

Congratulations to David Ralph



Congratulations to staff attorney Dave Ralph for receiving the Mental Health Service Award at the Family Services of Chemung County, Inc., 3rd annual Community Awards Ceremony on November 1, 2017.

David enlisted in the US Army Army Special Security Group in Vietnam in 1965. After receiving his BA (1971) and law degree (1974) from SUNY Buffalo, David joined Chemung County Neighborhood Legal Services (now Legal Assistance of Western New York, Inc.) in 1974.

He specialized in Family Court, consumer credit, bankruptcy cases, and Social Security Disability appeals. David participated in many class actions involving access to public assistance, Medicaid, Social Security and SSI disability benefits. In his 43 years at CCNLS, (now LawNY), David represented innumerable impoverished individuals, and persons with disabilities.

Always a champion for the poor and disabled, he fiercely defended their rights as citizens and fought for their access to services, including working on a class action lawsuit against the Chemung County jail which had one of the highest suicide rates in the state. The jail had no mental health services. David's efforts resulted in the securing of federal funding for the first ever mental health treatment in the Chemung County Jail.

Publicity following his filing of an administrative complaint with the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency that prenatal services were unavailable to Medicaid recipients resulted in provision of prenatal care services to tens of thousands of Medicaid recipients, throughout the state, based on the unconstitutional denial of services to their unborn children.

A class action resulted in the local Social Security Administration Office including illiteracy, lack of English proficiency, low IQ or severe mental illness as considerations in deciding appeals for continuation of benefits, where individuals could not understand or capably respond to a written notice. All Social Security offices, throughout the Second Circuit of Appeals were required to take those factors into account, and these settlement terms later became a national SSA regulation.

Previous Awards:

- 2006 NYS Bar Association's Denison Ray Civil Legal Services Award for "extraordinary commitment to the provision of creative, skilled, and zealous representation of low-income clients."
- 2014 Chemung County Bar Association's "Judson R. Hoover Public Service Award "for outstanding public service to the citizens of Chemung County."

Community Group Involvement

- One of the founders of the Chemung Project for Bail, Inc.; Board Member for over three decades and President
- Past President of the Board of Directors of the Western New York Law Center, Inc., a non-profit legal services agency
- Board Member of Catholic Charities of Chemung and Schuyler
- Member of Gateways Community Advisory Board for over a decade
- Chemung County Community Service Board

- New Member of Board of Directors of the ARC of Chemung and on their Incident review Committee
- Member of the Board of Directors of Family Services of Chemung County, Inc. and Board Vice President

Congratulations David! Thank you for all your work.

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