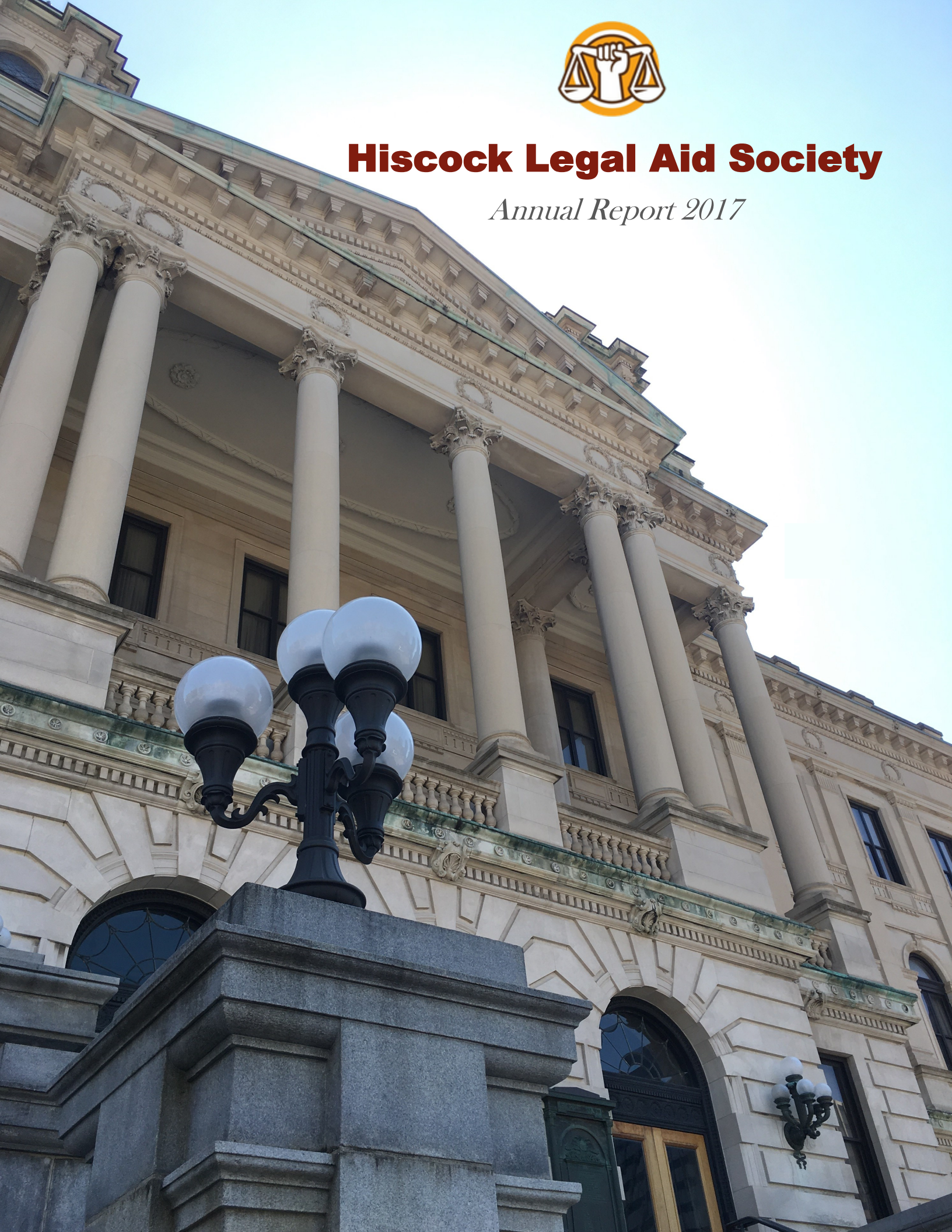




# **Hiscock Legal Aid Society**

*Annual Report 2017*





# **HISCOCK LEGAL AID SOCIETY**

**PROMOTING JUSTICE FOR ALL SINCE 1949**

## **VISION**

The Society works to ensure that no one in our community is denied justice because of a lack of means.

## **MISSION**

The Hiscock Legal Aid Society promotes the fundamental right of every person to equal justice under the law by providing high quality legal assistance to individuals and families in need in Onondaga County and the surrounding region.

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In an environment of challenge and change facing all Americans, the year 2017 presented one of the most significant challenge and change years for Hiscock Legal Aid Society (HLA) to date.

We completed a significant succession plan and found a new leader in Linda Gehron. As Board chair, my first year on the job was full and fulfilling. I am proud to report HLA emerged from 2017 strong: structurally and fiscally. Most important, the Board is ever more focused on the challenges that lie ahead.

Poverty is in the headlines. The national ratings, news reports and local media proclaim Syracuse as a deeply divided and poor community. Syracuse is faced with the many challenges of poverty and under employment and low employment. HLA is critically important to addressing the root causes of poverty. Our attorneys and support staff work tirelessly to maintain family integrity, housing and basic freedoms for more than 4,000 individuals every year.

We can and want to do more. The economics require we do more. The New York State Commission on Access to Justice estimated in its 2016 report that for every dollar spent on civil legal services to low income families, \$10 is returned to New York State. More importantly from my perspective, is that we have a societal imperative to break the poverty cycle.

A family that walks through our doors and -- as a result of our representation -- remains together and lives in a home, together, will play a role in positively shaping this place we



call home. When the cycle of poverty is broken, it's not only the people we've served that are impacted. It's very often every generation that follows, too.

The Board has embarked on a challenge to the community to provide additional funds for our programs through its signature annual event Justice For All. We have reached out to all our community partners through this event and it continued to grow in its 4th year. The attorneys, staff and Board of HLA applaud the efforts of our clients to restart and reset their lives in Syracuse. We are proud to be the legal helping hands in their journey to success. We believe our community is infinitely richer, more compassionate and more equitable as a result of our efforts and the efforts of our clients.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Virginia A. Hoveman".

Virginia A. Hoveman  
Board Chair



**2**017 was an exciting year of change and growth for the Frank H. Hiscock Legal Aid Society. We remain a vital agency and we're proud to have served the Central New York community for nearly 70 years.

We celebrated the renowned careers of President & CEO Susan R. Horn and Chief Operating Officer Joanne Sawmiller, who led HLA over many decades together. We also acknowledged the dedication and contributions of Suzanne Galbato, who served as our Board Chair for several years.

Those who have come before us have built a strong foundation for our work. Our funders coupled with the efforts of our dynamic team of attorneys and support staff are bringing innovation to our practices to serve more people than ever.

In February 2017, I was presented with the

extraordinary opportunity to serve as HLA's new President & CEO. Working together with our new Board Chair Virginia Hoveman and our Administration and Management Teams, we continue to discern new ways to expand and improve our services. Our collaborations with Legal Services of Central New York, the Legal Aid Society of Mid New York, the Onondaga County Bar Association, the Onondaga County Assigned Counsel Program, Vera House, the Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County and many others enhance our work immeasurably.

Our practices are strengthening to better serve those in need. We expanded our

“Those who have come before us have built a strong foundation for our work.”

unique open interview policy to facilitate client intake from 8:30 AM – 4:00 PM Monday – Friday, both in-person and by telephone. We re-organized to allow for

specialized practice areas and greater expertise among our attorneys. We provided a dedicated attorney to be present in Landlord Tenant Court every morning to help more people avoid homelessness, and have expanded these services further through our growing internship program. With the use of new technology we have continued to streamline our procedures to free up staff time to serve our clients.

Our funding sources continue to grow so we

can expand our services. This year we handled nearly 5,000 cases and helped over 8,000 people. You can read some of their compelling stories in the pages that follow.

The County of Onondaga, the State of New York, the City of Syracuse and the United Way

continue to generously support our organization to provide a wide variety of legal services, including appeals, child custody, child support, child welfare, divorce, eviction, foreclosure, immigration and unemployment insurance benefits representation. Fundraising from our “Justice For All” breakfast and support from others all helped us to continue the essential

“This year we handled nearly 5,000 cases and helped over 8,000 people.”

“Cancer Legal Advocacy Services Program.”

I believe in the work we all do to ensure no one in our community be denied access to justice because of a lack of means.

The Hiscock Legal Aid Society plays a vital role in turning this mission into a reality.

We cannot reach all those who desperately need our assistance without your help.

We thank you for your support.



Linda Gehron  
President & CEO



Management Team:

Back row: Michele Dyess, Nancy Farrell, Gregory Dewan, Jennifer Racciatti, Philip Rothschild, Piotr Banasiak

Front row: Linda Gehron, Amanda McHenry, Craig Schlanger

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## OFFICERS

### **Chair**

Virginia A. Hoveman

### **Chair Elect**

Mark Field

### **Vice Chair**

Margaret M. Cassady

### **Secretary-Treasurer**

Joseph A. Hardick

### **Assistant Secretary-Treasurer**

Joanne P. Sawmiller

### **President & C.E.O.**

Linda Gehron

## DIRECTORS

Nadine C. Bell	Matthew L. Parry
Cameron T. Bernard	Carl Pesko
David M. Carnie	John G. Powers
Anita Cottrell	Janice T. Rosbrook
Wynetta Devore	Stephen Rosenholm
Sam A. Elbadawi	Barry M. Shulman
Suzanne O. Galbato	F. Paul Vellano
Margaret M. Harding	JoAnn C. Wallace
Conor Kirchner	Earnestine Williams
Anthony J. Malavenda	Samuel C. Young
Jillian L. McGuire	

## HONORARY LIFETIME MEMBER

Bertha A. Adams

### **CASES OPENED 2017:**

Criminal and Family Court Appeals	126
Parole Revocation Defense	633
Extradition Defense	49
Family Court	1958
Civil Program	1952
Immigration Law Project	249
Emergency Solutions Grant (Landlord/Tenant)	137
Foreclosure Prevention Project	359
International Victims Project	40

### **CASES CLOSED 2017:**

Criminal and Family Court Appeals	133
Parole Revocation Defense	599
Extradition Defense	57
Family Court	2009
Civil Program	1833
Immigration Law Project	233
Emergency Solutions Grant (Landlord/Tenant)	142
Foreclosure Prevention Project	217
International Victims Project	20



# FINANCIALS

## 2017 REVENUES

5,230,234

Onondaga County	2,792,487
New York State	1,367,115
IOLA Fund of the State of New York	650,063
Other Grants	145,536
Fundraising	105,130
City of Syracuse	83,636
United Way of CNY	47,549
Other Miscellaneous Revenue	26,618
Foundations	12,100

## 2017 EXPENSES

5,185,476

Salaries	3,246,351
Payroll Taxes and Benefits	1,240,396
Insurance, Office Supplies & Other Misc. Expenses	198,568
Occupancy	177,916
Professional Fees & Contracted Services	122,221
Publications & Dues	63,398
Conferences, Seminars & Meetings	62,096
Equipment Purchase, Lease & Maintenance	57,838
Public Relations & Fundraising	16,692



# PROGRAMS

## APPEALS



This was a great year for our Appeals Program, which ensures that our clients have not been denied their fundamental rights by trial courts.

We were successful in a number of cases in 2017. In one, we obtained a new trial for a client who was denied his right to counsel. Before trial the client asked the court for a new attorney, explaining that his assigned attorney told him there was no money to hire an investigator, and otherwise did not conduct any investigation on his case. The trial court refused to provide a new attorney, or even to conduct any sort of inquiry into the client's request. The Court of Appeals reversed the conviction, finding that the trial court should have at least looked into the client's request before summarily denying it (*People v Smith*).

We also obtained a new trial for a client who was convicted based on faulty identification evidence (*People v Reeves*). Bad identifications are one of the top causes of wrongful convictions, and in this case, the Appellate Division found that the identification procedure used by police was unreliable, and the identification evidence should never have been shown to a jury. In another case, the trial court never determined whether our teenage client was eligible for youthful offender status, so the Appellate Division sent the case back for the trial court to consider that issue. Obtaining youthful offender status would mean the client would not have a criminal record for the rest of his life, based on something he did as a teenager.

## FAMILY COURT



The Family Court Program closed out 2,000 cases in 2017, working very hard defending clients' fundamental rights and addressing service needs in order to maintain familial relationships. They successfully negotiated hundreds of resolutions to family offenses, custody, parenting time, and child support matters, sparing our clients' from stressful and often times counterproductive litigation.

In a termination of parental rights proceeding, they successfully negotiated the permanent placement of our client's children in a relative's home to allow for permanency for the child but to also allow our client to continue to have a relationship with the child while she continues to seek necessary services.

In a separate case, our client was the non-biological parent from a same-sex relationship and wanted parenting time with the two children. This is an area of custody and visitation that is still developing. After diligently working to demonstrate our client's standing as a parent and that it is in the best interests of the children, our client successfully received an order giving her joint legal custody and a significant amount of parenting time, including holidays.

In another case, our client's young child who is diagnosed with autism was removed from her care for eight months after she tried to receive help from the hospital with his angry outbursts and out of control behaviors. He was placed in a foster home outside of

# PROGRAMS

the county which added to the challenges of our client trying to have frequent and meaningful contact. After a multi-day trial spread out over two months, the Court determined our client had not neglected her child and her child was successfully returned to her.

## PAROLE



In 2017, the HLAS Parole Revocation Program continued to defend the due process rights of parolees.

In one case, we filed a petition for a writ of habeas corpus on behalf of our client. The petition argued our client's due process rights were violated at an early stage of the parole revocation process. Our client was facing return to state prison, but as a result of the successful petition, he was released and restored to community supervision.

We also prevailed at a final revocation hearing on behalf of another client facing serious charges. If those charges were sustained, he could have been returned to state prison. As a result of HLA representation, the hearing officer determined that the Division of Parole failed to prove the most serious allegations. Our client admitted to a curfew violation and was restored to community supervision. In numerous other cases our parole attorneys were successful in diverting clients to community drug treatment programs, as an alternative to incarceration. Those clients are given an opportunity to address underlying substance-abuse issues in a therapeutic setting, instead of being warehoused in state prison.

## CIVIL



The Civil Program handled almost 2,000 cases in 2017. The attorneys and support staff worked zealously to get successful outcomes for their clients.

Our Civil Program helped a father diagnosed with cancer ensure his sister was awarded guardianship of his two young children; a mother get custody of her children from their abusive father; and a man who was denied unemployment benefits have them restored.

In one landlord/tenant case, the property manager repeatedly tried to evict the client in retaliation for the client exercising his rights by calling code enforcement. HLA was able to prevent this improper eviction, keeping the client in his home.

A Cuban woman who came to the United States with her husband, a citizen of the United States, was misclassified as a conditional permanent resident, as was her son. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services caught the error in the case of the mother who was issued a Permanent Resident Card. However, her son's card was only valid for two years. The attorney on the case provided information and documents which proved the son had been misclassified. Soon thereafter, the son received a letter stating they had made an error as well as the new, correct card.

# CONTRIBUTORS

## Champion of Justice

*\$1,000 or more*

Barclay Damon, LLP  
Bond, Schoeneck & King, PLLC  
Bousquet Holstein, PLLC  
Laurence and Lauri Bousquet  
Margaret M. Cassady  
Costello-Cooney-Fearon, PLLC  
Dannible & McKee  
Kevin Duke  
James D. FitzPatrick  
Suzanne O. Galbato  
Linda Gehron  
Hancock & Estabrook, LLP  
Brigitte Herzog  
Susan R. Horn,

In Honor of Joanne P. Sawmiller

Virginia A. Hoveman  
Steven L. Jacobs  
Key Bank, National Association  
Susan King  
Ellen A. LaBerge  
Patricia A. Lynn-Ford  
Anthony J. Malavenda and Martine Burat  
Judith C. and Eric Mower  
Carl Pesko  
J. Richard Pooler  
Mimi C. Satter  
Barry M. Shulman  
Hon. Karen M. Uplinger

## Defender of Justice

*\$500 or more*

Dennis R. Baldwin  
Ronald C. Berger  
John H. Callahan  
Michael J. Compagni  
Anita Cottrell  
Sidney and Suzanne Devorsetz  
Eastern Copy  
Eric Mower & Associates  
Excellus BlueCross BlueShield  
Frank & Frances Revoir Foundation  
Mark and Susan Field  
Michael J. and Noreen R. Falcone  
Jonathan B. Fellows  
Joseph A. Hardick  
Cole Henderson

Infinitt Technology Solutions  
Robert J. Jenkins  
Barry R. Kogut  
William F. Lynn  
James E. Mackin  
Sidney L. Manes, In Honor of Amy Zamkoff  
Morgan Stanley - The Liberty Group  
Onondaga County Bar Foundation  
Robert S. Sarason & Jane Burkhead  
Joanne P. Sawmiller  
Syracuse University College of Law  
United Partners Management, LLC  
JoAnn C. Wallace  
Frederick R. Woods  
Samuel C. Young

## Guardian of Justice

*\$250 or more*

American Food & Vending Enterprises, Inc.  
Ames Linen Service  
Kimberly A. Boynton  
Carolyn and Edward Brown  
Thomas M. Carnrike  
Joseph C. Chiarenza  
John A. Cirando  
John P. Clinton  
Patricia Curtin  
Sam A. Elbadawi  
Susan N. Esce  
Karen G. Felter  
Thomas M. Freyer  
Cindy A. Granger  
Margaret M. Harding  
Haylor, Freyer & Coon  
Kevin E. Hulslander  
Renee L. James & John Murad  
Frederick S. Marty  
Roy S. Moore  
Timothy P. Murphy  
Theodore and Mary Pat Northrup  
Shannon T. O'Connor  
Gary L. Orenstein,  
In Memory of Albert Orenstein 2016  
John G. Powers  
Robert E. Purcell  
Michael P. Ringwood  
Janice T. Rosbrook,  
In Honor of Susan R. Horn  
Elizabeth R. Ross

Phillip Rubenstein  
Brian M. Schultz  
Theodore W. Stenuf  
Gregory R. Thornton  
James P. Tracy  
F. Paul Vellano  
Therese Wiley Dancks

## Advocate of Justice

*\$100 or more*

Ann M. Alexander  
Paige M Archambeault,  
In Honor of Nancy Farrell  
Nadine C. Bell  
Leslie Bender  
William L. Bergan  
Cameron Bernard  
Kevin M. Bernstein  
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Paul J. Falgares  
Susan Finkelstein and Robert Fullenbaum  
Karin Franklin King  
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Susan A. Gorton  
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David M. Hayes  
Monica R. Heath  
Maurie G. Heins  
David M. Higgins  
James E. Hughes  
Eric G. Johnson  
Kall and Reilly  
Elizabeth Kolodney  
Amber Lawyer

# CONTRIBUTORS

Legal Services of Central New York

Paul J. Lupia

John Paul Mando,

In Memory of Joseph LaFay

Nels G. and Deborah Magnuson

Kerin A. Mannion

John McCormick

Ann M. McGrath

Jillian L. McGuire

Susan Theolinda McNeil

Michael F. Melara

Suzette M. Melendez

Suzanne M. Messer

David S. Michel and Peggy Liuzzi

Julian and Jennifer Modesti

Taylor H. Obold

John E. and Kathleen E. O'Hara

Lleni Pach

Matthew L. Parry

Lillian A. Pfohl

Steve Plank

Nancy L. Pontius

Frederick J.M. and Kimberly W. Price

M. Catherine Richardson

Right Price Companies, Inc

Virginia C. Robbins

R. Stephen Rosenholm

Philip Rothschild

Robert Sarason, In Memory of D. Sarason

Thelma D. Selzer & Jon N. Selzer,

In Honor of Carl Pesko

Barry Shulman,

In Honor of Susan Horn

C. Daniel Shulman

John P. and Cecilia Sindoni

Lynn H. Smith

Karen S. Southwick

Jane S. Stopher

Sara C. Temes

James A. Traver and Marquerite A. Conan

Jeffrey A. Unaitis

Heather A. Waters

Earnestine Williams

Steven W. Williams

Richard A. Wittenburg

Jennifer P. Young

Lawrence J. and Rosalie Young

## *Under \$100*

Cora A. Alsante

Sharon Ames

Elaine C. Amory

Ken Andrews

Craig M. Atlas

Michael J. Balanoff

Aileen M. Balitz

Patrick Blood

Randi K. Bregman,

In Honor of Joanne Sawmiller

Sue Britton

Cindy Britz

Kathleen Cassady

Jennifer Coman

Michael A. Connor

Georgia G. Crinnin

Shirley A. Cruickshank

Wynetta Devore

Dean J. DiPilato

Michele R. Dyess

Paula M. Engel

Richard Ernst

Susan Eskholme

Nancy J. Farrell

Casey Fitzgerald

Deborah Gardiner

Eugene Gerace

Colleen Gibbons

Sandra K. Gingold,

In Memory of Lawrence H. Gingold

Barbara J. Glath

Nancy Hayes

Stefanie Heath

Bethanie M. Hemingway

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Melissa Hidele

Melody E. Holmes

Jaime J. Hunsicker

Jaymes W. Hurley

Wendy H. Jones

Joseph Kelly

Tammy Kiesa

Conor J. Kirchner

Stephen K. Koldin

Diane E. Kupperman

Monica Lamont

Moise P. Laub

Colin M. Leonard

Mackenzie Hughes LLP

John M. Maestri

Andy Mager

Liza Magley

Patrick A. Mannion

Joseph R. Mathews

Donald M. Mawhinney

Amanda McHenry

Melissa J. Menon,

In Honor of Caroline O. Menon

Aliza Milner

Aidan C. Mitchell-Eaton

Theresa M. Morgan

Gabriel NaPier

Carrie R. Penner

John L. Peterson

Gary Pieples

Marilyn Pinsky

Diane Plumley

Sarah J. Reckess

Ranette Releford

Kerin J. Rigney

Mary Roberts-Bailey

Kisha Rogers

Sarah E. Ruhlen

Laurie A. Sanderson

Sally A. Santangelo

Richard H. Sargent

Marissa R. Saunders

Aaron Schiffrik

Kristen E. Smith

Christina Sorbello

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Marsha Weissman

Brandy Westerman

Faye R. and Timothy Williams

Emily J. Winiecki

Bruce Wodka

James P. Wright

Thomasina Zavalasuskas

Loretta Zolkowksi,

In Honor of Susan R. Horn

# EVENTS



## JUSTICE WALK/RUN

Hiscock Legal Aid Society was proud to again collaborate with the Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County on the Third Annual Justice Walk/Run.

The event was held September 13, 2017 at Onondaga Lake Park. Seventy people participated and more than \$6,000 was raised.

“This annual event is a great way for the community to come together to support the efforts of HLA and OnVLP,” said Jason Torreano, Justice For All Campaign Director.



Linda Gehron; Jason Torreano,  
Justice For All Campaign Director



## VERA HOUSE WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN

In March, Hiscock Legal Aid Society participated in the Vera House White Ribbon Campaign by walking around downtown Syracuse. Pictured are HLA staff and speakers from Vera House’s annual breakfast.

“I participate in the Vera House White Ribbon Walk because I want to raise awareness of domestic violence and show victims that they can take a stand, march along and become a survivor,” said Nikia Trice, HLA Receptionist and Domestic Violence Survivor.

# EVENTS



## JP MORGAN CORPORATE CHALLENGE

Hiscock Legal Aid Society staff braved the rain and cold temperatures to take part in the 35th running of the JP Morgan Corporate Challenge on June 6, 2017.

Of the HLA staff that participated, Staff Attorney Alexandra Lechman came in first place, running the 3.5 mile race in 28:36. HLA is always pleased to join this event, support our community and build camaraderie among HLA staff.

“The Corporate Challenge is a great opportunity to bond with colleagues outside of the office and support a good cause,” said Staff Attorney Sara Goldfarb.



## WESTCOTT ST FESTIVAL

Hiscock Legal Aid Society attended the Westcott Street Fair again in 2017 to share information on our mission and vision as well as the services provided by HLA. Attorneys, HLA leadership and staff spoke to dozens of people who were eager to learn more about the organization.

The Westcott Street Fair is an annual celebration of the diversity and uniqueness of the Westcott neighborhood. The festival attracts more than 8,000 people each year.

“HLA’s attendance at the Westcott Street Fair gives staff the chance to meet with people in the community one on one to explain the HLA mission and to describe the services that we provide to those in need,” said Linda Gehron, President & C.E.O.

# EVENTS



## UNITED WAY DAY FESTIVITIES

Hiscock Legal Aid Society is proud to be a United Way agency. Each year, HLA picks a day to raise money for United Way of CNY.

HLA Office Manager Michele Dyess spearheaded the efforts for United Way Day in 2017. The theme, *United We All Win*, had HLA employees working together to win a variety of group games, board games, and puzzles.

“My favorite part of the day was seeing HLA colleagues working together to solve the puzzles,” said Jaime Skiff, Executive Assistant who helped put together United Way Day. “In raising money for the United Way, we also built camaraderie within our organization.”

More than \$9,000 was raised.



## HLA STAFF AWARDED

Supervising Attorney Nancy Farrell and Assistant Supervising Attorney Amanda McHenry received the NYSBA Committee on Mandated Representation Denison Ray Award for their excellence in parent defense.

This award is given to attorneys who exceed the standards of mandated representation in Family Court Cases.

“I was very honored and pleased to receive the Denison Ray Award for 2017 along with Nancy Farrell,” said Amanda McHenry. “The work we do can be very challenging and to be presented with an award recognizing our time, effort and dedication helped inspire me to continue the good fight.”





## JUSTICE FOR ALL BREAKFAST

Hiscock Legal Aid Society held its 4th annual Justice For All event on December 6, 2017 at Drumlins in Syracuse. More than \$80,000 was raised in cash and multiple year gifts.

Past clients of different HLA programs spoke at the breakfast. One client, David Szkolnik, spoke about his experience with the organization.

“I have a great deal of gratitude for the kindness and professionalism that Hiscock Legal Aid Society afforded me at a time when I really needed help,” said Szkolnik.

The free, one-hour breakfast event offers guests an opportunity to take a virtual tour of the mission and vision of HLA through compelling stories and videos from clients, board members and staff.

“Promoting justice for all is at the cornerstone of what we do and who we are,” said Linda Gehron, President & C.E.O.

**The fifth annual Justice For All (JFA) breakfast will take place October 10, 2018 at Drumlins. It begins at 7:45 a.m. and is free to attend.**

**New in 2018, the organization unveiled the “Justice For All” award. The Justice For All award recognizes a respected, thoughtful member of the New York legal community who has had sustained engagement in promoting projects that serve CNY’s most marginalized residents.**

**For more information or to RSVP, e-mail Justice For All Campaign Director Jason Torreano at [jtorreano@hlalaw.org](mailto:jtorreano@hlalaw.org).**

# FROM VOLUNTEER TO EMPLOYEE

Darienn M. Powers came to Hiscock Legal Aid as a volunteer/ intern in September of 2017.

As a recent law school graduate, she wanted to gain some experience while she waited on the results of the bar exam.

She was recommended to HLA by the SU School of Law.

As an intern, Darienn worked with our Upstate New York Immigration Law Project team. In her role with the project, she helped with research and drafting intake forms.

“In all assignments, she (Darienn) worked quickly and efficiently to do the requested task,” said HLA Staff Attorney Divya Hoffman. “Darienn was very knowledgeable and thorough in performing legal research, and demonstrated an eagerness to learn the subject area by engaging me in further conversation about the legal issues at hand.”

When HLA had an opening in its Foreclosure Prevention Project, her commitment to the mission and to our clients made her the right choice to transition from motivated intern to dedicated employee.



## INTERNS AND VOLUNTEERS



Darienn Powers , Daniela De La Cruz, Brian Tedd

Hiscock Legal Aid Society has a long history of employing interns with varying educational backgrounds, from high school to law students and everything in between.

HLA feels very strongly in helping to shape the future workforce. Leveraging the support of interns helps us advance our mission and promote justice for all.

Interns provide innovative ideas and help with a variety of tasks including file management, drafting documents, research, and client intakes.

The projects that interns advance on allow HLA staff to devote more time to working one on one with clients.

“Interns are an integral part of HLA’s mission and vision, because of their invaluable contributions we are able to help more clients than ever,” said Linda Gehron, President & C.E.O.

## ADMINISTRATION TEAM

The Administration (Admin) Team at Hiscock Legal Aid Society works diligently, and often silently, in the background to support those providing front line service for our clients. The team, a small but capable group, ensures HLA runs smoothly, orders office supplies, provides IT support, researches, writes and submits a variety of grant proposals, and processes payroll.

"The Admin staff are always very open and helpful," said Senior Law Assistant Lynn Schreyer. "No matter what I need, they always have an answer or will find out an answer for me."

"The Admin staff are delightful and respond quickly to employee needs," said Staff Attorney Danielle Blackaby.

Over the years, Administration has evolved with the organization. When HLA began in 1949, it was a small office with just a few staff. Today, admin supports HLA, an organization of more than 60 people spread across two locations in downtown Syracuse that handled almost 5,000 cases in 2017.



Michele Dyess, Jaime Skiff, Kari Cotter, Britani Sims, Darrin Lawson, Gabriel NaPier, Piotr Banasiak

# CLIENT STORY

## MEET RAYMOND

Raymond came to Hiscock Legal Aid Society at a low point in his life.

He is twenty six years old and was born and raised in Syracuse. Raymond currently works at a local nonprofit organization. He also cleans and is going back to school to become an EMT.

In February of 2013 his life changed forever when his son was born.

He grew up with a father who wasn't in his life. When Raymond learned he was going to be a father he was determined to ensure his son knew who his father was, and knew how much his father cared about him.

He and the child's mother broke up before his son was born. They didn't agree on many things, including the relationship he wanted to have with his son. He wanted to be an active presence in his son's life.

He saw his son when he was five months old and didn't see him again until he was nearly two. This was very difficult for Raymond.

He was assigned by the Court to Hiscock Legal Aid Society where he met with Senior

Attorney Kelly Fairchild.

"Kelly was exactly the sort of attorney I needed. She was kind, compassionate and fought for me while trying to find a solution that was workable for me and for the mother of my son," said Raymond.

Kelly helped him get supervised visits where he would meet his son at the mall. Then he was able to take him to the playground and eventually supervised visits turned into unsupervised visits. Now he gets him every other weekend, Wednesdays and often picks him up from school.

"Raymond is a caring individual who wanted to develop his relationship with his young son," said HLA Senior Attorney Kelly Fairchild. "He was patient and hardworking throughout the Family Court process, and did not give up even when it seemed like things were not going his way." Raymond says his son is his everything, his pride and joy.

"I cannot thank Hiscock Legal Aid enough for what it did for me and my family."



ONONDAGA

# CLIENT STORY

A woman with dark hair, wearing a maroon sweater and black leggings, is sitting on a stone ledge. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. Behind her is a large, multi-story stone building with several arched windows. To her right is a large green bush. The scene is outdoors during the day.

## MEET FREYA

Freya is a young woman who came to the United States at just nine years old, when she was adopted by an American woman.

Born in Ethiopia, Freya discovered years later the challenges around her immigration status.

While she was attending school at Mohawk Valley Community College, she and a friend were planning a trip to Jamaica.

“I found out that I was not a citizen when I

went to get a passport,” said Freya. “They kept asking me for more paperwork, then eventually I received the news that I was not a citizen.”

The problem dated back to the time Freya arrived on U.S. soil, at which point her adoptive mother did not file the paperwork needed for Freya to become a United States citizen automatically. After realizing this, Freya and her mother tried to file the paperwork, but learned that - at that



point - she was too old to qualify for automatic citizenship. Over the course of two years, Freya continued to struggle on her own to file for citizenship.

This is when Freya was told about the Office for New Americans Consultation Day with HLA Staff Attorney Divya Hoffmann at the Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees.

“Divya helped me with every aspect of the citizenship process, filling out and filing the

application and preparing for the interview and the United States Civics Exam,” said Freya. “Having her help was very comforting.”

Thanks to Ms. Hoffmann’s advocacy, Freya became a citizen and eventually got her passport.

She still hasn’t made it to Jamaica but recently went on a trip to Italy!

# RETIREMENTS



## Susan Horn

In January, Hiscock Legal Aid Society said farewell to Susan Horn, who served as President & CEO for nearly three decades.

While serving as President & CEO Susan worked with others to more than quintuple a budget of \$800,000 to a budget of more than \$5 million per year.

Born in Brooklyn, Susan attended Syracuse University College of Law. She says that Atticus Finch from *To Kill a Mockingbird* was one attorney who influenced her to go to law school.

Michele Dyess worked closely with Susan Horn throughout the years and describes Susan as a fierce advocate for those who were less fortunate. "If we lost a grant Susan would go out and find another one."

Susan received many awards over the years, including most recently being named Distinguished Lawyer by the Onondaga County Bar Association as well as receiving the Syracuse University Law Honors Award.

## Joanne Sawmiller

Joanne Sawmiller spent five-and-a-half decades at Hiscock Legal Aid Society. She began as an office manager - and retired as the Chief Operating Officer.

During her tenure, Joanne witnessed HLA grow from 5 people to more than 65 people with a budget of more than \$5 million.

Joanne worked very closely with President & CEO Susan Horn. During her time at Hiscock

Legal Aid, she collaborated with Susan to create new programs and funding streams, allowing HLA to evolve with the needs of the community.

Joanne believed strongly in the mission of HLA and in putting clients first.

Joanne's commitment to HLA, its staff and its clients earned her the Liberty Bell Award in 2007.





Carl Pesko

## HOLIDAY PARTY BIDS FAREWELL TO LONG TIME BOARD MEMBERS

HLA held its annual holiday party at the Century Club. The festive event served as an opportunity to mark the end of the year, enjoy delicious food, and say farewell to some longtime board members.

“Serving for 23 years on the Hiscock Legal Aid Society Board has been both a privilege and a pleasure,” said JoAnn C. Wallace, former HLA Board Member. “Just to play a small part in supporting the outstanding and dedicated attorneys and staff along with my fellow Board members was such a rewarding experience.”

Departing members Anita Cottrell, JoAnn C. Wallace, Anthony J. Malavenda, Samuel C. Young and Carl Pesko have collectively served HLA for more than a century.

"We are grateful for the energy, enthusiasm and passion that each of these members brought to the Hiscock Legal Aid Society over the past decade," said Linda Gehron, President & CEO "Their efforts have helped us to promote justice for some of the most vulnerable people in our community."

Carl Pesko fondly recounts his time on the board: “My 15 years as a member of the HLA Board were a distinct privilege,” said Pesko. “During my tenure more than 50,000 individuals were served by the truly outstanding team of HLA's dedicated lawyers and staff.”



Anita Cottrell, JoAnn C. Wallace, Anthony J. Malavenda, Samuel C. Young

# CLE PRESENTATIONS

In September Supervising Attorney Philip Rothschild presented at a CLE in Oswego NY on “Trial Attorney’s Responsibilities in Local Appeals.”

He discussed the Fourth Department rules applying to those cases and how they normally require the filing of a Notice of Appeal and a Poor Persons Motion. In addition, he talked about the jurisdictional impact of the affidavit of errors enunciated in *People v Smith* (27 NY3d 643 [2016]), as well as more recent legislation. He also discussed best practice and applicable case law.



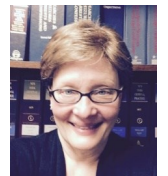
Philip Rothschild

In November he also presented at the New York State Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (NYSACDL) Central New York Criminal Defense Fall Seminar at SU College of Law. His topic was “The Preservation Minefield: Making Sure Your Issues Don’t Blow Up Before They Can Be Heard on Appeal.”

HLA attorneys Amanda McHenry, Nancy Farrell and Heather Prado presented at the Family Court Defense Seminar on “What is Imminent Risk?” in September. They discussed the pertinent statutes and case law surrounding imminent risk that results in or prevents the removal of children from their homes. This seminar was a collaboration between the New York State Defender’s Association, the Onondaga County Assigned Counsel Program, and Hiscock Legal Aid Society.

In June 2017 attorneys Nancy Farrell and Amanda McHenry presented “The Outer Boundaries of Article 10,” a CLE sponsored by the New York State Bar Association’s Committee on Mandated Representation in Albany. They provided an overview of the kinds of allegations that are often made against a parent, but which need not result in a finding of neglect.

President & CEO Linda Gehron and Family Court Supervising Attorney Nancy Farrell and Assistant Supervising Attorney Amanda McHenry made CLE presentations on parent representation in domestic violence and family defense cases for the New York State Bar Association in Albany on June 9, 2017.



Linda Gehron

Ms. Gehron helped to plan the New York State Bar Association’s June 9, 2017 CLE “Representation in Family Court Proceedings” for the Committee on Mandated Representation and presented on handling family offense cases in family court.

In June, HLAS attorneys Leah Witmer and Joe Murray, presented a CLE for the Central New York Bankruptcy Bar Association, addressing recent amendments to the Real Property Action and Proceedings Law regarding “Zombie Properties”.

# COLLABORATIONS

We are grateful for the many collaborations we have throughout the region. These have allowed us to provide holistic support for clients with various interconnected legal needs. These collaborations include, but are not limited to: The Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County; Home HeadQuarters (Foreclosure Prevention Project); Legal Services of Central New York (Cancer Legal Advocacy and Services Project); Vera House (International Victims Project); the Center for Community Alternatives; the Legal Aid Society of Rochester; the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York and Albany (Upstate New York Immigration Law Project); and the Office of New Americans.



In 2017, Hiscock Legal Aid Society was honored to again received funding from the New York Bar Foundation (NYBF). The ten thousand dollar grant from NYBF facilitated an upgrade to the internal phone system to include our additional location at 221 South Warren Street. This upgrade allows staff at both 221 and at our headquarters to seamlessly and efficiently communicate.

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WE PROMOTE JUSTICE FOR ALL.**