

# PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

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## At its Core, Law is Service



Lawyers are in the service business.

Every brief filed, every contract drafted, every case won is done in service of someone else. People turn to lawyers during life's most challenging times. In the pursuit of justice, we help our clients navigate

periods of hardship. We guide them toward a path forward. It's demanding work. It's stressful. But our work is vital for a society built on the rule of law.

Great lawyers will earn the accolades, rack up the billable hours and rise to prestigious titles. Of course, there's nothing wrong with getting ahead. But the best lawyers never forget that this profession is about serving people and the rule of law. At its core, the practice of law is less about victories—it's about working hard and making a meaningful difference for those who need it most. In serving our clients, we serve the greater good.

Lawyers, with their rare mix of skills and experience, are uniquely positioned to help others—both in the law and outside it. For shining examples of how lawyers can apply their expertise to do good, look no further than the devoted volunteers within the NJSBA. Every day our members are working to write legislation, prepare *amicus* briefs and share their substantive legal knowledge and professional experience. Seeing them leverage their experience to help others and promote justice inspires me every day. Their work deserves recognition.

The NJSBA's Young Lawyers Division is more than a hub for young professionals—it has grown into a charitable force within the Association. The Division embraces the philosophy that lawyers grow their abilities not only through traditional educational programming, but through hands-on service. For example, the Division actively supports its Wills for Heroes program, helping some of society's bravest professionals. YLD volunteers regularly gather across the state to prepare wills, powers of attorney and health care proxy documents at no cost for veterans, first responders, law enforcement officers and health care workers. Hundreds have benefited from these efforts, making a real impact in the community. The Division also runs a mobile farmer's market for MEND, a hunger relief

network in Essex County, staffed by YLD members. Ahead of Thanksgiving, volunteers provide fresh, healthy food to families in need. The event has become an annual tradition: the Division collects donations—nonperishable foods, clothing and other essentials—and delivers them directly to the mobile food hub. These initiatives have provided meaningful assistance to countless New Jersey families.

The greater NJSBA also has taken meaningful steps to combat hunger in New Jersey. Through the Lawyers Feeding New Jersey program, the Association and its members are proud to have raised over \$100,000 since 2014, providing nutritious meals to those in need. Proceeds benefit The Community FoodBank of New Jersey, which distributes 85 million meals annually through its network of more than 800 community partners. The NJSBA is also a proud supporter of Danny's Pantry at the federal courthouse in Newark, a food bank established in memory of U.S. District Court Judge Esther Salas' son. The pantry collects donations to benefit food insecure residents in New Jersey and the federal re-entry program.

In recent news, the NJSBA hosted another successful Union City Law Day in September. Dozens of volunteers, supported by interpreters, provided free consultations in a Union City high school gym, assisting hundreds of residents with their legal issues in immigration, guardianship, landlord-tenant, divorce and more. The NJSBA organized the event in partnership with several organizations, including affinity bars, the local prosecutor's and public defender's offices and Union City officials. The result was a meaningful initiative that expands access to justice for some of society's most marginalized individuals.

Few responsibilities are more important for an attorney than providing pro bono representation. This October, the NJSBA will recognize those who exemplify this commitment at its annual Pro Bono Awards. Six individuals, firms, and corporate legal departments will be honored for their dedication to serving New Jersey's underserved residents, addressing matters ranging from LGBTQ rights to veteran support, immigration of unaccompanied minors and services for domestic abuse survivors. We invite all to attend the awards reception

*Continued on page 7*

Whether through dedicated pro bono work, a career in public service, or active community leadership, lawyers have a unique and profound ability to make a significant and lasting impact on their communities and our state. The skills we develop in our profession are not only for the courtroom or negotiating deals; as we see in this edition, they are powerful tools for positive change. By embracing this commitment to justice and community, through service, New Jersey lawyers fulfill the highest ideals of our profession and contribute to a stronger, more just society for all.

In curating this issue, we sought to showcase a wide range of attorneys pursuing service in multiple practice areas. This edition provides both insight and guidance and can be read simply with an eye toward recognizing those committed to the public good or can act as a roadmap for those interested in getting involved. Akil Roper, Senior Vice President at Legal Services of NJ, kicks off the issue by challenging the antiquated ways in which we assess the need for pro bono attorneys. In pointing out better metrics for such assessments, he highlights why service and pro bono work is so integral to equitable outcomes. In “Rooted in Service: Fostering a Pro Bono Culture in New Jersey”, Emerald Sheay, a staff attorney at Volunteer Lawyers for Justice, discusses both the need for legal aid in New Jersey, and how integral and rewarding such service can be for the profession.

Mary Frances Palisano’s piece provides a detailed overview of what it takes for law firms to champion justice through pro bono and community outreach. As chair of Gibbons’ pro bono committee as well as their pro bono coordinator, her experience brings important insights to the issue from a private-sector perspective. Ralph Lamparello, managing partner of Chasan Lamparello Malton & Cappuzzo, PC, President of the New Jersey State Bar Foundation and a past President of the New Jersey State Bar Association explores how the Bar Foundation educates, empowers, and aspires through the work of volunteers.

From here, the issue takes a closer look at careers in the public service realm, community outreach and others ways lawyers in New Jersey are finding a way to make a difference, starting with Deputy Attorney General Lawrence Kravyn’s look at the way New Jersey law and policy guide the public service mission of prosecutors. Robert Holup, an associate at Riker Danzig, discusses how volunteer activities, in the legal profession and outside of it, can help to hone professional development. Rebekah Conroy and Mary Toscano Carpenito discuss the New Jersey District Court’s programs that help participants with needs after incarceration, such as addiction solutions and legal resources. Col. Joseph H. Ruiz, Esq. focuses his article on the intentional balance required between military service and

being a practicing civilian attorney and the struggles and rewards of that career path. Andrew J. Provence, owner of Litwin & Provence, LLC, has been representing nonprofits since 1998 and shares his experience representing nonprofits outside of pro bono work. Scott Kobler, a partner at McCarter & English, LLP and Chair of the NJ PBS/NJ Spotlight, offers an interesting piece on how he has helped protect New Jersey’s news sources and several cultural institutions in need of a voice. And finally Erin Berman, a staff attorney with Northeast New Jersey Legal Services discusses how an attorney can grow their practice helping children with special education needs. So many thought-provoking articles that will hopefully encourage those to get involved.

We are grateful to each of the authors for sharing their experience, knowledge and time, which helped shine a light on the different types of service available. As evidenced in this edition, New Jersey lawyers possess a unique ability to effect positive change and make a difference in their communities through service. Beyond their traditional roles in courtrooms and corporate offices, these legal professionals can leverage their expertise in many different ways helping create a more just and equitable society for all. Kudos to all who engage in service and if you want to get involved there are plenty of resources in this edition for you to get started! ■

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## PRESIDENT’S PERSPECTIVE

*Continued from page 5*

on Oct. 22 to honor their commitment to justice. Information can be obtained on our website.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge a few extraordinary individuals who demonstrate how lawyers can blend their professional work with a deep commitment to service. They have been featured in the NJSBA’s Members Who Inspire series, which turns the spot-

light on members and highlights how they are making a difference in their career and outside of the law. The series allows members to share their unique stories, inspire future legal professionals and strengthen awareness of the profession and Association. Among the membership, we have Art Raynes, a Basking Ridge attorney who for 30 years has run a weekend program for children with autism. We also applaud Robert Holup, a rising star in the Association who helped spearhead much of the YLD’s charitable

work as Co-Chair of its Philanthropy Committee. Similarly, Lorraine Barnett, of South Orange, has worked for decades to keep the lights on at Haitian schools through tireless fundraising. They are remarkable volunteers and represent the best of the profession.

When lawyers use their skills to lift others up, they remind us why this work matters. The NJSBA proudly recognizes those who show that client service and community service are one and the same. Let’s continue to honor that duty. ■