



LEGAL ASSISTANCE OF WESTERN NEW YORK, INC.®

2015 Annual Report

MISSION STATEMENT

*Legal Assistance of Western New York, Inc.®
is a not-for-profit corporation established
to provide access to the justice system
to low-income people and other vulnerable
populations who have civil legal problems.*

A Message from...

Andrew Conroy, Board President and

C. Kenneth Perri, Executive Director

It is our privilege to introduce you to the 2015 annual report of Legal Assistance of Western New York, Inc.®

LawNY® was established to provide access to the justice system to low-income people and other vulnerable populations who have civil legal problems. Our service area is a large geographic expanse of nearly 10,000 square miles comprised of 14 counties: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Chemung, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Tioga, Tompkins, Wayne and Yates. We serve our clients through seven staffed offices which are located in Bath, Elmira, Geneva, Ithaca, Jamestown, Olean and Rochester.

In 2015, our staff of 76.6 FTE attorneys, 52.5 FTE paralegals and 14.4 FTE support staff worked together to close 8,877 cases that benefitted 18,241 people. Our direct services to clients involved matters affecting the essentials of life including: Government benefits – 33.4%; Housing – 23.3%; Family – 16.6%; Health – 13.4%; Consumer – 3.6%; and Employment – 2.8%.

Pursuant to priorities established by the LawNY® board of directors, we intentionally target our services to those who are particularly vulnerable including people with disabilities, survivors of domestic violence, children, the elderly, veterans, formerly incarcerated persons reentering our communities and immigrants.

We are grateful for the generosity of our funders, without whom we would not exist. Details regarding our funding are contained in the summary of our financial statements in this report. We are also grateful for the opportunities that have been provided to us to work together with our community partners, without whom our clients would not be able to receive the full range of holistic services that are often necessary to help them weather a crisis – be it a lack of affordable housing, the need to access health care, going without food or finding safety from domestic violence.

We work cooperatively with dozens of community-based organizations throughout our service area to reach and educate clients, conduct legal education projects and develop self-help strategies. Our collaborators encompass all of the poverty services community including: departments of social services, economic opportunity/Head Start agencies, Offices for the Aging, community dispute resolution centers, housing authorities, Salvation Army chapters, Catholic Charities programs, organizations which serve veterans, continuum of care consortiums, medical – legal collaboratives, a fair housing task force, homeless networks, a lead paint coalition, domestic violence task forces and provider networks, an anti-predatory lending task force, a re-entry consortium and networks of elder abuse providers, broad based human service providers and emergency service providers.

Please read about the work of the LawNY® staff in the pages that follow. Thank you again. It is an honor for us to serve as LawNY®'s president and executive director.



Highlights of 2015



Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman surrounded by attendees of the meeting.

Many LawNY® staff attended the Welfare Task Force meeting on May 20, 2015 at the Telesca Center for Justice in Rochester.



Keith McCafferty introducing New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman in Jamestown.

Through our Homeownership Protection Program, we represent homeowners facing foreclosure as a result of the 2008 housing crisis. Attorney General Schneiderman visited Jamestown on August 12, 2015 and LawNY® managing attorney Keith McCafferty was the first speaker at a presentation which took place at the Robert H. Jackson center. Keith thanked Attorney General Schneiderman for his commitment to homeowners affected by the foreclosure crisis.



Laura Branca, Michaela Azemi, Natalie Knott, Kirby Edmonds and Rob Kim at LawNY®'s programwide staff meeting.

Nearly all of LawNY's 145 staff members gathered in Rochester on November 11, 2015 for a programwide staff meeting which was held at the Rochester Museum and Science Center. The meeting focused on issues of diversity and inclusion.

After welcoming remarks by executive director Ken Perri, staff attorneys Michaela Azemi, Rob Kim and Natalie Knott provided a report on the work of the LawNY® diversity committee. External presenters Laura Branca and Kirby Edmonds gave a presentation on implicit bias and de-biasing. Later, Ken Perri provided a presentation on the background, process and goals of the Racial Justice Training Institute sponsored by the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law. Staff attorneys Danielle Erickson and Natalie Knott and supervising attorneys Robin Marable and Kari Talbott participated in the Institute.

Technology

LawNY®'s technology coordinator, Anna Hineline, served on a panel that made a presentation to the Legal Services Corporation's (LSC) board of directors with regard to the impact that LSC's Technology Initiative Grants (TIG) program has had on the service delivery capacities of LSC's grantees and on our client communities. Anna has worked on LSC funded technology projects involving document assembly programs, plain language, remote videoconferencing, online triage and website enhancements.

The panel presentation took place during the LSC board meeting in April 2015 during a portion of the meeting that was held at the White House. A reception for LSC board members and panelists was held in the Supreme Court building. We congratulate Anna for being recognized by LSC for the high quality of her contributions to LSC's technology initiatives.



The Legal Services Corporation has awarded two new technology grants to LawNY®. One grant is for a project to continue development and support of two national plain language projects. The second grant is to create a single online entry point for low-income western New Yorkers who are seeking legal information and services on consumer related issues. We will also pilot coordinated web based screening, intake and referrals for LawNY® and two other LSC grantees, the Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York based in Utica and Neighborhood Legal Services based in Buffalo.

Innovators

LawNY® serves as the lead agency for the Pro Bono Innovation Fund project in New York. We work with the five other LSC funded programs outside of New York City to build on the two major pro bono initiatives begun by Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman. We are recruiting law students and law graduates to volunteer in our offices to help them meet the requirement for 50 hours of pro bono service to become licensed as New York State attorneys. We are also recruiting experienced attorneys to provide 60 hours of pro bono service through the Attorney Emeritus Program.

Through the one year period ending on October 31, 2015, the project partners cumulatively recruited 144 law students who donated 18,070 hours and worked on 3,049 cases. They also recruited 22 emeritus attorneys who donated 799 hours and worked on 434 cases.



*Nicole Scialabba (LSCNY), Christine McMenamin (NLS),
Melissa Greenberger (NSLS), Kevin Kelly (LawNY®),
Carol Neiditch (LSHV)*

AmeriCorps



Olean: Wendy Filbert and Brad Barnes



Rochester: Rebecca Riedman, Rachel Narowski, Erin Kuhn, Patrick Reichard, Jeremiah King, and Rachel Bittman



Elmira: Richard Cornell and John Francis



Ithaca: Marty Beach, Krystall Escobedo and Marcia Pierce-Rasmussen

LawNY® is proud to work with 21 AmeriCorps Access to Justice members, seven Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps fellows, and four AmeriCorps VISTA members across our seven offices. Their work has been an extremely valuable part of our service delivery system. Our Access to Justice members support our day-to-day case handling and office tasks. Our Equal Justice Works fellows support our Employment Opportunity and Veterans Legal Services Projects. Our VISTA members support our Education Law and Veterans Legal Services Projects and our work with the Emergency Services and Family Stabilization Network.



Bath: Oliver Mushtare, John Winters, Ashley Tompkins and Franci Saunders



Geneva: Sinead Reilly, Natalie Sanchez, Charlotte Granison, Kristen Scherb and Aryn Keyel



Jamestown: Ben Haskin, Rebecca Magnuson, Jonathan Bogey and Kristy Woodfield

LawNY®: Faces in the Community

Our Ithaca office coordinated with Levene, Gouldin & Thompson, LLP to host a Senior Legal Clinic on October 30, 2015.



Kaitlin Tharp and Hilary Gove at the Wayne County Veteran Service Advisory Committee's Veteran Job and Resource Fair



Pam Johnson, Sue Segelman and Rachel Bittman at the Jordan Health Center Fair



Sue Segelman and Kelly McGovern at Rochester's Summer Meals Kick-Off



Staff enjoying Rochester's Puerto Rican Festival



Ossie Arce and volunteer Bernadette Foley at the Finger Lakes Pride Festival



VISTA members Charlotte Granison and Aryn Keyel at "Our Community Health Fair" in Canandaigua

To improve veterans' access to legal help, the Rochester legal community has teamed with One Team - One Fight (1t1f) to host Valor Day. This one day legal and veteran services fair was held on June 13, 2015. Approximately 200 veterans attended Valor Day with over half receiving legal services.



Staff in Elmira collected money to purchase school supplies for the Catholic Charities Back to School Giveaway at the Samaritan Center in Elmira, NY.

On May 23, 2015 LawNY® co-sponsored the film screening of "It Happened Here" at the Palace Theater in Corning. The film deals with the issue of sexual assault on college campuses through the personal testimonials of five survivors who transformed their experiences into a springboard for change. After the film, staff attorney Michaela Azemi and paralegal Kelly Perine served on a panel of speakers to discuss local resources and initiatives. The panel included Congressman Tom Reed.



Rebecca Russo, Vanessa Ortiz and Pam Johnson at the 8th Annual African American Festival at Highland Bowl Park



Sue Segelman, Jeff Nieznanski and Stephanie Miller with State Assembly Majority Leader Joe Morelle at a Health and Wellness Fair that he sponsored

Our Work

Our client is a nineteen year old with an intellectual disability. Abandoned by his family, he lives in a boarding house. The Adult Protective Services applies for Supplemental Security Income on his behalf, but he is denied. Our office handled the appeal of the denial, and our client received a fully favorable decision. He now participates in the Ticket to Work program, maximizing his benefits and providing him more stability.

Our client is a veteran with unsafe housing. Conditions in the apartment cause health problems for his family. Despite this, his landlord accuses him of causing the pipes to freeze and gives him a thirty day notice of eviction and a three day rent demand. We were able to advocate for him, and the landlord withdrew the petition. Our client and his family found new, more suitable housing before the landlord delivered any other notices or court papers.

In 2015, LawNY® closed 8,877 cases benefitting 18,241 people. The breakout of the cases was as follows: income maintenance (33.4%), housing (23.3%), family (16.6%), health (13.4%), consumer (3.6%), employment (2.8%) and other (6.9%).

LawNY® achieved at least \$281,488 in ongoing monthly benefits and at least \$1,607,778 in one-time payments for a total payout of at least \$4,985,634 over 12 months.

Our client is a senior whose Supplemental Security Income (SSI) was discontinued due to an alleged overpayment. She suffers from the effects of a stroke that requires skilled nursing rehabilitation. The Social Security Administration (SSA) stopped her SSI and claimed she was overpaid \$1,232 because she is in a nursing home. We wrote to SSA requesting a waiver of the alleged overpayment and asking that her SSI be resumed. We argued that our client's physical and mental impairments from her stroke, and her advanced age combined to substantially impair her ability to understand her obligation to report her move to a nursing home from a hospital. SSA waived the alleged overpayment and resumed her SSI monthly benefits.

From Our Clients

"I found (my advocate) to be very kind. But most of all she didn't make me feel like a non-person. I thank God for her. She made me feel good, not poor."

"Thank you so much for your help. With all of my medical problems it was great to see the light at the end of the tunnel."

"From the moment I walked into the office the staff I dealt with was very professional and compassionate. Thank you all so very much! I will recommend to everyone if they need assistance."

Thank You

Pro Bono Work

Thank you to all of the attorneys who provided services to our clients pro bono.

On October 28, 2015, in conjunction with the American Bar Association's celebration of National Pro Bono Week, the Chemung County Bar Association hosted a recognition event for volunteer attorneys who donated their services to represent low-income clients of our Elmira office. The guest speaker was Supreme Court Justice Judith O'Shea, who presented awards to 22 recipients at the pro bono awards banquet.

LawNY® also helped to sponsor a luncheon recognition event in conjunction with National Pro Bono Week to honor six volunteer attorneys in Cattaraugus County and 13 volunteer attorneys in Chautauqua County. In Chautauqua County, Congressman Tom Reed provided certificates of congressional recognition for the honorees. Honorable Paula Feroletto, administrative judge for the 8th Judicial District, presented the certificates to the honorees in Chautauqua County and attended the recognition event in Cattaraugus County.

Another recognition event, co-sponsored by the Steuben County Bar Association, took place on December 9, 2015 in Corning and included a free ethics continuing legal education event on pro bono, which was presented by staff attorneys Michaela Azemi and Kevin Kelly. This was followed by a ceremony to honor 12 volunteer attorneys.



Amy Christensen, LawNY® deputy director; George Welch, Jr.; Desiree Lurf, LawNY® staff attorney and pro bono awardee; Brittany Linder; Ruth Chafee; William Joint; Wendy Gould; Gabriel Rossettie and Michaela Rossettie Azemi, LawNY® staff attorney.

Without the support and generosity of our funders who believe in our mission to provide access to the justice system, we would not be able to provide the wide variety of legal services we now offer to residents of our 14 county service area. Thanks to the numerous agencies, individuals and organizations, we have been able to develop a variety of innovative projects and partnerships that allow us to holistically serve our clients.

Campaign for Justice
Community Service Society of New York
Equal Justice America
Equal Justice Works
Hunger Solutions New York
Legacy Foundation
Lifespan
Monroe County Bar Foundation
New York Bar Foundation
Ontario/Yates Fund for Women & Girls
Pro Bono Net
Rochester General Hospital
Rutgers Presbyterian Church Foundation
Private Donors

United Ways of:
Cattaraugus County
Greater Rochester
Ontario County
Seneca County
Southern Tier
Tompkins County

Thanks also to all the Federal agencies, New York State agencies and local governments for their support. We are particularly grateful to Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman for overseeing the continuous expansion of Judiciary Civil Legal Services funding allowing us to target services to low-income New Yorkers with civil legal problems affecting the essentials of life.

Legal Assistance of Western New York, Inc.®

2015 Financial Statements

Revenue

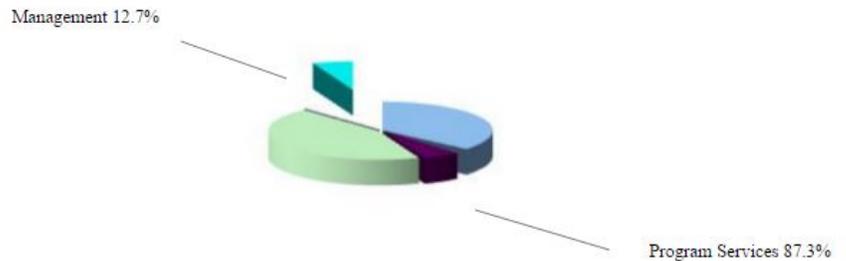
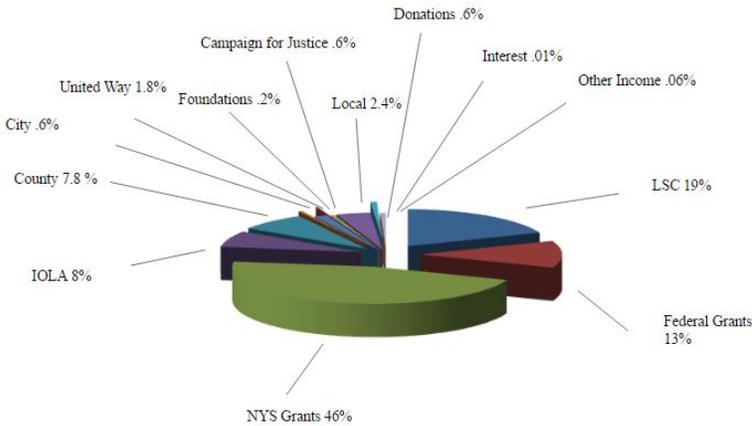
LSC	\$ 2,008,720
Federal Grants	\$ 1,245,355
NYS Grants	\$ 4,900,510
Interest on Lawyer's Accounts	\$ 750,000
County Grants	\$ 826,401
City Grants	\$ 44,604
United Way	\$ 158,580
Foundations	\$ 21,100
Campaign for Justice	\$ 48,535
Local Collaboratives	\$ 409,546
Donations	\$ 77,711
Interest Income	\$ 1,719
Other Income	\$ 64,931

Total Operating Revenue \$ 10,557,712

Expenses

Program Services	
Personnel	\$ 7,718,085
Contract Services	\$ 519,751
Occupancy	\$ 482,495
Office and Related Expenses	\$ 663,836
Total Program Services	\$ 9,384,167
Management	
Personnel	\$ 1,122,152
Occupancy	\$ 72,416
Office and Related Expenses	\$ 72,003
Total Management	\$ 1,266,571

Total Combined Expenses \$ 10,650,738



Congratulations

Loretta Callahan received the 2015 Carter C. Williams award for outstanding advocacy for the elderly.

Danielle Erickson, Natalie Knott, Robin Marable, Kari Talbott - 2015 Racial Justice Training Intstitue Fellows

David Kagle recieved an award from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of New York for outstanding victim assistance.

David Pels recieved the 2015 Cornell Law School Alumni Exemplary Public Service Award.

Lourdes Marcano-Stokes was featured on the cover of the 11/10/15 – 12/10/15 issue of *La Voz*.

Our Rochester Veterans Team received the 2015 Veterans Services Champion Award from the Veterans Business Council.

LawNY's foreclosure prevention work was highlighted in the New York State Attorney General Schneiderman's visit to Jamestown.

The Democrat & Chronicle published an article written by Honorable Patricia Marks and Louis Prieto highlighting Valor Day in June 2015.

Rochester office managing attorney Louis Prieto announced his retirement from LawNY® effective January 2016. Lou joined LawNY® (at the time Monroe County Legal Assistance Center) as the supervising attorney of the housing unit in our Rochester office in May 1991. He became the office's managing attorney in 1995.



Louis Prieto standing to the right of C. Kenneth Perri, LawNY's executive director

Lou's accomplishments during his tenure are too numerous to mention in the context of this report. His most recent accomplishments include the expansion of LawNY®'s region wide projects to provide legal services to veterans, to those seeking access to health care and public and private health care insurance, to reentering former offenders facing barriers to employment and to the enforcement of the fair housing rights of the members of our communities.



Pictured above: Barry Storm and David Pels. Barry Storm and JoAnne Miner, both retired Clinical Law Professors at the Cornell Legal Aid Clinic and former LawNY Board members, nominated David for the 2015 Cornell Law School Alumni Exemplary Public Service Award.



Pictured right: Todd Baxter (Veterans Outreach Center), Hannah Mayne Nezezon, Margaret Perkins, Bob Gregoire (VOC), Jocene Henderson (VOC)

Board of Directors

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Dale Stanton
Mackenzie Stutzman, Esq.
Christopher Thomas, Esq.
Patti Warner

Thanks to board and committee members who have volunteered their time and services throughout the year.

On behalf of LawNY® we extend our gratitude to those members who have left our board in 2015...
Allison Carrow, Bernadette Foley, Natasha Noras, Bruce Rosekrans

Principal Place of Business

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Fax: 607-776-4029

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