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Staying True to Our Roots- The Community's Lawyers



In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 to mobilize the nation's resources to combat poverty in the United States, including the need to provide equal access to the justice system. In 1968, the Monroe County Bar Association (MCBA), in collaboration with Action for a Better Community, formed the Monroe County Bar Legal Assistance Corporation (MCLAC). Now the Rochester office of Legal Assistance of Western New York, Inc. (LawNY®) continues to provide legal assistance to indigent persons in civil and administrative proceedings. See <http://nydailyrecord.com/2015/09/09/mcba-presidents-message-a-legacy-of-accessing-justice/>

The Rochester Office has changed since its inception in 1968. Once a storefront location, LawNY® now provides services in collaboration with other legal service providers at the Telesca Center for Justice. The once handful of staff members has grown to nearly 50 in Rochester alone. Amidst these changes, LawNY®'s commitment to Monroe County and the City of Rochester has remained steadfast as we continue to remember and respect our origins as an organization that was born out of unrest and a need for social change in our community.

LawNY® is committed to providing community-wide solutions to the problems of the poor through the provision of high quality legal services and the integration of legal and non-legal services to the poor. In order to accomplish this goal, LawNY® engages in a community lawyering service delivery model. In action, community lawyering can be seen as a twofold process. It empowers communities through engagement and education and it strives to make access to justice readily available.

In order to achieve these goals, LawNY® takes a multi-faceted approach. We engage community members in our priority setting process with the understanding that those affected by and seeking our services are in the best position to provide input. We maintain collaborative projects with several community agencies in order to reach those most in need of our services and provide holistic, comprehensive services. We provide services onsite within the community at convenient, accessible and trusted locations.

LawNY®'s Rochester Office has partnered with 46 community-based organizations and provided services onsite at locations such as public libraries, homeless shelters, treatment courts, the Veterans Outreach Center, Rochester Regional Health System, and Rochester Educational Opportunity Center (REOC). We participate in hundreds of outreach and training events each year and assist in coordination of large scale community events such as the Elder Law Fair, Valor Day, and Project Homeless Connect. We hold community listening sessions, focus groups and roundtables and our staff participates in networks, taskforces and other community groups.

We welcome input on our programs and services. If you have questions or comments please contact Lori M. O'Brien, Managing Attorney - Rochester Office, at lobrien "at" lawny "dot" org. Watch our video below to see what Community Lawyering means to our advocates.

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