Justice Awards Reception. Given the recent, and necessary, hiatus due to the pandemic, gathering in person felt especially hopeful and reenergizing.

First and foremost, I want to once again thank and highlight our honorees—hundreds of pro bono volunteers from across the state; our inaugural Melville “De” Miller, Jr. Memorial Fund fellow; legislators who have provided key support for Legal Services’ mission

and funding; the New Jersey Bankruptcy Lawyers Foundation, whose generous donations make life-altering emergency funds available to clients in urgent need; and two extraordinary individuals who made lifelong commitments to justice—Stanley C. Van Ness (posthumously) and Douglas S. Eakeley. I encourage you to learn more about the exceptional contributions of our honorees online at our Equal Justice Awards and Circle of Honor web pages. It is a great privilege and responsibility to honor, record, and share the stories of so many remarkable advocates and to help document the arc of justice in our state.

While I wish we could profile every volunteer, I proudly emphasize the contributions of our dedicated pro bono attorneys across the state. Year after year, I am moved by the time, effort, energy, and compassion you invest in our clients and mission. This year, volunteer pro bono attorneys together donated more than 6,592 hours, totaling—by a conservative estimate—approximately \$2.175 million in services. Their contributions, while always deeply valued as a supplement to the daily work of Legal Services

advocates, proved critical during a pandemic that has exacerbated existing inequalities and produced significantly greater need for our services.

While the opportunity to gather in person marks an important shift in the pandemic, we recognize that many of our clients continue to face new, ongoing, and compounding challenges due to the pandemic. For low-income and other vulnerable New Jerseyans, recovery from this economic and public health crisis may take years, while some may never fully recover. As we have throughout our 55-year history, Legal Services staff and volunteers will continue to step up to meet increased need for services, advocate for policies and solutions that support our client community, and fight to end poverty in our state.

Thank you for joining us in this struggle, as we strive to secure economic, social, and legal justice for all. As we commemorate the progress made so far and renew our commitment to the continued work ahead, we hope you will join us at our 55th anniversary event on December 8 at The Addison Park in Aberdeen for an evening of community, celebration, and reflection.

2022 Equal Justice Honorees



Top left: LSNJ's Akil Roper, Dawn K. Miller, and Shivi Prasad pose with the first Melville "De" Miller, Jr. Memorial Fund fellow Jessica Miller.



Top right: Former New Jersey Governor Donald T. DiFrancesco offers congratulatory remarks to Assemblywoman Pintor Marin and Senator Bateman.



Lower left: Charles Forman, president, and Carol-Ann Rose, grant administrator, New Jersey Bankruptcy Lawyers Foundation (NJBLF), received the William J. Brennan Citation for Justice.

View more photos and a highlight video reel at www.lsnj.org/EJA

■ Significant Contributors

Equal Justice Medals were awarded this year to recognize firms, community organizations, and individuals that made significant contributions to Legal Services and provided much-needed services to the low-income community over time and especially during the global pandemic.

Central Jersey Legal Services

Geleen G. Donovan

Essex-Newark Legal Services

The Rev. Dr. Jethro C. James, Jr.

Legal Services of New Jersey

Frank Agostino, Esq. and Caren Zahn, E.A.

Legal Services of Northwest Jersey

Morris County Department of Human Services

Northeast New Jersey Legal Services

JPMorgan Chase & Co.

South Jersey Legal Services

Jewish Family Service

■ Exceptional Contributors

The Exceptional Service category of Equal Justice Medals is for individuals and firms who have, in one year or multiple years, made extraordinary pro bono contributions to their affiliate programs, with one awardee honored from each New Jersey Legal Services program.

Central Jersey Legal Services

Stanley Fink, Esq.

Essex-Newark Legal Services

Arnold J. Calabrese, Esq. and Becker & Poliakoff

Legal Services of New Jersey

Pauline M.K. Young, Esq.

Legal Services of Northwest Jersey

Diane S. Margolin, Esq.

Northeast New Jersey Legal Services

Steven R. Rubenstein, Esq.

South Jersey Legal Services

Rachelle Ann Waitz, Esq.

Special Thanks to Our PROBONONJ Partners

Visit www.probononj.org to register



Pro bono volunteers Katie Fedosz, Lisa Jakob, and Lisa LeCointe-Cephas from Major Contributor Merck & Co., Inc. at the 2022 EJA Reception.

Undocumented immigrant victims of crime are an extraordinarily vulnerable population. Despite the risks, many victims provide essential assistance to law enforcement, making them eligible to apply for U visas that legalize their immigration status. Since 2014, Merck attorneys have been an integral part of helping LSNJ clients through this process.

“Merck is honored to partner with LSNJ on their U Visa program. This program provides a critical pathway for women and children who have been victims of domestic violence to obtain permission to work and live in the United States without fear of continued abuse or deportation.”

Lisa Jakob, Esq., Managing Counsel
Trademarks & Copyrights Office of the General Counsel, Merck & Co.



Save the Date

New Jersey Legal Services
55th Anniversary Commemoration
Thursday, December 8
The Addison Park in Aberdeen

Jhanice V. Domingo, Esq.

We welcome Jhanice Domingo, who joined the LSNJ board of trustees in June 2022. Born in Manila, Philippines, Domingo immigrated to the United States at the age of nine. She attended Boston College, where she earned a B.A. in psychology with a minor in women's studies before receiving her J.D. from Seton Hall University School of Law.

Domingo is a partner at Pashman Stein Walder Hayden P.C., where she focuses on family law and litigation. She is a former Somerset County assistant prosecutor with more than 20 years' experience in family law, and is a court-approved family law mediator. She was the first woman president of the National Filipino American Lawyers Association, where she formed NFALA's first-ever Women Lawyers Affinity Network and partnered with Pinay Powerhouse, a women's annual conference focused on empowering Filipina American attorneys and aspiring attorneys as leaders in the law. She is also active in the Asian Pacific American Lawyers Association of New Jersey (APALA-NJ), having served in multiple

roles, including president, vice president, and treasurer. She also chairs the APALA-NJ's Judicial and Prosecutorial Appointments Committee, which facilitates the appointment of qualified Asian Pacific American candidates to the judiciary and other positions in state and federal government.

Domingo's public service work includes representing indigent clients in family court at the Seton Hall Law Center for Social Justice Family Law Clinic while in law school; conducting free family law workshops for Northeast New Jersey Legal Services' Private Attorney Involvement program; volunteering with Citizenship Rutgers to provide pro bono naturalization application assistance to legal permanent residents of New Jersey; and representing pro bono DACA-eligible youth in DACA applications.

"I am thrilled to join the exceptional board of trustees of LSNJ," says Ms. Domingo. "I look forward to helping advance LSNJ's more than 55-year history of ensuring equal access to justice for all New Jersey residents."



Melville “De” Miller, Jr. Justice Series

DISCRIMINATION AND BIAS IN NEW JERSEY



Melville “De” Miller, Jr. Justice Series
Legal Services of New Jersey



On June 15, 2022, LSNJ presented a webinar as part of its Melville “De” Miller, Jr. Justice Series, “Discrimination and Bias in New Jersey,” to an audience of nearly 800 attendees. The panel was moderated by Akil Roper, senior vice president and co-supervisor of LSNJ’s Racial and Ethnic Justice Initiative, and featured Aarin Williams, interim chief of Strategic Initiatives and Enforcement for the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights; Reginald Johnson, agent for the Middlesex County Prosecutor’s Office and president of the Metuchen-Edison Branch of the NAACP; and Shivi

Prasad, director of LSNJ’s Poverty Research Institute.

While bias and hate incidents have drawn national attention, New Jersey is experiencing an increase in reported bias incidents in communities, schools, and on the internet.

“Discrimination and Bias” examined trends and factors contributing to the recent uptick and the corresponding impact on specific communities in New Jersey. Participants discussed the use of statistics and other data-reporting methods to increase public awareness of poverty, inequity, and injustice, and in support of

our efforts to help secure more positive outcomes for low-income people in the state. The discussion included local efforts to address bias incidents and an overview of significant discrimination impact cases brought by the NAACP in New Jersey.

The Melville “De” Miller, Jr. Justice Series is named in honor of LSNJ’s co-founder and former president. The free events are open to the public and intended to raise awareness of important social, legal, and economic justice issues. Featured guest lecturers and members of the community speak on topics of appeal to both lawyers and non-lawyers. Continuing education credits are offered for lawyers. Keep an eye out for upcoming Justice Series events at www.lsnj.org/JusticeSeries. For information on sponsoring an upcoming Justice Series event, email development@lsnj.org.

LISTEN UP! SERVING FAMILIES BY CENTERING THE PARENT VOICE



Family Unification Day



Family Unification Day Video

LSNJ recently celebrated Family Unification Day, an annual event that honors families who have successfully prevented the removal of their children by the Division of Child Protection and Permanency, or been reunited following separation. The video, Listen Up! Serving Families by Centering the Parent Voice, was shown at the event.

Our Clients Speak

Joan (not her real name) is 77 years old and still works part time. She contacted LSNJ after being served with a foreclosure complaint on a reverse mortgage of her Hunterdon County home. "I got a knock on the front door," she recalls, "and the person presented me with a bunch of paperwork. I looked at the paperwork and I found Legal Services phone number."

Joan had fallen behind on her property taxes and was despondent in her initial call to Legal Services, convinced she was going to lose her home and had nowhere to go. "I had no plan B. I have no idea where I'd go. I'm out in the sticks. I'm out in the country. I'd have nowhere to go."

She was confused by the allegations because she had been making tax payments and thought she was only a few hundred dollars behind. She was

surprised to learn that while she was making intermittent payments of her property taxes over the years, the mortgage servicer was periodically paying the shortfall. "I knew that I was behind and I tried to rectify it many times. The situation here is if I made a payment for my taxes, the next thing I would find out was that the mortgage company would make a payment. And before I knew it, I was \$8,000 behind. There was no way I could catch up with that kind of payment."

After the servicer denied Joan's request for a repayment plan, Legal Services helped her draft a letter asserting her statutory right to a 45-day period to cure, but, unfortunately, she was not able to cure in that 45-day period. Legal Services worked on a budget with Joan to free up some funds and she was able to get some financial assistance

from a friend to send the payment in full. However, in the meantime, the mortgage company filed a motion for final judgment, and it was coming down to the wire. LSNJ drafted objection papers to the motion for her to file pro se. She struggled with the court's on-line system to file the papers and LSNJ stayed on the phone with her, walking her through each screen until her objection was filed. This delayed entry of final judgment until her payment had cleared. The mortgage company then withdrew their motion and dismissed the foreclosure case. Throughout the case, Joan persisted, overcoming car trouble, treacherous weather, and even a hack on her cell phone, to meet tight deadlines. In the end, she ultimately succeeded in saving her home. "I'm glad it's resolved and I'm trying to get back on track."



A heartfelt thank you to our wonderful interns, volunteers, and Poritz fellows!

Hailing from Rutgers, Fordham, Duke, CUNY, Princeton, Northeastern, and Seton Hall, this summer's group will spend 10 weeks working with LSNJ, a regional Legal Services program, and other public interest employers.



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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