

# ***THE BAR REPORTER***

*The Newsletter of the Onondaga County Bar Association*



## ***In this issue***

President's Column p. 5  
Member Spotlight p. 8-11  
OCBA Goings-on p. 12-16  
Newsmakers & Influencers p. 17-19





Onondaga County Bar Association  
CNY Philanthropy Center  
431 East Fayette Street, Suite 300  
Syracuse, NY 13202  
315-471-2667

## **Our Mission:**

To maintain the honor and dignity of the profession of law, to cultivate social discourse among its members, and to increase its significance in promoting the due administration of Justice.



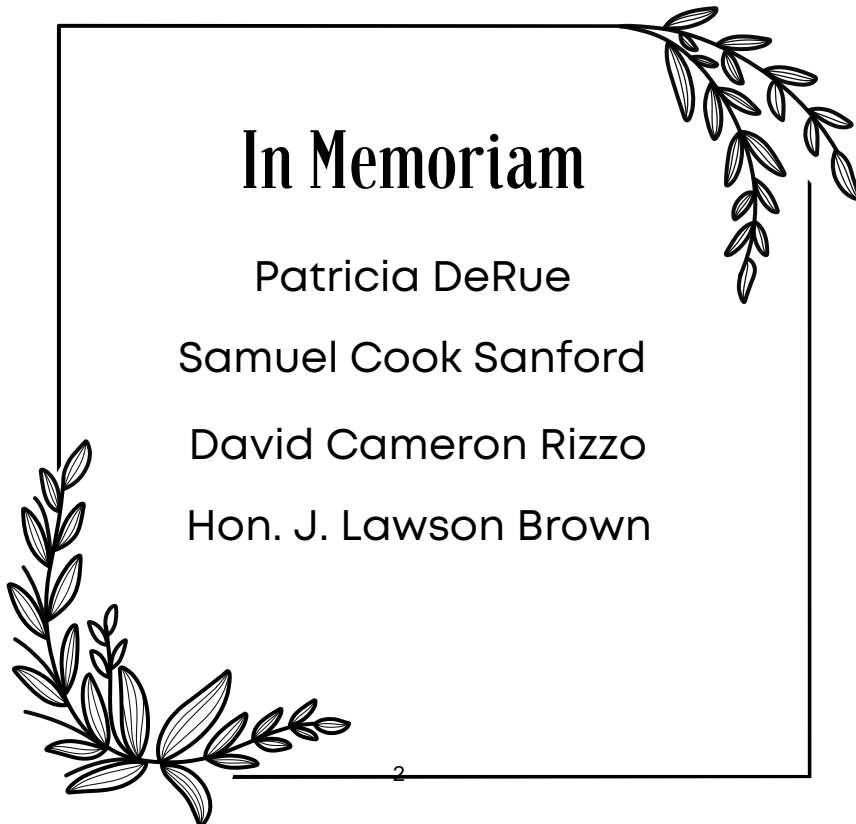
## **In Memoriam**

Patricia DeRue

Samuel Cook Sanford

David Cameron Rizzo

Hon. J. Lawson Brown







## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### PAGE

<b>4</b>	<b>Upcoming Events</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>President's Column</b>
<b>8-11</b>	<b>Member Spotlight</b>
<b>12-16</b>	<b>OCBA Goings-on</b>
<b>17-19</b>	<b>Newsmakers &amp; Influencers</b>

The 1,200-member Onondaga County Bar Association was founded in 1875. Among its purposes are: to maintain the honor and dignity of the profession of law; to promote suitable reforms and necessary improvements in the law; to facilitate the administration of justice; and, to elevate the standards of integrity, professional competence, and courtesy in the legal profession.



### **President**

Martin A. Lynn

### **President-Elect**

Laura L. Spring

### **Vice President**

Sarah C. Reckess

### **Treasurer**

Jimmie C. McCurdy

### **Secretary**

Staci Dennis-Taylor

### **Immediate Past President**

Graeme Spicer

### **Directors**

Samantha Aguam

Joseph J. Centra

Amy D'Ambrogio

Carly J. Dziekan

Bradley E. Keem

Kirsten Lerch Kroft

Mary E. Langan

Anthony A. Marrone II

Dennis J. Nave

Samantha C. Riggi

Sarah E. Ruhlen

Michael A. Schwartz

Lauren H. Seiter

Megan P. Smith

Katherine A. Stewart

Hon. Derrek T. Thomas

### **Ex-Officio**

Dean Craig M. Boise

Hon. James P. Murphy

### **Staff**

Jeffrey A. Unaitis

*Executive Director*

Carrie Chantler

*Marketing & Communications Dir.*

Maggie James

*Administrative Professional*

*& Lawyer Referral Service Manager*

John A. Cirando, Esq.

*Editor Emeritus*

# Upcoming Events

Friday, May 17, 2024	Paralegals Luncheon, 12:30 to 2 p.m. CNY Philanthropy Center Ballroom, 431 E. Fayette St. 2nd Floor, Syracuse
Monday, May 27, 2024	Memorial Day - OCBA Office Closed
Thursday, May 30, 2024	CLE   Lien on Us! An Update on Liens in Personal Injury 2024 Noon to 1:30 p.m. CNY Philanthropy Center, 3rd Fl. Conference Rm. Register <a href="#">here</a> .
Friday, May 31, 2024	CLE   Representing Non-Citizen Clients: Cultural Sensitivity & Your Ethical Obligations Noon to 2 p.m. CNY Philanthropy Center Ballroom. This is hybrid. Register <a href="#">here</a> .
Tuesday, June 11, 2024	Judicial Reception   A spotlight on the Latest Courtroom Technologies and Innovations, 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., Oneida County Courthouse, 200 Elizabeth St., 5th Floor, Utica, NY. Register <a href="#">HERE</a> .
Wednesday, June 19, 2024	Juneteenth- OCBA Office Closed

*SWING INTO ACTION!*

*JOIN US FOR THE DAN MATHEWS MEMORIAL GOLF OUTING*

**Thursday, August 22nd**  
**The Pompey Golf Club**

*SEASONED PRO OR JUST STARTING OUT, IT MATTERS NOT.*

*THIS EVENT PROMISES SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE!*

*PRISTINE GREENS • STUNNING VIEWS • CAMARADERIE*

**All event proceeds benefit the programming  
of the Onondaga County Bar Foundation.**

**Registration Details  
Coming Soon!**



# From the President



Dear Members,

It has been my privilege to serve the Onondaga County Bar Association as President during the 2024-25 term. I want to thank our outgoing board members, Sarah Ruhlen and Michael Schwartz for their service to OCBA. I would also like to recognize Graeme Spicer for his continued contributions to OCBA as past president this year. I'd also like to offer a somewhat sad congratulations to Carrie Chantler – after 8 years of great service to OCBA she will be moving to work on the attorney grievance committee. I do not hope to see you soon Carrie.

Looking to the future – we are so fortunate to have Laura Spring serving as President this coming year. Laura served as President-Elect this year and I have been so appreciative of her help and counsel. Thank you very much! We are in good hands next year.

I am excited about the new slate of officers that will be joining us next year: Judge McGunnigle, Kelsey Shannon and Melissa Swartz. Congratulations and thank you for serving! The 2024-25 board is well equipped to continue OCBA's success.

I would also like to thank all of our board members, and members, for their support this year. Most importantly, I have special appreciation for the efforts of Jeff, Carrie and Maggie; who were indispensable in planning and running successful events throughout the term. The collegiality of the Bar has been on display all year as we gathered together on so many occasions. You are the ones that make these events possible.

Earlier this month we celebrated Law Day at the Onondaga County Courthouse and hosted an impactful event. Hon. Deborah Karalunas, Administrative Judge, Fifth Judicial District, was our master of ceremonies. Justice Karalunas offered timely remarks on the importance of the legal community to assemble, invited Prof. Keith Bybee to speak on "What is the Point of Free Speech" and recognized the Nottingham High School Mock Trial team. Most exciting for me, was the presentation of the Champion of the Law Award to Hon. Therese Dancks, the Outstanding Service Award to Anthony Gigliotti and the Rising Star Award to Staci Dennis-Taylor. We were all moved by the touching remarks during the presentation and acceptance of these awards. Congratulations to our well-deserved award winners.

I look forward to staying involved with OCBA in the future and hope to see you at our June 11, 2024 event in Oneida County welcoming Hon. Rowan D. Wilson and Hon. Joseph A. Zayas.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martin A. Lynn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Martin" being more prominent.

Martin A. Lynn, Esq.



THE LAW OFFICE OF  
TAMARA L. CAPONE

**OFFICE SPACE AVAILABLE**

Office space available in a suite of legal offices. One private office available. Reception area and cubicle/desk for paralegal are also available. Shared conference room and lobby area. Newly refurbished space, high speed wifi, plenty of free parking.

\$400/month for private office, additional if reception area and/or paralegal area are wanted.

Month-to-month lease available.

If interested, please contact Tamara L. Capone at (315) 218-5853 or [TCapone.Law@gmail.com](mailto:TCapone.Law@gmail.com)

# APPEALS

Civil, Criminal, Administrative  
Referrals Welcome  
(315) 474-1285

John A.  
**CIRANDO**  
Attorney at Law

250 S. Clinton Street  
Suite 350  
Syracuse, New York 13202

**We APPEAL To You**

## Associate Attorney Position

Highly regarded appellate litigator in Syracuse, NY has an immediate opening for an Associate Attorney in its criminal law practice. The position is research and writing intensive. The position will include court appearances and appellate argument. New attorneys will receive mentoring, but strong research, writing, and oral communications skills are required.

Bar admission in NYS is required. Salary commensurate with experience, starting at \$65,000 to \$70,000, benefits included.

Resume and cover letter accepted in confidence at the Onondaga County Bar Association, send to:

Jeffrey A. Unaitis  
Executive Director  
Onondaga County Bar Association  
431 E. Fayette St., Suite 300  
Syracuse, NY 13202  
Email: [junaitis@onbar.org](mailto:junaitis@onbar.org)

**The OCBA  
hears from people in search of  
wills and last testaments  
of loved ones  
when they discover  
the lawyer who penned  
those documents  
has retired or is deceased.**

**Contact the OCBA to let us know  
where your files may be forwarded  
so we can help these callers  
and lighten their load.**

**(315) 471-2667**

**SHEATS & BAILEY**

theConstructionLaw.com

## **Commercial Litigation Associate Attorney**

Sheats & Bailey is seeking a commercial litigation associate attorney. Our practice serves all aspects of the design and construction industry. We represent public and private owners, developers, design-builders, contractors, suppliers, design professionals, contractor associations and all parties in the contracting chain. Within the industry our practice covers construction project management, contract negotiating and drafting, HR, corporate, labor relations and personnel law. We represent the parties in all types of contract, claims, real estate, HR, labor and design malpractice litigation. Candidates must be admitted in New York State and should have at least 5 years' experience. Salary will be commensurate with experience and book of business. Duties include research and writing, depositions, discovery, mediation and arbitration, motion practice. The associate will work with our senior attorneys and train and grow in all aspects of commercial litigation.

Interested candidates should submit a resume and writing sample to: [esheats@theconstructionlaw.com](mailto:esheats@theconstructionlaw.com); [jbailey@theconstructionlaw.com](mailto:jbailey@theconstructionlaw.com) and a copy to: [tnoel@theconstructionlaw.com](mailto:tnoel@theconstructionlaw.com).

Rate: \$90,000 - \$150,000

Experience: 5 plus



Kenney Shelton Liptak Nowak LLP, a dynamic growing law firm known for its collaborative approach, team-oriented environment and dedication to mentoring, has immediate openings for defense litigation associates in our Buffalo and Syracuse offices. If you are looking for a flexible and team-oriented work environment to develop your skills or to take your practice to the next level, then this position may be for you. Ideally, qualified candidates will have 3+ years of defense litigation experience. Familiarity with the NYS Labor Law (§§ 200, 240 & 241(6)) and/or the construction industry is preferred, but not a requirement. Position offers trial experience and client-interaction opportunities, if desired. Candidates with strong analytical and writing skills, with a strategic mindset and an eye for detail will thrive in this role. Position offers a very flexible hybrid WFH and/or in-office schedule for the right candidate to suit the candidate's preferences. Competitive salary in the range of \$90,000-\$130,000 and commensurate with experience, with full benefits package (health insurance, dental insurance, life insurance, 401(K) plan, flexible spending and more) offered. This position will provide the ability to work with great clients, have a job you love, and the life (outside of the office) that you want.

If you are interested, please contact Patrick Kenney at [pskenney@kslnlaw.com](mailto:pskenney@kslnlaw.com).

# Member Spotlight

*Hassina K. Adams*

*We say a hearty hello to Hassina K. Adams the new Chair of the OCBA Paralegals Committee. Enjoy reading about this energetic legal professional and her journey (literally - she is an immigrant to Syracuse). And meet her in person at the Friday, May 17th Paralegals Luncheon -- all are welcome! RSVP [here](#).*

***Tell us about yourself. You are relatively new to Central New York, by only 9 years. You originally hail from South Africa – tell us how you came to our part of the world? What drew you?***

My family fled political persecution in Uganda following the death of my father. I was two years old at the time when my mom left. My mom ended up in South Africa where she sought asylum and luckily was granted. I spent all my formative years there, which is why when anyone asks me where I am from, I say that I am from South Africa because it is the only home I've ever known. While in South Africa, my mom applied for resettlement through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It was always her dream to come to the US because she knew and believed it to be a place where even the most obscure person could come and make a future for themselves. Unfortunately, she passed away two months before we received the decision of our acceptance. My siblings and I came here as unaccompanied minors with two goals: to fulfill our mom's dream and establish a future for ourselves. During the resettlement process, we were paired with a truly phenomenal case worker whom I am still in contact with today. She helped us determine which city would be hospitable to unaccompanied minors, and that's how we ended up in Syracuse. Looking back, I am so grateful to all the people who worked tirelessly to facilitate our move because their efforts made it possible for me to be where I am today. When we arrived, we experienced a bit of culture shock because all we had heard was that we were going to New York and assumed we were going to be in New York City. We did not pay much attention to the specifics of the city, so driving into Syracuse from Hancock was quite a surprise. We also arrived in March and did not have the proper attire for the winter, but we made it work. Reflecting on our journey and the incredible memories we've created over the years; I can't help but feel immense gratitude for the angels of people we came across. Being resettled in Syracuse was the best decision our caseworker could have made because the community is so welcoming. Syracuse is truly a marvelous place—it has certainly grown on me.







***You have a B.A. in International Relations with a minor in Political Science from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University plus an Associate's Degree from the Onondaga Community College and you're starting a Master's Program in Public Administration at the Maxwell School. Tell us about your aspirations with all of this solid education bolstering you.***

I aspire to amplify the voices of marginalized and disenfranchised individuals, by dedicating my life to helping the less fortunate and paying it forward. During my time at Syracuse University and Onondaga Community College, I focused my studies on understanding government structures, policies, laws, and international state actors. Initially, I sought to comprehend why some governments fail to protect their citizens, particularly why the Ugandan government forced my family into becoming refugees.

At SU, my focus shifted from solely asking why to exploring how governments with robust and strong legal institutions sustain those structures and why they are successful. This redirection allowed me to delve deeper into the mechanisms behind effective governance and legal frameworks.

Moreover, during this time, I began applying my academic experiences to community work, participating in voter drives and campaigning for senatorial candidates such as Dana Balter and Senator Mannion, and Chol Majok's Congressional campaign. This involvement allowed me to bridge theory with practical application, gaining firsthand insight into the intersection of politics, governance, and public service.

I am deeply grateful for the exceptional professors who not only opened my eyes in class but also guided me through the whys, how's, and where to from now. My humanities studies at OCC laid the foundation for my concentration in international security and diplomacy at SU, where I also pursued a minor in political science. This academic journey allowed me to explore the intricacies of international affairs, national and international security regimes, domestic and foreign policies, and legal frameworks that safeguard the rights and liberties of individuals worldwide.

Further enriching my international relations studies, I had the honor of studying in South Korea, where I broadened and deepened my understanding of global dynamics. Upon my return, I engaged in the immersive Maxwell-in-Washington, DC program, interning for an outstanding immigrant-serving agency. This invaluable experience not only provided hands-on learning but also enabled me to interface with practitioners in international and domestic policy, foreign service officers, diplomats, and national security advisors. It was through this program that I could apply the knowledge gained in the classroom to real-world career endeavors.

Upon returning to Syracuse, I had a clearer vision of my life's purpose and the segment of the population I felt most passionate about advocating for.

I am thrilled to embark on my next academic chapter at Syracuse University, where I will deepen my knowledge of Public Administration with an emphasis on public policy, focusing on human rights and inequality. My ultimate goal is to attend law school—a dream inspired by all the lawyers who defended my family from repatriation to Uganda in all the countries from which we sought asylum.

Despite traversing through seven countries before reaching South Africa; the lawyers we encountered, despite speaking different languages, shared a universal mission: to use the legal system to preserve our right to life. Witnessing their passion and determination to safeguard our rights against our own government ignited a desire in me to advocate for others in similar situations. I am driven to follow in their footsteps and advocate for justice and human rights for all.

***Tell us about your legal career journey. You are a paralegal in the Business Department of Bond, Schoeneck & King, PLLC and have also been a paralegal with the Office of Corporation Counsel at City Hall and as a legal assistant at Hiscock Legal Aid Society. What is it about the law that interests you? Has there been a particularly satisfying experience you'd share?***

I am drawn to the legal field because of my life experiences. Without the legal system, I would not be here telling my story. When my mom fled Uganda and sought asylum in different countries, it was legal practitioners who worked tirelessly to assist her and my siblings. I often accompanied my mom to consultations with human rights attorneys where she had to recount her journey. Those visits were charged moments for the both of us because, as a young girl, I understood my mom to be struggling as she sobbed while sharing her experiences. Yet, when I looked over to the lawyer she was talking to, they remained composed, meticulously noting down everything she said, nodding at her every word, and sometimes patting her on the shoulder to reassure her that she would be okay and that they would do everything in their power to help her. I recognized that my family were in a precarious situation but felt some semblance of hope and security because I understood that we were not alone. This assurance and the attorneys' passion for assisting us, despite not knowing us personally, ignited my interest and eventual obsession with the law.

I am immensely grateful for the privilege and honor of working in prestigious and truly fulfilling roles, currently at BOND and previously with the City of Syracuse, Hiscock Legal Aid Society, and other firms. The exposure and experience have only reinforced my passion and made me even more determined to chase my dreams. When I think back to the great lawyers who helped my family and me, I feel a profound sense of both gratitude and responsibility to realize my dreams, knowing that others in my shoes have not been as fortunate in terms of opportunity. I have so much to live for now, and I view the world as my oyster.

***You volunteer for several community groups as a board member of Interfaith Works and as Vice President of the New American Forum of Central New York. Why is volunteering important to you?***

Ubuntu, the South African ethos rooted in the commitment to serving others, is the driving force behind my dedication to aiding my community. Drawing from my personal journey as a refugee, I am profoundly motivated to champion the principles of compassion, empathy, and community enshrined in Ubuntu, especially through work that empowers refugee and immigrant communities. My passion for the law also propels me to volunteer in initiatives focused on advocating for the rights and civil liberties of others.

Moreover, I am always reminded that my success and achievements have been underpinned by several anchors—divine intervention, luck, my own efforts, and the support of my community. I consider myself privileged because I was saved from experiencing barriers that could have thwarted my academic and career ascensions. Arriving in the U.S. with proficiency in English provided my family with a leg up, enabling us to effectively advocate for ourselves despite being unfamiliar with the American system. In my community work, I witness firsthand the impediments that many families confront due to language barriers experienced by multiple family members.

Organizations like Interfaith Works and the Northside Learning Center allow me to use my talents to help those in need. As a volunteer English as a Second Language teacher at the Northside Learning Center, I had the pleasure of interacting with diverse groups of New Americans, each with varying needs. Through this experience, I became attuned to the socioeconomic, political, and immigration-related challenges they face. These interactions ignited my passion for advocacy, driving me to offer support beyond English instruction and to serve with organizations addressing structural, social, and governmental barriers that New Americans encounter as they transition to the US.



## Member Spotlight cont'd

At Interfaith Works, I contribute insights to improve programming for refugee clients as a member of the strategic visioning committee, drawing from my personal experiences. Additionally, serving on the Syracuse/Onondaga Human Rights Commission and as a member of the steering committee of Northside Futures allows me to utilize my advocacy skills to champion the rights of marginalized people in our community. I am now honored to serve on the Quality-of-Life Commission with the Mayor's Office.

As someone who has navigated the world through learning as I go, I strive to empower others to avoid similar challenges. It is crucial to teach people to be their own agents of change while providing them with the right tools and resources. Serving as a commissioner, I aim to provide unique insights to help promulgate and prescribe policies that will ameliorate the hurdles many Syracusans face.

Our community, with its richness in culture, diversity, ingenuity, and talent of all calibers, holds immense potential for growth and prosperity. By providing our Syracusans with the necessary tools and resources to tap into their talents and build themselves and their families up, we can change the socio-economic landscape and fabric of this beautiful city, ensuring that people of all backgrounds, can live in dignity. This approach will empower individuals to contribute meaningfully to the development of the city, fostering a sense of pride and fulfillment as they give back to the community and help create an environment where everyone thrives.

## Learn More!

Hassina Adams is a person who gains much personal satisfaction from giving of herself and volunteering in the community. Find out more about the programs and organizations referenced in this article when you click on the following links.

**[United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#)**

**[Syracuse University Maxwell-in-Washington DC program](#)**

**[Interfaith Works](#)**

**[Northside Learning Center](#)**

**[Syracuse/Onondaga Human Rights Commission](#)**

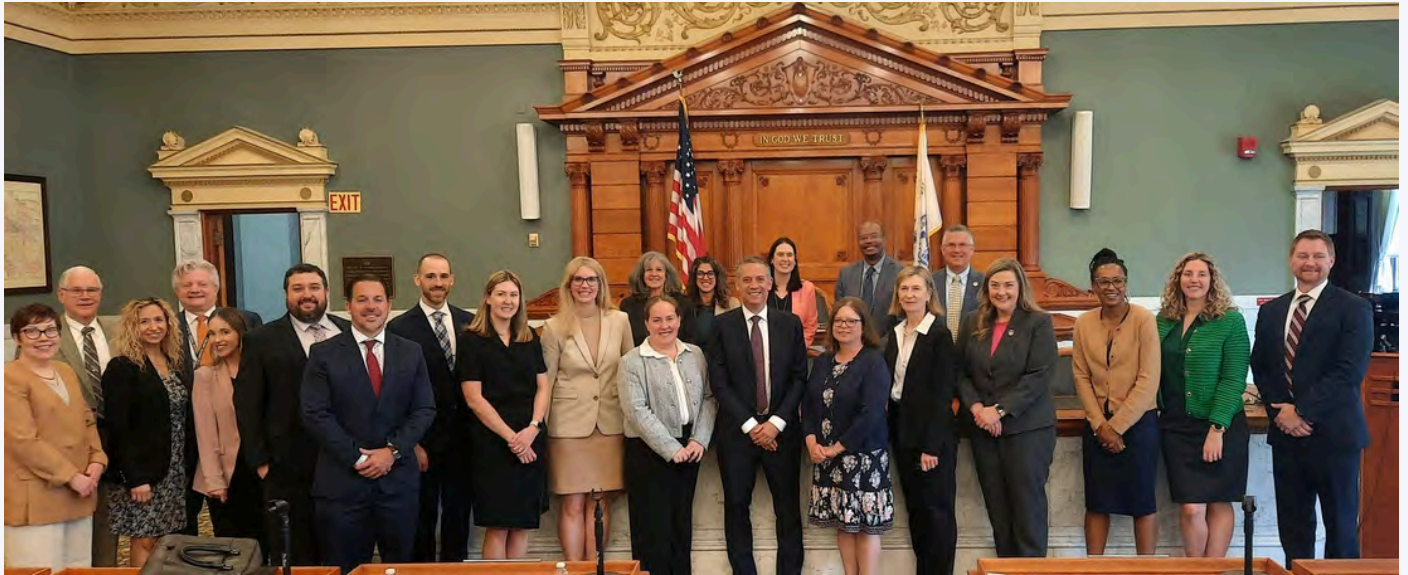
**[Northside Futures](#)**

**[Quality of Life Commission, City of Syracuse](#)**

**[UBUNTU](#) Click on the word and learn more about this philosophy when you check out the New World Encyclopedia definition.**



# Annual Meeting | OCBA Welcomes New Officers & Directors



On Monday, April 29th the Onondaga County Bar Association held its Annual Meeting in the gracious Onondaga County Legislative Chambers. There, during the lunchtime meeting, OCBA members met for a congenial lunch and to welcome in a new slate of officers and directors as they also bid adieu to those who served in 2023-24.

2023-24 President-Elect Laura Spring emceed the ceremony in the absence of President Martin A. Lynn and 5th J.D. Administrative Judge the Hon. Deborah H. Karalunas swore in all relevant parties.

We were honored to have several members of the judiciary join us for the Annual Meeting as evidenced in the group photo above. Pictured in the photo above to the left include: Incoming President Laura Spring, President-Elect Sarah C. Reckess, Vice President Jimmie McCurdy, the Hon. Deborah H. Karalunas, Treasurer Staci Dennis-Taylor, and Secretary Lauren Seiter. Pictured in the photo to the right are new directors Melissa Swartz, Judge Karalunas, the Hon. Melinda McGunnigle, and Kelsey Shannon.



# Law Day 2024



Every May 1st the nation celebrates Law Day where legal practitioners, judicial members and other legal community professionals recognize the importance of the Rule of Law.

This year's theme, Voices of Democracy, was expressed in Keynote Speaker Keith Bybee's succinct address titled "What is the Point of Free Speech?"

Whether it's a silent ballot cast at a polling place or a speech made at a rally -- voices matter because they have the potential to strengthen our understanding of each other's ideas and opinions.

The Onondaga County Bar Association honored the three following award recipients as well as the Nottingham High School student lawyers with the following awards.

We thank 5th Judicial District Administrative Judge the Hon. Deborah H. Karalunas for graciously hosting the celebration in the Hon. Stewart Hancock Ceremonial Courtroom.



## The Rising Star Award

*Awarded to a lawyer in the Fifth Judicial District admitted to the practice of law for less than 10 years, deemed by their peers as an emerging leader in the practice of law because of their contributions to the profession, the association and the community – and promise of leadership in the future.*

Staci Dennis-Taylor graduated from the Syracuse University College of Law only nine years ago. Today, she is the Principal Court Attorney to the Hon. James P. Murphy, Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Courts outside of New York City. This, after an early career as a mediator and seven years with the Onondaga County District Attorney's Office beginning as an Assistant District Attorney and moving into the Special Victims Unit and concluding her time there as a Bureau Chief. She holds leadership positions in many organizations including the

Central New York Women's Bar Association and the OCBA, plus is on the campaign trail seeking to fill a seat on the Syracuse City Court.

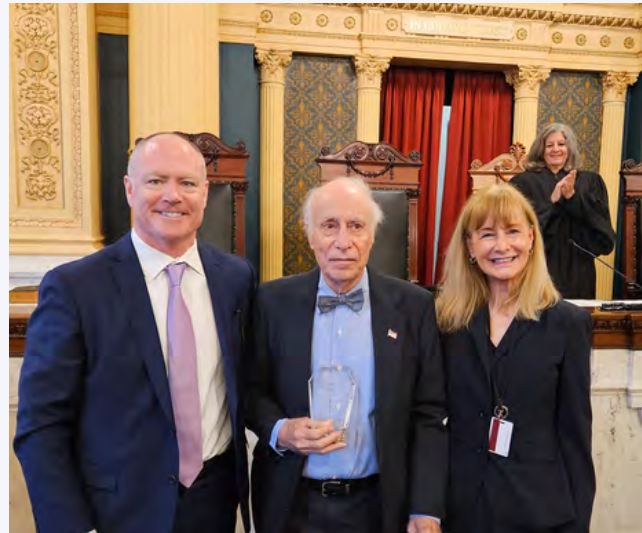
Getting involved and working through sometimes uncomfortable conversations has made all the difference, Staci said in her warm acceptance remarks. Answering a call, at the height of the COVID pandemic from Paula Engel, then OCBA President, asking her to join the association's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee to help facilitate much needed community discourse, "changed my life."

*Pictured above left to right: OCBA President Martin A. Lynn, Staci Dennis-Taylor, Esq., Annaleigh Porter, Esq.*

## The OCBA Outstanding Service Award

*Awarded to a lawyer and OCBA member whose service to the legal profession contributes to the overall welfare and general good of the Bar Association and its membership.*

Award recipient Anthony Gigliotti, Esq. was nominated for this award on account of his esteemed career as an authority on ethics and 20+ years as Principal Counsel for the Attorney Grievance Committee, Appellate Division, Fourth Department, Fifth Judicial District. As an early director of the Legal Services of Central New York, Tony brought legal representation to indigent persons throughout several counties assuring that, indeed, all had access to justice. He was the founding director of the Volunteer Lawyers Project of Central New York, and remains an active board member today. Despite his persistent habit of downplaying the amount of influence he's had among district practitioners, nominator Paula M. Engel, Esq. touted his personal imperative to care for his fellow lawyers, particularly when they are in need of a helping hand. Gigliotti is a staunch advocate of mentoring his colleagues and leads the OCBA Lawyers Assistance Program and, in the words of event emcee the Hon. Deborah Karalunas, is a "lawyer's lawyer."



*Pictured left to right: OCBA President Martin A. Lynn, Anthony Gigliotti, Esq., Paula M. Engel, Esq.*



## The Champion of the Law Award



*Awarded to a member of the Judiciary for notable success in advancing the interests of justice, participating in the growth of the Bench and Bar, leadership, generosity of time, collegiality and outstanding reputation in the legal community.*

Chief U.S. Magistrate Judge for the Northern District of New York the Hon. Thérèse Wiley Dancks received this award because she simply exemplified the award criteria.

Throughout her legal career, Judge Dancks has given of herself, over countless hours, to several bar associations, legal aid services boards, and charitable causes in leadership roles, dispensing advice, mentoring young lawyers, and taking on committee work to the betterment of the legal community. During her moving remarks she compelled established lawyers to value the time it takes to mentor young colleagues -- "even if its just a cup of coffee!"

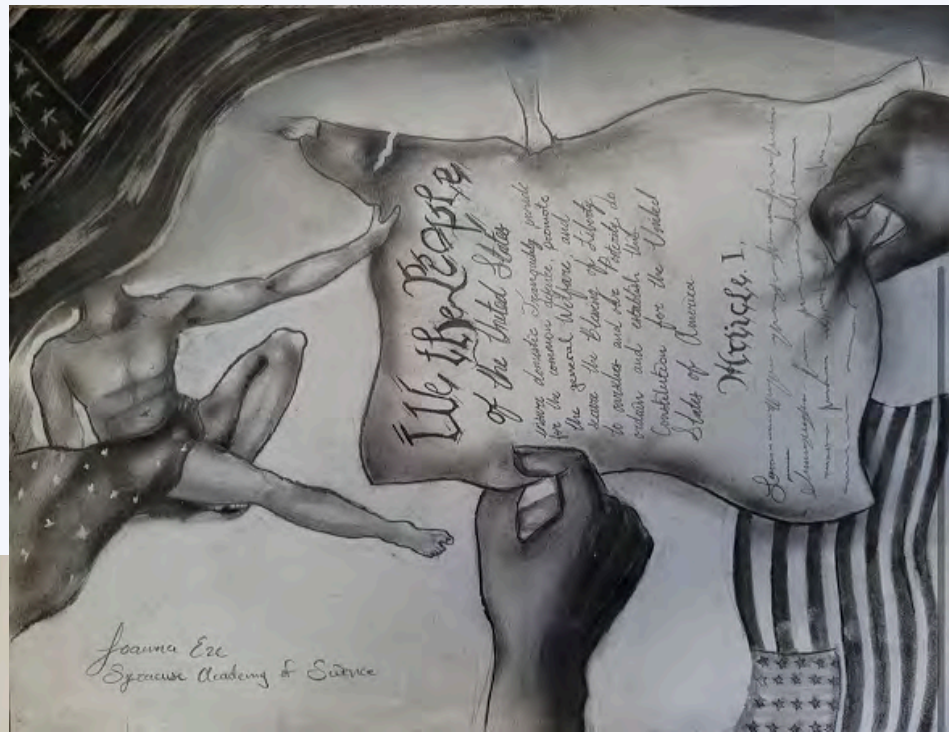
*Pictured left to right: OCBA President Martin A. Lynn, Judge Dancks, Bryn Lovejoy-Grinnell, Esq., who nominated the judge for this award.*

## 2024 Onondaga County High School Mock Trial Champions Nottingham High School

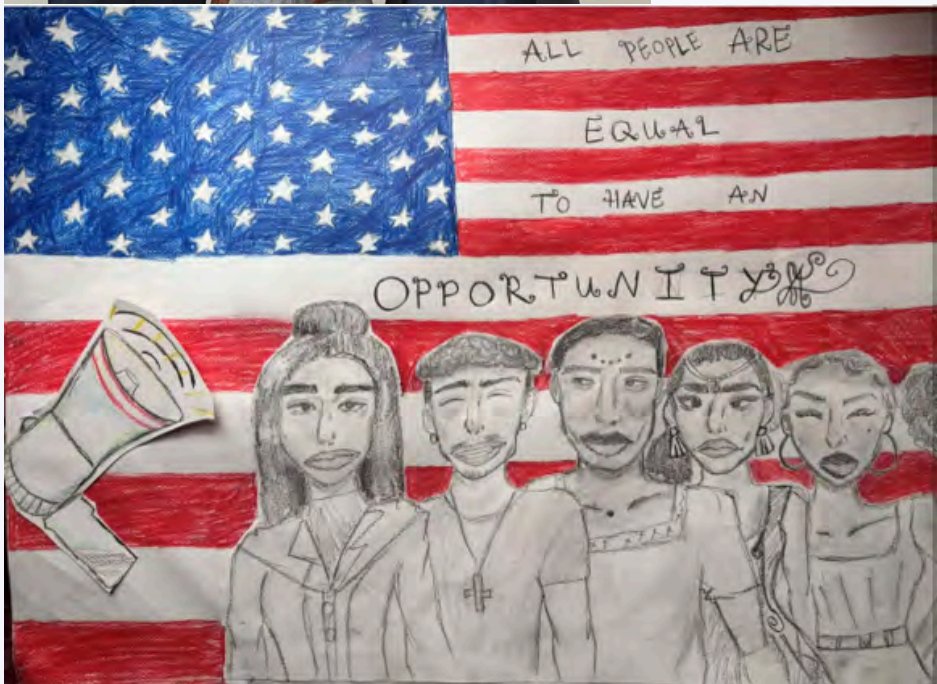




The 2024 Law Day theme “Voices of Democracy” recognizes that in democracies, the people rule. For nearly 250 years, Americans have expressed their political views and wishes by speaking their minds and voting in elections. In 2024, the United States will hold its 60th presidential election, and Americans will address fundamental questions about democracy and the rule of law.



The artwork above, a black and white drawing by Chinualumogu Eze, an eighth grader at the Syracuse Academy of Science won the contest's 1st Place Prize and received \$200 for her winning interpretation of this year's theme. The artist is pictured to the left with OCBA Executive Director Jeff Unaitis and Onondaga County Legislator and OCBA Member Nodesia Hernandez, who oversaw the art contest.



The Voices of Democracy theme was borne out by two talented Syracuse City School District students who visually depicted it in these winning Law Day art contest entries.

The U. S. Flag inspired artwork above was made by seventh grader Keziah Mason-Chandler, who attends SCSD's Expeditionary Learning Middle School. Keziah's entry was recognized with a \$100 prize for 2nd Place for her interpretation of the theme. The artist is pictured to the right with OCBA Executive Director Jeff Unaitis and Onondaga County Legislator and OCBA Member Nodesia Hernandez.



# NEWSMAKERS & INFLUENCERS

---

## Harris Beach and Murtha Cullina sign Combination Agreement

Earlier this month, Harris Beach PLLC, a firm with a strong presence across New York and the Tri-State area, and Murtha Cullina LLP, a leading legal presence in Connecticut and Massachusetts, today announced a planned combination for the creation of one firm. This new combined firm, which will be a powerhouse in the region's legal industry, will be known as Harris Beach Murtha.

Harris Beach and Murtha Cullina are each leading law firms in their respective geographies and offer complementary services. Together, Harris Beach Murtha will offer greater strength and reach throughout upstate and Western New York, accelerating the growth strategy of both firms. The combination will create more robust capabilities to meet and exceed clients' needs and support them as they navigate increasingly complex legal and regulatory environments.

The synergies between the two law firms will benefit clients of both firms through a significantly increased knowledge base and expanded service areas. Together, Harris Beach Murtha will have more than 250 attorneys across 15 offices in several states, and more than 250 years of combined legal experience.

Harris Beach serves clients throughout New York State and across the nation. The firm has offices in Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Ithaca, Saratoga Springs, Albany, White Plains, Long Island and New York City, as well as New Haven, CT, Washington D.C. and Newark, NJ. Murtha Cullina serves clients throughout New England and across the United States. The firm has offices in Boston, MA, Stamford, New Haven and Hartford, CT and White Plains, NY.

Harris Beach and Murtha Cullina will continue to operate as separate, independent entities until the combination has been completed, and both firms are committed to ensuring clients continue to receive high-quality, focused services throughout this process. During this period, Chris Jagel, CEO of Harris Beach, and Andy Corea, Managing Partner of Murtha Cullina, will co-lead an interim advisory committee.

"This Harris Beach Murtha combination is an exciting, transformational move and proof of our investment in our clients. Both firms have a long history of excellence and client-driven growth in our respective markets and are well-aligned culturally and with many of the same practice areas. The combination will enable us to extend our reach to provide even more diverse and innovative services and capabilities over a larger geographic footprint," said Chris Jagel, Harris Beach CEO.

Consummation of the proposed combination is subject to customary conditions, including a vote of the Partners of each firm to approve the Operating Agreement for the combined entity. The vote is expected to take place in the next several months, with the Operating Agreement effective January 1, 2025, pending completion of all necessary reviews and closing conditions.





# NEWSMAKERS & INFLUENCERS

## Two New Partners Welcomed at Smith Sovik Kendrick & Sugnet P.C.

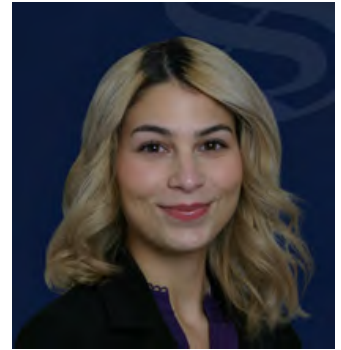
Smith Sovik Kendrick & Sugnet, P.C., recently announced the addition of Gabriela C. Groman and Kevin J. Casserino as Attorneys in the firm's Syracuse office.

Groman and Casserino participated in Smith Sovik's Summer Associate program and re-joined the firm after graduating from Syracuse University College of Law in 2023. In law school, Groman was a member of the Journal of Science and Technology, Cold Case Justice Initiative, Black Law Student Association, and Advocacy Honors Society Mock Trial Team. Gabriela also worked as a Research Assistant and as a student attorney in the Veterans Legal Clinic.

During law school, Casserino was a member of the Travis H.D. Lewin Advocacy Honor Society, the Student Bar Association, and the Journal for International Law and Commerce. He was also a member of the Syracuse Law National Trial Team. He won and was the best advocate of the 45th Annual Lionel O. Grossman

Trial Competition and was recently inducted into the Order of the Barristers Honor Society. Prior to law school, Kevin worked for a Big 4 accounting firm where he worked with clients from around the United States on technology and risk practices.

At the firm, both attorneys will work in all areas of litigation including medical malpractice, premises liability, motor vehicle accidents, products liability, construction site accidents, contract disputes and labor employment matters.



*Groman*



*Casserino*

## ***New Partners at Costello Cooney & Fearon, PLLC***

Costello, Cooney & Fearon, PLLC, has elected Kelly J. Pare and Stacy A. Marris to the firm's partnership.

Pare joined the firm in March 2019. His practice is focused within the firm's Civil Litigation and Trial Law practice groups, with an emphasis on Construction Law, Municipal Litigation, and the General Defense of Insureds. He routinely represents municipalities, land developers, individuals, and businesses in civil lawsuits throughout New York State.

Marris joined the firm in March of 2020. She practices primarily in the firm's Municipal law practice group with an emphasis in Zoning and Environmental Law, Land Use and Development. She also works with the firm's litigation practice and with the firm's Regulated Industries clients.



Marris



Pare

# NEWSMAKERS & INFLUENCERS

---

## College of Law to Add Housing Clinic for Fall 2024

The Syracuse University College of Law is adding a **Housing Clinic** to its clinical legal education offerings beginning in the Fall 2024 semester. The Clinic will be supervised by OCBA member and SUCOL Teaching Professor Gary J. Pieples.

The Housing Clinic will operate in partnership with Legal Services of Central New York and the Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York to provide representation to low-income tenants in eviction, housing conditions, and other rental housing-related matters.



Students in the clinic, working under the supervision of clinic director Professor Gary Pieples, will handle all aspects of clients' cases, including interviewing and counseling, investigation, negotiation, pleading and motion practice, courtroom advocacy, and real estate procedure.

"The Housing Clinic will bring much-needed representation to an underserved population dealing with profound living condition issues," says Dean Craig M. Boise. "At the same time, our students will be gaining practical legal skills essential to a legal career and a priority in the College of Law curriculum."

"Housing cases move quickly and are tried almost immediately, providing students with multiple opportunities during the semester to see a case through to resolution—from the initial interview and filing of motions to settlement or trial, including appearing in Syracuse City Court," says Pieples. "The Housing Clinic also provides students another opportunity to explore public interest law as a career."

The Housing Clinic is underwritten by a grant from Legal Services of Central New York and the Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York, which received additional New York State funding under the Tenant Dignity and Safe Housing Act.

The College of Law now offers students a choice of seven legal clinics: the Bankruptcy Clinic, the Betty & Michael D. Wohl Veterans Legal Clinic, the Criminal Defense Clinic, the Disability Rights Clinic, the Housing Clinic, the Sherman F. Levey '57, L'59 Low Income Taxpayer Clinic, and the Transactional Law Clinic.

## What is the lawyers' Assistance Program?

The Lawyers' Assistance Program of Onondaga County is a confidential service providing information, referrals, access to professional counseling and peer support.

## What Kind of Assistance is Available?

You are entitled to a confidential telephone consultation, free counseling sessions with a professional counselor, and participation in peer support groups.

## What Can I Expect When I Call for an Appt?

You will talk to an intake coordinator who may refer you to an experienced counselor. Family Services Associates serves as the Program's counseling agency.

## Is Contact with the LAP Confidential?

YES. You can discuss the issue of confidentiality with the intake coordinator or counselor.

## Why was the Program Established?

The Program was established to assist lawyers who have problems with alcohol, drugs, anxiety, depression, gambling and other personal problems.

## Who May I Call?

Attorneys, judges and law students in Onondaga County and these other neighboring counties: Oswego, Jefferson, Lewis, Herkimer, Oneida, Cortland, Cayuga and Madison.

# LAWYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

**Your  
First Choice**

**Your  
Last Resort**



The New York State Bar Association  
Lawyer Assistance Program

**(518) 487-5688**

The New York State Bar Association  
Lawyer Assistance Program Hotline (24/7)

**(877) 772-8835**

Family Services Associates

**(315) 451-2161**

Onondaga County Bar Association  
Executive Director, Jeff Unaitis

**(315) 579-2581**



The mission of the Onondaga County Bar Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the Onondaga County Bar Association, is to aid members of the legal profession in Onondaga County who may be ill, incapacitated, indigent, or otherwise in need, and to improve and promote the following:

- The administration of justice;
- Service to the public and the legal community;
- Equal access to the legal system for all;
- Professional ethics and responsibility; and,
- Legal research and education.

Established in 1975, the Foundation is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation. To fulfill its mission, the Foundation depends on individual donations (which are tax deductible as charitable contributions) and grants from other funding sources. The Foundation welcomes grant applications for projects consistent with this mission statement.

**Onondaga County Bar Foundation • 431 E. Fayette St., #300 • Syracuse, NY 13202**



# Ethics Hotline

New York lawyers faced with ethical questions regarding their own prospective conduct can reach the Ethics Hotline by calling volunteers Victor Hershdorfer at **315-913-4087** or Tony Gigliotti **315-727-6780**.

The Ethics Hotline is operated and staffed by members of the Onondaga County Bar Association's Committee on Professional Ethics (the "Committee"). These volunteers respond to inquiries made by lawyers admitted in New York who face ethical questions regarding their own prospective conduct. The purpose of the Hotline is to provide informal guidance to callers in accordance with the New York Rules of Professional Conduct (the "New York Rules"). Any information provided in response to a Hotline inquiry is merely the opinion of the Committee member answering the call. It is not the opinion of the Committee as a whole. The information provided in response to a Hotline inquiry does not constitute legal advice. If the matter involves complex issues, or implicates a substantive area of law, you may wish to retain professional ethics counsel.

## **Callers should be aware of the following guidelines before calling the Ethics Hotline:**

1. The Hotline only provides guidance to lawyers admitted to practice in New York about the New York Rules.
2. The Hotline only provides guidance concerning the caller's own prospective conduct. We do not answer questions about past conduct or the conduct of other lawyers.
3. The Hotline does not provide legal advice or answer questions of law.
4. The Hotline does not provide answers to hypothetical questions nor inquiries which have also been submitted to another bar association's ethics committee.
5. The Hotline does not answer questions about the unlicensed practice of law (UPL). UPL is governed by statutory law, not the New York Rules and is, therefore, outside the Committee's jurisdiction.
6. The Hotline provides general guidance. Due to the limited information we can obtain during a brief and informal telephone conversation, we cannot provide a definitive answer to Hotline questions.
7. The Hotline does not answer questions where the issue itself is the matter of a pending legal proceeding or is before a grievance committee.
8. Although it is the Committee's policy to maintain confidentiality of all Hotline inquiries, callers should be aware that the information is not protected by the attorney-client privilege or RPC 1.6.
9. The Ethics Hotline does not respond to complaints or inquiries regarding unethical conduct of other lawyers. Any such complaints or inquiries should be addressed to the Grievance or Disciplinary Committee for the county in which the lawyer practices (see <http://www.nycourts.gov/attorneys/grievance/>).
10. Lawyers who call the Ethics Hotline are required to provide their full name and telephone numbers.

If, after speaking with someone on the Hotline, a New York lawyer wishes to obtain a written Informal Opinion from the Committee, he or she may submit a written request. Please review the guidelines for requesting an Informal Opinion here (See attached guidelines – need hyperlink to the document). As with Hotline questions, the Committee's Informal Opinions are limited to interpreting the New York Rules. Please be aware that the Committee cannot provide a concrete timeline for responding to written requests. If your matter is urgent, you may wish to retain professional ethics counsel.



# OCBA CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION

431 East Fayette St. | Syracuse, NY | Phone: 315-579-2578 | Fax: 315-471-0705 | cchantler@onbar.org

## Representing Non-Citizen Clients: Cultural Sensitivity & Your Ethical Obligations

**WHEN** Noon to 2 p.m. Friday, May 31st

**HOW** HYBRID in-person or via ZOOM

**COST** FREE

**MCLE** 2.0 (1.0 Ethics, 1.0 DIEB)

*This CLE is appropriate for both established and newly admitted attorneys*

**Come hungry!!  
LUNCH  
INCLUDED**

**REGISTER NOW**

*Attending in person? Great. We'll see you on May 31st in the CNY Philanthropy Center, Ballroom.*



You've never walked in your clients' shoes. Your job as a lawyer is to zealously represent your clients to the best of your ability in consideration of who they are and what their circumstances may be. This CLE, sponsored by the OCBA Criminal Law Section, explores the overlap of effectively doing your job while also assuring your client receives the conscientious respect they deserve.

**Presenters:** Sharon Ames, Esq. Daniel Jackson, Esq., and Shana Pugh Dean of the Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees



*Brought to you in proud partnership with*

Onondaga County Bar Association  
**Assigned Counsel Program, Inc**





# OCBA CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION

431 East Fayette St. | Syracuse, NY | Phone: 315-579-2578 | Fax: 315-471-0705 | cchantler@onbar.org

## Supreme Court Practice for Pro Se Litigants: A Primer for 5th J.D. Help Center Volunteers

**WHEN** Noon to 2 p.m. Friday, June 28th

**WHERE** 221 S. Warren St., 1st Fl. Education Room, Syracuse

**COST** FREE **LUNCH IS INCLUDED!!**

**MCLE** 2.0 (0.5 Ethics, 1.5 Skills)

*This CLE is appropriate for both established and newly admitted attorneys*

### DO NOT MISS THIS CLE!

Become one of the first among your colleagues to receive this important training. Receive an introduction to the new 5th J.D. Help Center. Learn about Pro Se Filings, Issues in Pro Se Filings, Supreme Court practices and Limited Scope Ethics while working with challenging clients.



Presenters include: NYS Supreme Court Justice the Hon. Danielle M. Fogel, Chief Clerk Diane Helbig, Deputy Chief Clerk Mary Monoshefsky, Senior Court Analyst Jeannette Bizgia, and Samantha Aguam, Esq. Co-Deputy Executive Director of Volunteer Lawyers Project of Central New York, Inc.



Brought to you in proud partnership with

