

LawNY Celebrates 50 Years of Advocacy, Equality, & Access to the Justice System



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The start of 2018 marks our 50th year serving the Monroe County community. In 1968, the Monroe County Bar Association (MCBA), in collaboration with Action for a Better Community, formed the Monroe County Legal Assistance Center (MCLAC). 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 our Rochester Office alone, serving over 4,000 clients per year.

This blog post is to commemorate 50 years of advocacy efforts as well as 50 years fighting for equality and access to the justice system for those who otherwise would not be able to afford it. Check out some headlines the Rochester Office has made since 1968! Below you will also find a schedule of events for how we are celebrating our 50th Anniversary throughout the year.

A Look into the Past

Legal Assistance has a unique role in the county

AS THE PRESIDENT of the Monroe County Bar Association, I am writing to inform the community of the uniquely important role that the Monroe County Legal Assistance Corporation (MCLAC) serves, with the hope that the County of Monroe will reverse its recent decision to exclude MCLAC from its 1977 budget.

The MCLAC was established in 1968 to furnish legal services to low-income people in civil matters only. It is the only office of its kind in Monroe County.

Unfortunately, it is sometimes confused with the Monroe County Public Defender's Office and the Legal Aid Society. The Public Defender's Office provides legal services to low-income people in criminal matters and the Legal Aid Society provides legal services to people primarily in Family Law matters.

During the eight years of its existence, MCLAC has provided extensive legal services to over 15,000 low-income people in a variety of areas, including housing, public assistance, civil rights, employment discrimination, unemployment compensation,

Letters

the need for far greater funds to institutionalize people at a cost of approximately \$20,000 per person per year and the cost of supplying other social and protective services that are inevitably necessitated where tensions and frustrations are not constructively resolved through legal channels.

It is unfortunate and unjustified that the county initially singled out MCLAC by totally excluding it from the 1977 budget while only reducing other agencies by one-third of their 1976 county budgets.

JUSTIN L. VIGDOR, president, Monroe County Bar Association

Where's concern for the common good?

DURING HIS years in government and in particular the last two, Mr. Ford seems to have forgotten something that our fore-

of people in government and their salaries and free-loading pensions.

In our county we've had to let go quite a few employees, and no salary increases. Why should federal government be different?

I'M IN RECEIPT of a letter from my congressional representative Barber Conable, dated Jan. 16, and I quote his remarks relative to the pay increases in question: "I wrote to the President, strongly opposing the initial proposals as excessive."

Under the present executive congressional pay system, it is possible for presidential recommendations to take effect without approval by Congress. I consider this an evasion of congressional responsibility and have consistently opposed this method of dealing with this issue.

"I believe Congress should be required to vote on any pay increase and that such action should be effective after the next election, so that candidates may seek office with a full awareness of the emoluments to be received."

Jan. 16). The first step must be to inform people that such problems exist now and could get worse.

I particularly liked the suggestion of the National Commission on Supplies and Shortages which urged more recycling and removal of depletion allowances. Both of these measures can reduce waste of our limited natural resources.

The report also called for "more effective consideration of complex and interrelated policy issues" involving resources. One of these must be an awareness that the U.S. population is growing and that this aggravates our problems with resource supplies.

Our population is growing now and will continue even with our low birthrate as long as we have so much illegal and legal immigration. Zero population growth is essential for a responsible natural resources policy and many other reasons.

JOHN S. BLIEK, 129 Kirklees Rd., Pittsford

Published by the Democrat and Chronicle on Sunday January 30, 1977. Justin Vigdor, President of the Monroe County Bar Association at the time, voices his support for LawNY® (then Monroe County Legal Assistance Center- MCLAC). He points out that during the 8 years in which MCLAC had been open, we had already managed to assist over 15,000 low income New Yorkers. Mr. Vigdor states that MCLAC provides access to the justice system for low-income people "without lawlessness and without violence that might otherwise spring from frustration, helplessness and futility felt by otherwise disenfranchised people."

Lou Prieto stands as fierce ally for low-income people seeking justice



BYRAN D. HETHERINGTON
STAFF COUNSEL

There are a few people in our community who make a big difference but who don't get the recognition they deserve. They don't seek recognition, instead they just want to make things better for those they care about. **Lou Prieto**, the attorney who heads the Monroe County Legal Assistance Center, is one of them.

Lou has devoted his career as a lawyer to serving those in the most need, first with the Legal Aid Society in New York City and now for more than 20 years with MCLAC. MCLAC provides free civil legal representation to low-income people. Lou came to Rochester in 1995 to head MCLAC's housing unit because of the office's reputation for ex-



Lou Prieto heads the Monroe County Legal Assistance Center in Rochester.

cellent legal work and at the urging of his close college friend, the late Charles D. McKee (late Buffalo), who told Lou on the way that Rochester would be a great community in which to raise his three children. Lou has strengthened the legal work of

"His Cuban heritage means a great deal to him. ... He remembers being blamed for things in school that he didn't do because at age 6 he couldn't speak English and his teacher couldn't speak Spanish."

the MCLAC housing unit. Family has always meant a lot to Lou. When he commuted his mother to move from New York City to Rochester, Lou found her an apartment in the building across the street from his office. Almost every day until her

death, Lou took his lunch across the street to eat with his mom. Lou is a gentle man but a fierce competitor in the courtroom, an attribute stemming from everything he does. His Cuban heritage means a great deal to him, the remembrance that it was like for his family to be turned down for housing because of their Spanish accents, the remembrance being blamed for things in school that he didn't do because at age 6 he couldn't speak English and his teacher couldn't speak Spanish. It is no accident that his office, with his leadership and insistence on doing what is right, is one of the best legal services offices in the country. Heavily trying to correct injustices. It is a result of the leadership of a man who decided that he needs to live his life consistently with his core beliefs in fairness and equality.

Hetherington is chief counsel, Empire Justice Center in Rochester.

Published by the Democrat and Chronicle on Sunday, October 6, 2006. Bryan D. Hetherington, at the time Empire Justice Center's Chief Counsel, highlights Lou Prieto's relentless advocacy efforts throughout the years. Mr. Prieto came to Rochester in 1991 to head LawNY's Housing Unit. He served as the Rochester Office's Managing Attorney until 2015. In the article, Mr. Prieto discusses how important his Cuban heritage is to him and how it affected his life growing up in America.

Published by the Democrat and Chronicle on Sunday, July 8, 2007. Jason Hoge, Staff Attorney at LawNY², describes LawNY²'s collaboration with the grassroots organization Judicial Process Commission to create the Re-Entry Project. LawNY²'s Re-Entry unit has been practicing since 2006, helping to remove barriers to employment and housing that those with a criminal record often face when seeking to reintegrate into society after incarceration.

Re-entry Project smoothes road home



JASON HOGE
STAFF ATTORNEY

Giving people a second chance to join society ... profits the community.

To learn more

For more information, contact Monroe County Legal Assistance Center at (585) 325-2520 or the Judicial Process Commission, (585) 325-7727.

Nearly 2 million Americans are held in state and federal prisons with 66 percent due for release over the next several years. Of the 650,000 people released every year, one-third will be reincarcerated within three years.

President Bush commented on this growing dilemma in his 2004 State of the Union address: "I ask you to consider another group of Americans in need of help. This year, almost 700,000 inmates will be released from prison back into society. We know from long experience that if they can't find work, or a home, or help, they are much more likely to commit crime and return to

prison. ... America is the land of second chances, and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life."

To address this issue, in 2006 the Monroe County Legal Assistance Center, a nonprofit legal service provider to low-income persons, and the Judicial Process Commission, a grassroots community service provider, started the Re-Entry Project, an innovative community collaboration.

The Re-Entry Project helps individuals returning to our community from incarceration and those who have never been incarcerated but struggle daily to overcome the stigma of criminal records.

The Re-Entry Project helps

remove the legal and social barriers that people with criminal records face when seeking a fresh start. These barriers are counterproductive to successful re-entry into our community and often lead to new criminal activity and eventual reincarceration.

Over the past year, the Re-Entry Project has helped well over 500 people correct inaccuracies in their criminal records for the purpose of obtaining employment, work permits and professional licenses.

In addition, the project helps employers understand the laws pertaining to hiring people with criminal records. The project also provides legal remedies, such as Certificate of Good Conduct, to lessen the detri-

mental effects of a criminal record on employment and licensing.

Giving people a second chance to join society as working and productive members profits the community. But providing the path that leads to a better life, as called for by the president, requires the involvement of our entire community. The Re-Entry Project is one model for successfully helping people with criminal records, a model that may be replicated across the country.

Hoge is lead counsel, Monroe County Legal Assistance Center's Re-Entry Project.

Lawyer honored for housing fight

MICHAEL DOLGIN
Staff writer

Laurie M. Lambrix was 31 when the Africa prince riot of 1975 made her think about a career in the law.

"It was the first time that I ever noticed in my own community," Lambrix said. "I had always been interested in issues of social justice and in my mind, getting a law degree would help me address some of those issues."

Lambrix, who represents victims of housing discrimination as senior attorney of the non-profit Monroe County Legal Assistance Center, will travel to New York City next week to receive an award that honors a lawyer who dedicated his or her career to the law.

The New York State Bar Association will present to Lambrix in 2007 Haywood Burns Award, named for a civil rights lawyer who also worked with the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and ac-



Laurie M. Lambrix

will receive an award of the state bar association.

Before Angela Davis before dying in a car accident in 1996.

"I'm extremely honored to have my name linked with his," Lambrix said. "Even though he died tragically young... he accomplished so much."

Lambrix has devoted herself to fighting discriminatory housing practices, said Mindy R. Deringers, president of the Women's Bar Association of New York, which nominated her.

"As a result of her determination, commitment and hard work, landlords and builders now know that they will be held accountable for their actions, and the public knows there is

Laurie Lambrix

Age: 44
Home: Brighton
Education: Graduated from Brighton High School in 1976, State University of New York at Buffalo in 1982, and University of Colorado School of Law in 1986.

Career: Staff attorney with Ohio People's Legal Services in Shippensburg, Pa., from 1986 to 1989, lawyer with Monroe County Legal Assistance Center since 1990.

Family: Married, two children.

nowhere to go to seek redress for the wrongs that still exist," Deringers said.

Bringing these cases usually involves discrimination based on race, handicap or because the plaintiff has children, Lambrix said.

Since 1996, she has filed 20 lawsuits in U.S. District Court claiming violations

of the federal Fair Housing Act.

Most have been settled, but she won her first case to go to trial last month against a landlord who refused to rent a home to an African-American woman with two children.

Her client, Jacqueline Diaz, a coordinator for the Webster Central School District, had wanted to move from Rochester to a better school from the school where she worked.

When a jury returned its verdict finding that discrimination had occurred, Diaz was crying so hard she didn't hear that the jury had awarded her \$5,000 in damages.

"The money really wasn't an issue for her," Lambrix said.

Diaz said she's thankful she found Lambrix.

"She's a very wonderful person, a very caring person," Diaz said. a

Legal services unite at Four Corners

GARY CHASE
Staff writer

U.S. District Judge Michael Telesca remembers watching V.I. Day from a perch at a bank building at the downtown Four Corners.

As a boy, Telesca sold papers at the corner. His copies of the Rochester newspapers disappeared quickly that day, then he became engaged in the jubilation of the end of World War II in Europe.

"The streets were flooded with people," Telesca said. "It was the biggest thrill of my life."

Now, his corner defines the building at the corner corner opened this year after a successful fundraising campaign, the Telesca Center for Justice — formerly the Four Corners Building — brings the Monroe County Bar Association under the same roof as four local agencies that provide legal services to low-income residents.

"The fact that it brings my family name in even-whispering," Telesca said. "Something is the only word I can think of."



Telesca

Published by the Democrat and Chronicle on Monday, December 28, 2009. The article describes U.S. District Judge Telesca's dedication to serving low-income individuals in Monroe County throughout his career.

Telesca Center signals teamwork



HAROLD KURLAND
AND JUSTIN VIGDOR
Staff writers

There will soon be a new sign on what was known for decades as the Four Corners Building in downtown Rochester: now the Telesca Center for Justice.

That sign will be in the form of an owl. It is a symbol of wisdom, a reminder that the building is a place where people can find the answers they need.

Legal services providers used to virtually every city in the country, but the Telesca Center for Justice is

one principle — justice for all.

The Telesca Center for Justice houses the offices of four agencies that provide civil legal services for the poor, as well as the Monroe County Bar Association, its Public Center for Education, and the Foundation of the Monroe County Bar.

The mission and work of these legal services providers, The Legal Aid Society, Brighton Justice Center, Monroe County Legal Assistance Center and the Volunteer Legal Services Program, is to provide legal services to help people with very limited resources meet their basic needs.

Legal services providers used to virtually every city in the country, but the Telesca Center for Justice is

unique because it combines the legal services agencies with the law school in one facility, allowing all to collaborate in one location and to share space resources.

Hundreds of lawyers who are members of the NYSBA also represent citizens pro bono through VLSB and many serve on the boards of the provider agencies.

The Telesca Center also has a common lobby and is an attractive, functional, convenient physical shared space for legal services clients and for the lawyers and staff of the legal services agencies.

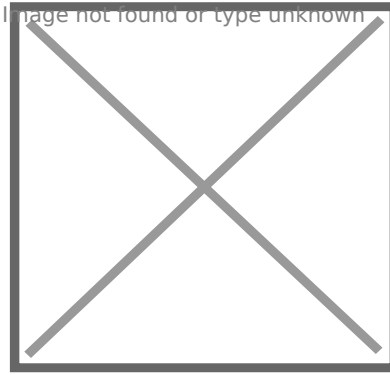
The Telesca Center for Justice is named for Justice U.S. District Judge Michael A. Telesca. Telesca has presided in federal court for 27 years. He is known

as a judge who has worked for simplicity for all those who come before him, especially those with the least advantages in life.

It is particularly appropriate that the Telesca Center for Justice is named for Judge Telesca. Many lawyers and others in the community have been inspired by Telesca's work and the importance of the cause to contribute to the Partnership for Equal Justice Campaign. To date, they have pledged close to \$1 million to support this unique collaboration.

Kurland is president of the Monroe County Bar Association. Vigdor is chair of the Partnership for Equal Justice Campaign.

Published by the Democrat and Chronicle on November 29, 2009. The article highlights Monroe County as the first county in the nation to integrate all legal services provides as well as the local bar association under one roof in order to allow accessibility as well as stronger partnerships between providers.



Celebrate our 50th Anniversary with us!

Follow our Facebook Page for dates and more details as they become available.

Month	Event	Description of Activities
March 2018	AmeriCorps Alumni 'Where Are They Now' Lunch	AmeriCorps Alumni of the LawNY Rochester office are invited to have lunch with our current AmeriCorps members.
April 2018	Fair Housing	A CLE on the Fair Housing Act will be offered by attorneys in our Fair Housing Project.
May 2018	Truth in Lending Act 50th Anniversary Workshop	LawNY® staff from our Regional Consumer Project will be holding a workshop offering information on a variety of consumer rights.
June 2018	Re-Entry Providers of Monroe County Meet and Greet	An open house at LawNY® for all re-entry providers in Monroe County. Light refreshments will provided.

July 2018	NOEP Outreach	Our Nutrition Outreach & Education Program (NOEP) coordinators will be out in the community at outreach events offering information about LawNY®'s services and history.
September 2018	<i>LawNY®'s 50th Anniversary Dinner!</i>	Celebrate with us over dinner at the Strathallan's rooftop bar and restaurant on September 27, 2018! Learn more about our work within the community for the past half century and help us thank our community partners for their unwavering support throughout the years.
September 2018	Project Homeless Connect 2018	Our Eviction Prevention Unit will be attending Rochester's annual Project Homeless Connect to offer assistance to homeless individuals or those at risk of homelessness.
October 2018	Elder Law Fair 2018	Our Seniors Legal Services project will be attending Rochester's annual Elder Law Fair to offer assistance in estate planning, elder abuse, and more.
November 2018	Veterans Outreach Center Stand Down Event	Our Legal Services for Veterans Project members will be attending the VOC's annual Stand Down event to offer legal assistance to veterans.
December 2018	Navigator Open House	Our Health Insurance Enrollment Specialists will be holding an open house where attendees can receive refreshments while enrolling in health insurance if needed.

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