

# THE DAILY RECORD

WESTERN NEW YORK'S SOURCE FOR LAW, REAL ESTATE, FINANCE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SINCE 1908

## Pro Bono SPOTLIGHT

### VLSP thankful for strong judicial support

Volunteer Legal Services Project of Monroe County Inc. is fortunate to count numerous members of the judiciary among its many supporters. Since VLSP's inception in 1981, judges have demonstrated their unflagging support for VLSP in a wide variety of ways.

Some, such as the Hon. Thomas M. Van Strydonck, the Hon. Thomas Rainbow Morse and the Hon. Craig J. Doran, provide stewardship by serving on VLSP's board of directors.

Many judges are amongst the most generous donors to the annual Campaign for Justice phonathon, including Justice Van Strydonck and the Hon. Michael A. Telesca, the judge for whom the Telesca Center for Justice — home to VLSP and other civil legal services providers, as well as the Monroe County Bar Association — was named.



**Van Strydonck**

The Hon. Joan S. Kohout, the Hon. David Larimer and the Hon. Robert H. Wagner are also generous supporters of the annual Campaign for Justice.

Although prohibited from soliciting funds by the judicial canon of ethics, judges find creative ways to support VLSP fundraisers. Judge Morse never fails to rally the troops during Campaign for Justice. As a volunteer "runner," he circulates among the volunteers as they make calls, collecting pledge forms from them. With his characteristic panache, Judge Morse keeps spirits high. VLSP's volunteers and staff still talk about the year Judge Morse led a Campaign for Justice conga line through the office.

The Art of Lawyering silent auction is another VLSP fundraiser that receives broad judicial support. Many judges are among those who attend the opening reception and bid on works of art created by legal professionals and their friends and family.

The Hon. Gerard Alonzo, a retired judge who served on the multi-bench court in Livingston County who is also an accomplished woodworker, has donated one of his impressive wood sculptures for every Art of Lawyering. His sculptures are always a major draw.

At the 2007 Art of Lawyering, VLSP's board of directors purchased Judge Alonzo's "Gideon's Goal" for VLSP's reception area. The sculpture serves as a reminder to all who pass by of the importance of their efforts to ensure equal justice for all.

Judge Alonzo is currently putting the finishing touches on his piece titled "Justice Is ..." for this year's Art of Lawyering. Bidding opens Oct. 6 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the gala reception featuring live music and upscale refreshments at VLSP's offices, and will continue through mid-November.

Judges also show their support for VLSP by lending their assistance to expand the number of low-income people receiving *pro bono* assistance through VLSP.

The Hon. Henry J. Scudder, presiding justice of the Appellate Division, Fourth Department, implemented New York State's first *pro bono* and volunteer service policy for appellate court attorneys and staff. On Law Day 2011, the New York State Bar Association recognized this groundbreaking achievement by presenting its prestigious President's *Pro Bono* Service Award to Justice Scudder and the Appellate Division attorneys and staff members.

"The court implemented the policy in an effort to encourage and support participation in *pro bono* activities," Justice Scudder said. "The real credit belongs to our employees who responded to the policy by providing many hours of *pro bono* work to help meet the legal needs of our most vulnerable citizens. Appellate Division employees

have honored our profession, and provided a valuable service to the community by participating in *pro bono* activities."

Judges also lend their time and talents to VLSP's CLE programs, which results in more *pro bono* attorneys being recruited and more clients receiving assistance.

One of the most effective ways VLSP recruits new volunteers is by offering a free CLE in exchange for a commitment to accept a case. While VLSP's CLEs are well-attended in general, adding judges into the mix as planners and presenters results in attorneys clearing their calendars to attend.

Such was the case in 2009, when Judges Gail A. Donofrio, Kohout, Patricia D. Marks, Morse, Elizabeth W. Pine, John R. Schwartz and Thomas A. Stander planned Ethics in the Afternoon, a three-credit ethics CLE presented in part by Judges Scudder, Van Strydonck, Morse and Robert J. Lunn (ret.).

In 2010, the Hon. Marian W. Payson, U.S. Magistrate Judge,



**Scudder**



**By LINDA KOSTIN**  
Daily Record  
Columnist

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## Continued ...

was a panelist for Ethics Redux, broadcast live from Rochester's Hall of Justice to courthouses in the seven rural counties of the Seventh Judicial District.

VLSP is currently planning a wills and standby guardianship CLE for Sept. 30 from 12:15 to 2 p.m. Margaret Lavery, court attorney to the Hon. Edmund A. Calvaruso, Monroe County Surrogate, will present, as well as John Garrett and Adam Brunner of Nixon Peabody and R. Thompson Gilman of Woods Oviatt Gilman LLP. Those wishing to register may contact me to do so.

Thanks judicial support for VLSP's CLEs in 2009 and 2010, over 150 *pro bono* attorneys were recruited. They assisted low-income clients with serious civil legal problems including tax issues, unemployment insurance benefits denials, name change, domestic violence divorce, grandparent/nonparent custody, wills and foreclosure settlement conferences.

In retirement, our local judges are stepping up to provide direct *pro bono* assistance to VLSP's clients as *pro bono* volunteers through the New York State Unified Court System's Attorney Emeritus program. The program confers a new status upon attorneys who have completed the active phase of their careers and are committed to volunteering their legal skills to make a difference in the lives of low-income New Yorkers.

Judge Alonzo, who recently enrolled as an attorney emeritus, volunteered for VLSP's Family Law Clinic in July.

"With the ending of the Judicial Hearing Officer program, I've accepted Chief Judge Lippman's invitation to become an Attorney Emeritus with VLSP," Justice Alonzo said. "While participating in my first Family Law Clinic, I saw three or four clients. Some of their problems were easily resolved, others not so.

"These clients would not be talking to a lawyer at all without VLSP and all the other attorneys who provide legal services to the

poor," Justice Alonzo continued. "The experience was very rewarding, and the VLSP attorneys provide great mentoring to attorneys who have been away from practice for awhile or are trying new areas."

Judge Marks has also enrolled as an attorney emeritus. Accustomed to presiding over criminal matter in Monroe County Court, Judge Marks is considering which of VLSP *pro bono* opportunities to pursue.

"One of the things I saw from the bench was how marginalized the poor are and that an inability to navigate civil law problems often brought people into the criminal justice system," Judge Marks said. "I am looking forward to volunteering through VLSP. They make it easy for judges to volunteer effectively."

Despite the incredibly demanding nature of their jobs, those who believe that judges are all work and no play are mistaken. VLSP is thrilled to announce that Rochester's contribution to the American Bar Association's third annual National Celebration of Pro Bono will be "Jeopardy: the Harry Potter and the Law Version," presented by Hon. Karen Morris, Brighton Town Court Judge. A late October date will be announced soon. Judge Morris is the co-author of the recently published book upon which the game is based, "Law Made Fun Through Harry Potter's Adventures: 99 Lessons in the Law from the Wizarding World for Fans of All Ages."

VLSP thanks the judiciary for all of its support and thanks the members of the legal community who stepped up last month to help low-income clients with a wide range of issues including bankruptcies, wills, tax, name changes, unemployment insurance benefits denials, grandparent/non-parent child custody disputes and divorces.

## July 2011 Honor Roll

**Judge:** Gerard Alonzo (Retired).

### Solo Practitioners and paralegals:

Maroun Ajaka; Vanessa Brown Hanks; Craig Carson; Tina De Souza; Charles Genese; Deborah Indivino; Victoria

Lagoe; Chenoa Maye; Lisa Morris; Barbara Orenstein; David Owens; Neeraj Shah; paralegals Jonathan Edwards, Yantise Fulton.

### Attorneys and paralegals at firms:

Thomas Cusker (Cusker & Cusker); Fatimat Reid (Davidson Fink); George Forsyth (Forsyth & Forsyth); Kenneth Gordon (Gordon & Schaal); Diana Holl, Kristin Lowe, Martin O'Toole (Harter Secrest & Emery); Erica DiRenzo (Hiscock & Barclay); David MacKnight (Lacy Katzen); Ashley Baker, Gregory Nearpass, Meghan Schubmehl, Eric Tanck, John Witmeyer (Nixon Peabody); Hope Olsson (Olsson & Feder); Robert Clark (Thomas & Solomon); David Tang (Underberg & Kessler); Meghan DiPasquale (Ward Greenberg); Elizabeth Wolford (The Wolford Law Firm); paralegal Anne Marie Short (Woods Oviatt).

**Corporate attorneys and paralegals:** Gary Cohen, Kevin Kepner (Xerox Corporation); paralegals Patricia Carey, Jared Kronenberg (Thomson Reuters).

**Government attorneys:** Patrick Chamberlain, Sanjeev Devabhakthuni, Tim Fox, Colleen Laughran, Maureen Polen (Appellate Division, Fourth Department).

**Mediator:** Robert Hauser (Center for Dispute Settlement).

Web Developer: Robert Kostin.

**Summer Associates:** Alex Grout, Iskra Miralem, Rayza Santiago, Todd Vening (Harter Secrest & Emery); Vanria Glenn (Hiscock & Barclay).

**Students:** Ophelie Bettiol (Law School at Université Jean Moulin Lyon III, Lyon, France); Margaret Ding (Stanford University College of Law); Allison Kittelberger (Michigan State University College of Law); Katrina Profeta (Canisius College); Sam Menchel (Victor High School); Dai Smith (School Without Walls).

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