



## YLD member is a lawyer by trade, but volunteering is his passion

*The NJSBA's Members Who Inspire program is an ongoing series that turns the spotlight on members and highlights how they are making a difference in their career and outside of the law. The program offers an opportunity for members to share their unique stories with their colleagues, inspire future legal professionals and strengthen awareness of the profession and Association. This story features Robert Holup, who organizes several charitable efforts as co-chair of the Young Lawyers Division's Philanthropy Committee.*

Robert Holup wears many hats.

On a given day you can find him stocking shelves at a local food pantry, or running a mentorship program for prospective law students. After hours, he serves as president of his condo association. Somewhere in the day he finds time for his job—handling securities litigation at Riker Danzig.

How does Holup do it? For him, volunteer service is better than caffeine.

“It doesn’t draw my energy. If anything, it energizes me and allows me to spend a few hours doing other things after working a full day,” Holup said. “I just continue to engage in things that excite me. I’m passionate about service work, so for me it doesn’t seem like work.”

As co-chair of the Young Lawyers Division’s Philanthropy Committee, Holup has a hand in planning volunteer events that benefit families experiencing poverty by partnering with the Community Food Bank of New Jersey, Toni’s Kitchen—a food ministry in Montclair—and various veterans groups. On a warm Saturday morning in November, Holup and a group of YLD members ran a mobile farmer’s market for MEND, a hunger relief network in Essex County that provides healthy food ahead of Thanksgiving. The young lawyers served assorted fresh fruits and vegetables—225 mangoes, 180 eggs, yellow squash, sweet potatoes and apples—to 80 families representing 226 individuals.

Holup started volunteering with MEND in 2020, when he brought a YLD group to pack and sort food at the organization’s warehouse, according to Kelly Hayes, MEND’s director of community impact. Since then, the farmer’s market has become an annual tradition, where Holup takes up a collection from the YLD for whatever MEND needs—nonperishable foods or clothes—loads up a car and runs the mobile food hub.



“He’s been a huge help in terms of bringing more people, spreading awareness about what MEND does and offering an opportunity to give back,” Hayes said.

In another event, Holup and the YLD donated clothing and other items for the Afghan Allies and Friends Winter Drive. Co-sponsored by the NJSBA Pro Bono Committee, Child Welfare Law Section and Military Law and Veterans’ Affairs Section, the drive helped thousands of Afghan evacuees sheltered at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in Burlington County.

“As lawyers we have so many ways to impact people’s lives both inside and outside of law. We’re blessed with where we are in life, and we should make it a point to get involved in some way,” Holup said.

The passion to volunteer started when Holup entered college at Florida State University. There, he joined many service-based organizations to meet people and determine a career path. He took an interest in the county Public Defender’s Office while helping process intakes for people recently detained and arrested, but was ambivalent about attending law school.

“I realized I wanted to do something where I was assisting and helping others. I just didn’t know in what

capacity,” Holup said.

After graduating, he joined AmeriCorps for a year and worked with a nonprofit in Washington, D.C., where met staff attorneys who convinced him that a career in the law was multifaceted and provided opportunities to give back.

“I was talking to people and trying to understand what they do, and what avenues I could take to fulfill what I wanted to do in life. That’s ultimately what led me to law school. I saw there were so many careers you could have as an attorney to benefit the public,” Holup said.

The volunteerism continued after he enrolled at George Washington University Law School, where he led a service trip to Jamaica during spring break to rehabilitate a local clinic in a remote area of the mountains. Holup also founded “Lawyers Guild” through his national fraternity, a mentorship and information hub for budding or current Latino law students. The group hosts virtual meetings bi-monthly to discuss various topics surrounding the legal profession, including managing finances and student loan debt, how to supervise other attorneys and tips for applying to law school.

“I realized there were a lot of law-

yers in the fraternity who were never connected. I thought it would be a great way to not only support one another with general advice, but also mentor the younger undergrads who were thinking about law school and needed help,” Holup said. “It’s a great way to connect people and help facilitate more Latino lawyers in the profession and build that pipeline.”

Holup joined the YLD in 2020 and almost immediately he developed a rapport with members as someone who is experienced, highly motivated and organized, said Frank DeRienzo, who Holup replaced as the Philanthropy Committee chair.

“Robert has a strong network with volunteer organizations and food pantries, even beyond what he does with the YLD. We’ve been grateful for his help,” DeRienzo said. “He’s been a tremendous asset to the YLD and philanthropy committee in getting young lawyers involved in charity and volunteer work in the community.”

Holup hopes to recruit more young attorneys for the YLD’s charitable functions. His pitch: “It’s great for networking. You get to meet a lot of people in the community you never would have interacted with. And it’s a great way to see the fruits of your labor.” ■

# Family Law Symposium returns for two-day conference

New Jersey's premier family law event returned to the Hyatt in New Brunswick on Jan. 27–28. Family law attorneys, judges and other related professionals attended for thought-provoking and insightful presentations from many of the state's leading legal minds. The sessions covered trusts, alimony and a special program about child support. Photos by Amanda Brown



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## NJSBA stays vigilant advocating for attorneys

The New Jersey State Bar Association had a busy quarter on the advocacy front. Through the combined efforts of countless NJSBA members and its leadership, the Association helped move the needle on several significant issues to the practice of law in New Jersey, its attorneys and most vulnerable residents. From improving access to justice for the underserved to safeguarding the health and well-being of those in New Jersey courts, the results achieved through NJSBA's advocacy will have a lasting positive impact.

“Advocacy is one of the most important functions of the NJSBA. When New Jersey attorneys speak as one voice to effectuate change, legal services are enhanced, clients get a fairer shake and the system of justice runs more smoothly,” NJSBA President Jerilyn L. Lawrence said.

Here are the highlights from the Association's advocacy work in recent months.

### Reforming the Madden system of assigned counsel

The NJSBA took its strongest steps yet to reshape the broken system of mandatory pro bono assignments in right to counsel cases where there is a consequence of magnitude. In January, the NJSBA's Board of Trustees adopted a resolution that called upon the New Jersey Supreme Court to abolish the *Madden* system of mandatory pro bono assignments in favor of a publicly funded compensated counsel system to represent indigent litigants who have a constitutional right to counsel.

The current system, established 30 years ago under *Madden v. Twp. of Delran*, is an imperfect one that assigns counsel at random to a case, regardless of the attorney's expertise or practice

area. This has created a two-tiered justice system that puts indigent litigants at a disadvantage and denies them equal access to justice, the NJSBA argued.

In addition to the resolution, the NJSBA petitioned to join a *Madden*-related case—*State v. Jason Burgos*—as an *amicus* party. The suit involves an attorney who was assigned to a contempt of domestic violence matter, but has only practiced law sporadically since 2000 and has never handled such a case.

### Shelter for foreign nationals

At the NJSBA's urging, the U.S. General Services Administration agreed to provide outdoor shelter at the Peter Rodino Federal Building in Newark to non-detained foreign nationals. For months, attorneys with their clients—who include infant children, people with disabilities and older adults—have braved the elements while waiting more than an hour in long lines that wrap around the building.

Lawrence wrote to the federal agency in December after members of the NJSBA's Immigration Law Section raised the issue. The excessively long wait time in cold temperatures “prevents equal access to justice and is a risk to people's health and safety,” Lawrence stated. She also urged the GSA to build temporary outdoor structures to shelter those in line, open a second entrance and consider other reasonable solutions to improve the wait times. The GSA responded that it is taking measures to build an outdoor shelter and will explore opening a second screening entrance.

### Defibrillators in courthouses

NJSBA Trustee Amy Vasquez led a push for counties across the state to out-

fit courthouses with more defibrillators, as a potential lifesaving measure for those who suffer sudden cardiac arrest. In a letter sent to administrators in all 21 counties, the NJSBA stressed the importance of placing defibrillators “on every floor of all facilities with clear signage and opportunities for courthouse staff to be trained to use the machines.” Doing so will help ensure the safety of the many attorneys, judges, court staff and members of the public who visit the courthouses daily, the letter stated.

Vasquez, a child welfare attorney, has championed the issue for years after her husband went into cardiac arrest at the Gloucester County Courthouse in 2011. He died days later, leaving behind a 3-year-old daughter. A defibrillator was on a different floor of the building and arrived too late. In response to the letter, officials in Hudson and Essex counties said they would review the need to add more defibrillators in areas accessible to sheriff's officers.

### Virtual hearings

With the courts shifting back to pre-pandemic norms and in-person hearings, the NJSBA pressed the state to maintain a virtual component for attorneys and clients. The efficiencies of virtual hearings have been a meaningful addition to the legal system's ability to provide access to justice, Lawrence said in a letter to the state Administrative Office of the Courts. Remote hearings allow attorneys to serve clients more affordably and with less stress, the letter stated.

The AOC updated its operations in October to continue holding routine conferences and motions remotely, but the implementation between vicinages has been uneven, NJSBA members

have noted. One attorney reported that client no-shows in pre-trial indictment hearings have increased since returning in-person, resulting in more bench warrants. Family law clients have faced large attorney bills for routine appearances that could have been held virtually. And, in civil court, in-person special civil and landlord-tenant have become a hardship for litigants who juggle child care and work.

### Guardian background screening policy

The NJSBA provided comments on proposed amendments to Rule 4:86-2(b)(3) and related updates to the Background Screening Policy for Proposed Guardians. The policy covers the appointment of a guardian for an incapacitated person. To ensure the standards are applied equally in each county, the NJSBA recommended that the changes include a clarification on how counties find a guardian beyond a name search; implement standard fingerprinting protocols; make clear to all involved in the process that only individuals in the background screening need to complete the certification paperwork; and release the results to parties through a secure portal or email system.

### Password requirements for Judiciary systems

The NJSBA asked the state to reconsider expanding the password requirements for attorneys to access the Judiciary's systems. The Judiciary strengthened its passcode approach to ward off cyber-attacks. But the new requirements—particularly one to change the 14-character password every 90 days—is vexing for users, who use the services often to file documents and access information about their cases, the NJSBA said in a letter. ■