

# Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut

NOVEMBER 2015

SPECIAL EDITION: PRO BONO HIGHLIGHTS

## Our Mission

*SLS empowers low-income people in Connecticut to obtain justice by providing tools to address their civil legal needs.*

At Statewide Legal Services we believe knowledge is power. We are a legal aid advice and referral center helping low-income people solve their legal problems. We believe that everyone should have access to justice.

### Pro Bono Attorney Spotlight

Recognizing a significant commitment and dedication to serving and empowering low-income people with legal problems in Connecticut.



We would like to recognize Attorney **Richard Simonson** for his dedication to SLS pro bono legal services for **more than 7 years**. Attorney Simonson's practice emphasizes residential and commercial real estate, landlord tenant representation, and contracts.

The majority of Connecticut's low-income tenants are unrepresented in eviction proceedings because they cannot afford a lawyer, but Attorney Simonson's Pro Bono efforts have produced lasting results. These include successful stays of execution, mediations between landlords and tenants, and retention of Section 8 Housing Benefits. With his legal expertise, Connecticut families navigate the court system and are able to stay in their homes. Having a safe and stable place to live helps to mitigate many other legal, social, economic and educational issues.

SLS is grateful to Attorney Simonson and the other Pro Bono attorneys helping to provide much-needed civil legal assistance - one case and one person at a time.

Fact: Connecticut's Legal Aid programs can only help approximately 2 out of every 10 individuals applying for civil legal assistance so the work of pro bono attorneys is always essential.

### Helping Connecticut Veterans

On September 18, 2015, SLS advocates and Pro Bono Attorneys participated in the **2015 Connecticut Veterans Stand Down Event**.

Each year SLS staff and Pro Bono attorneys join together with other non-profit organizations and state agencies at the Connecticut Veterans' Home in Rocky Hill to offer free legal advice to Connecticut veterans. The annual Veterans Stand Down Event brings together over 90 free services – including healthcare, social, and legal services. Veterans get free transportation from every corner of Connecticut, a hot meal, and a chance to walk "tent-to-tent" to talk to people from all of the agencies.

SLS Pro Bono attorneys donated their time to help our Connecticut Veterans. Each Pro Bono attorney sat with our Veterans, listened to their concerns, and provided free legal advice.

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The "I (Heart) Justice" logo symbolizes our movement to empower low-income people in Connecticut to obtain justice by providing tools to address their civil legal needs. Behind this project Statewide Legal Services, the CT Women's Education and Legal Fund, and the CT Alliance for Basic Human Needs formed the Hartford Equal Justice Collaborative.

The project is funded by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving to provide residents of the Greater Hartford area, particularly the Spanish-speaking community, with tools to increase their knowledge of and access to culturally responsive legal information, resources, and direct services. We also host bilingual educational workshops and provider education forums. We help attorneys interested in volunteering to get involved and to receive training.



HEJC members at "Yo Amo la Justicia" Contact Sandra San Emeterio, Project Manager Attorney, to learn more about HEJC at [ssanemeterio@slsct.org](mailto:ssanemeterio@slsct.org).

## Veterans, Continued

Please join us in thanking the attorneys who generously donated their time and expertise to help these veterans with their housing, bankruptcy, and child custody cases. Indeed, Attorneys Donna Civitello (Carter & Civitello) and solo practitioners Lisa Foy, Keelin Lynch, Charles O'Hara, and Michael Smiley are "serving those who have served us."

## New Additions to our team

We welcome three new staff members to our Pro Bono team.

**Attorney Ashleigh M. Backman** is the *Pro Bono Attorney Manager* overseeing our Pro Bono Unit. Attorney **John Bozzi** and Advocate **Claudia Magnan** continue to coordinate community legal clinics and direct representation cases, pro bono recruitment and retention, and free continuing education seminars for our pro bono attorneys.

Under the direction of Ms. Backman, the Pro Bono Unit's priorities include further engagement with the Private Bars, identifying emerging pro bono needs and program designs, and tracking client outcomes to measure the effectiveness of pro bono legal services on our low-income communities.

**Attorney Sandra L. San Emeterio** is the *Project Manager Attorney* for the Hartford Equal Justice Collaborative, an organizational partnership between Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut, CT Women's Education and Legal Fund, and CT Alliance for Basic Human Needs. The Collaborative is operating under a project funded by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving.

Ms. San Emeterio manages SLS's engagement as a partner in the Collaborative, including grant management and community legal outreach projects in the Greater Hartford Area.

**Cindy Fernandez** is the *Executive Assistant* providing substantial administrative support to the SLS Pro Bono Unit and the Executive Director. Utilizing her skills as a certified paralegal, Cindy is responsible for tracking the progress of Pro Bono direct referral cases and coding Pro Bono case outcomes in our Case Monitoring database. Ms. Fernandez's strong organizational and time management skills support the Executive Director in monitoring LSC Federal Funding deadlines, planning Board and Committee meetings,



and assisting with the research of future program initiatives.

Our warmest "Congratulations" to **Mary Boeger**, our *Executive Assistant*, on her retirement! Mary has been with SLS for 20 years and with the legal aid community for over 25 years. . . Thank you for your dedication and years of hard work!

Photo: Our Pro Bono team

Top: (L to R) Ashleigh Backman, Claudia Magnan, Cindy Fernandez

Bottom: (L to R) Mary Boeger, John Bozzi, Sandra San Emeterio

# Call4Law

## Pro Bono Your Way

With growing technology, our Call4Law program is an exciting opportunity for Connecticut lawyers who want to do pro bono work for low income people, but do not believe they have the time to take a pro bono case or the time to familiarize themselves with a new area of law.

Because Call4Law pro bono clients are pre-screened by us, volunteering as a pro bono Call4Law attorney merely takes one or two hours a month. Volunteer attorneys can call pre-screened pro bono clients to advise them from the comfort of their own office. After receiving a brief case summary, pro bono attorneys call the client and provide legal advice to empower the client to handle her problem, pro se.

Participating attorneys receive full primary professional liability insurance coverage, free on-demand online classes, mentoring and support.

Call4Law is truly pro bono work "your way." Learn more by contacting Claudia Magnan at (860) 852-1252 or [cmagnan@slsct.org](mailto:cmagnan@slsct.org).

*On November 6th, 2015, Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut is launching its 2015 Annual Appeal: I Heart Justice Campaign. Every donation makes a difference, whether it is \$100 or \$1,000! Donating is easy through PayPal. Together we can close the access to justice gap in Connecticut.*

Donate

