

# Law Services News



JAN/FEB. 2009

## 2008 Holiday Wine Tasting Was Toast of Town

Nassau Suffolk Law Services hosted its first annual *Commitment to Justice* Holiday Wine Tasting Reception on November 20, 2008. The reception was held at the beautiful, elegant and newly renovated Nassau County Bar Association. The fundraiser was a rousing success, not only to benefit the work of Nassau Suffolk Law Services, but to also toast supporters, vendors, Board Members, the Advisory Council, and staff for their extraordinary commitment to high quality, legal services for low income and disabled individuals.

Established in 1966, Law Services was one of the first Legal Services Corporation programs in New York State, and is now among the largest providers of civil

legal services in the state. The program is committed to helping the poor vindicate their rights under the law. It provides free legal services in thousands of cases each year, as well as legal support to every agency, religious group, and grass roots organization that works with the poor and persons with disabilities on Long Island.

The event was conceived by Carole A. Burns Esq., a member of the Special Events Committee of Law Services' Advisory Council. Ms. Burns is a major supporter and worked tirelessly along with the Advisory Council and staff to make this wine tasting a first for Law Services, and a night to remember.

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## Foreclosure Prevention Project Update

Nassau/Suffolk Law Services' Foreclosure Prevention Project is currently staffed by three attorneys (Debra Petrillo, Keiko Cervantes Ospina and Sheila Mullahy) and a paralegal (Kim Walker) supervised by Michael Wigutow. Our Foreclosure Prevention Project is part of a coalition with HUD approved housing counseling agencies who are members of the NYS Coalition for Excellence in Homeownership Education and Counseling. The local coalition has been meeting on a monthly

basis as part of a collaborative effort to help homeowners defeat foreclosure and remain in their homes.

We are receiving referrals from several sources, including the housing counseling agencies, other community groups, word of mouth and other publicity, as well as from the Courts and lenders themselves, especially through mandated notice requirements under new State law

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This issue is dedicated in memory of Pete Rios.

### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

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"Equal Justice Under Law"



IN ORDER TO RECEIVE OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER ISSUE, MAKE SURE TO SIGN UP FOR ELECTRONIC DELIVERY BY GOING TO OUR WEBSITE [WWW.NSLAWSERVICES.ORG](http://WWW.NSLAWSERVICES.ORG) TO GIVE US YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS! SEE P. 11 FOR MORE DETAILS!



United Way of Long Island

## Foreclosure Unit Update

(Continued from page 1)

governing the foreclosure process. Referrals can be made by calling 631 232-2400 or 516 202-8100 x 3158.

Our Volunteer Lawyer's Project (VLP) in Nassau and equivalent Pro Bono Project in Suffolk are able to seek private attorneys to provide free legal services in foreclosure matters when our staff cannot take on new cases, but only for homeowners whose incomes are at, or below 200% of the federal poverty level (the Foreclosure Unit's financial eligibility guidelines are higher). In addition, the Nassau County Bar Association has created a pro bono panel of attorneys willing to provide legal assistance to homeowners in foreclosure. The Foreclosure Prevention Project can make referrals directly to this panel. Households whose incomes reach as high as 80% of the median income (currently \$61,000 for a family of 3) are financially eligible for the Nassau County VLP, Suffolk's Pro Bono panel, and our Foreclosure Prevention Unit. Homeowners above 80% of the median income should be directed to the County Bar Associations' Lawyer Referral Service, where attorneys are listed by area of expertise and/or interest. Please note that these attorneys will charge fees for their service.

## HELP WITH UTILITIES

**HEAP:** A **\$100** Regular **HEAP** benefit supplement will be issued to households that have already received their regular HEAP grant. Also new applicants will receive their regular grant + **\$100**. A second emergency HEAP benefit will also be issued to eligible households. OTDA was able to make these changes because it received more HEAP funding from the federal government than originally anticipated. For more information:

<http://www.otda.state.ny.us/main/heap/stateplan.asp>

**DSS NON-HEAP UTILITY ASSISTANCE:** Suffolk and Nassau County DSS have agreed to suspend the enforcement of utility assistance repayment agreements from November 1, 2008 to April 15, 2008. Therefore, current requests to DSS for **non-HEAP\*** utility assistance should not be denied due to a failure to repay DSS for prior utility assistance.

\*HEAP assistance is never conditioned on repayment

## Annual Social Security Cost of Living Increases Announced (2009)

The Social Security Administration announced its annual cost-of-living adjustments (COLA). Notices have already been sent to recipients of Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability. For SSI beneficiaries in New York State, the living alone rate rose to \$761, the living with others rate to \$697, and the living in the household of others rate to \$472.34. The "SSI couples rate" is \$1,115.00 per month.

The revised work incentive amounts were also announced. The substantial gainful activity threshold amount for 2009 is \$980 per month (up from \$940). For blind beneficiaries it went up to \$1,640. A beneficiary eligible to accumulate Trial Work Period months gets a TWP month when earnings exceed \$700 (up from \$670).

The monthly premium paid by lower income beneficiaries enrolled in Medicare Part B (covering physician services, outpatient hospital services, certain home health services, durable medical equipment and other items) will remain at \$96.40. There is still a means test for the Medicare premium, so higher income individuals will pay more. As always, for those eligible for Medicare Part B, the premium is deducted directly from the Social Security Disability or retirement check.

## MORE SSA NEWS...

The Commissioner of Social Security recently announced the *Compassionate Allowances* initiative as a way to speed up the processing of claims for applicants with serious medical conditions which clearly meet SSA's disability standard. This fast track system identifies 50 conditions which should cut down the current year (or more) wait to 6-8 days once fully implemented. The list of qualifying impairments for this program can be found

at: [www.socialsecurity.gov/compassionateallowances](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/compassionateallowances)

### Are the Days of HEAP Delays Over?



After reports of serious HEAP application delays, the process seems to be moving more smoothly. If you are aware of continuing delays, please call our offices.

## GOOD CAUSE FOR “VOLUNTARY QUIT” PRESERVES PA GRANT

In a recent case, our Welfare Unit represented a recipient of public assistance whose grant was being reduced pursuant to 18 NYCRR 385.13 based on an allegation that she voluntarily quit her job for purposes of qualifying for increased public assistance. A fair hearing was requested and the client was represented by our Riverhead paralegal, Nora Gonzalez. The key goal at the hearing was to prove that the client had good cause for quitting the job.

At the hearing, the Department of Social Services (DSS) representative contended that our client quit her job so that she would qualify for an increased public assistance and food stamps grant. Because she had just started earning more money, her public assistance grant would have been cut causing DSS to suspect that she did not have good cause to quit her job. The client testified at the hearing that she had found this job on her own and regularly reported her earned income to DSS for purposes of adjusting her public assistance grant. After several weeks, she was forced to quit due to harassment on the job, both verbal as well as physical, by a coworker. The client went through proper channels, advising her supervisor of the harassment. She then waited two weeks and seeing that the supervisor did not intend to take any action, she reluctantly quit the job being unable and unwilling to subject herself to the continuing harassment. The client then notified DSS that she left the employment.

The Administrative Law Judge found the client's testimony forthright, credible and persuasive. The judge ruled that DSS had not established that the client left voluntarily for the express purpose of qualifying for public assistance. It was noted that she was already in receipt of public assistance, had found the job on her own, and it did not seem credible that she would quit the job for this purpose. The client's benefits were ordered to be continued without reduction. Congratulations!

## Medicaid Eligibility for Incarcerated Individuals

On April 1 2008 Section 366 of the Social Services Law was amended by adding subdivision (1-a) requiring Medicaid eligibility to be maintained for those recipients who are incarcerated in a New York State or local correctional facility. Prior to this amendment, when a Medicaid recipient became incarcerated, the local Department of Social Services discontinued coverage. Medicaid and FHPlus will still be discontinued for recipients who are incarcerated out-of-state or in a federal penitentiary within New York State.

Upon notification of an inmate's release, Medicaid will now be reinstated for four months subject to certain exceptions. During that interim the releasee's Medicaid application will be re-evaluated and coverage will be reinstated or appropriately discontinued. This law will insure that inmates and those recently released from prison, continue to receive necessary medical care for humanitarian and public health reasons.

## More Medicaid News

Effective, April 1, 2008, it is no longer a requirement for single adults and childless couples to complete an alcohol and substance abuse assessment as a condition of Medicaid eligibility. Clients should no longer be sanctioned for not completing The Alcohol/Substance Abuse Screening Form DSS-4571.



Please share a copy of this newsletter with your colleagues— Better yet, tell them to sign up for electronic delivery!



## Food Stamps Alert

- Effective February 2009, food stamp monthly allotments will **increase** for certain Long Island households. The Standard Utility Allowance for level one will increase from \$543 to \$727. Level two will increase from \$238 to \$286. Level three, the telephone allowance, will remain at \$33.00. Please check your clients food stamp budgets to make sure their February food stamps reflect this increase.
- Food Stamps (FS) households with a disabled member are entitled to uncapped shelter and medical deductions which results in a **higher grant**. Once a disabled FS recipient gets SSI or SSD, check to make sure that DSS recalculated the food stamp benefits retroactive to the date the member of the food stamp household was determined to be disabled (date of SSI or SSD decision) or the date of the food stamp application, whichever is later.



**Advocate:** My single, non disabled client applied for Public Assistance, Medicaid and HEAP and was denied because she was told that, although she is a Legal Permanent Resident, she was not eligible since she had not resided in the U.S. for at least 5 years. Is this correct?

**LSCA:** No. Public Assistance, Medicaid and HEAP **do not** require a 5 year residency for Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs). Many people get confused as the Food Stamps and SSI programs have this stricter eligibility requirement. Non-citizens who apply for Food Stamps and SSI often have a 5 year residency or credited work quarter requirement but there are even exceptions here for children, disabled, victims of domestic violence and persons over 60.

So all LPRs should file their applications for Public Assistance, Medicaid and HEAP if they believe they meet the financial eligibility requirements.

## FREE ANTIBIOTICS AT STOP & SHOP

As a part of their health and wellness initiative Stop & Shop supermarkets will be offering up to a 14-day supply of select generic antibiotics for free. You just need to have a prescription from your doctor. This special service will run from January 2, 2009 until March 21, 2009. This is only available in stores with pharmacies. For more information visit Stop & Shop's website at [www.stopandshop.com/antibiotics](http://www.stopandshop.com/antibiotics)

## Stony Brook HOME (Health Outreach and Medical Education)

Stony Brook University has created a student-run free clinic that will be managed and staffed by Stony Brook University students from the School of Medicine and the School of Social Work.

The clinic provides primary and preventive medical care (including health screening, prescription of medications and diagnostic tests, and referral to other health services), as well as social work and patient education services, for the underserved adult population of Suffolk County, focused on residents of Central Islip and surrounding towns. For more information please and to schedule an appointment, please call 631 444-2340.



JOIN US AT THE  
"Have a Heart for the Homeless"

Candlelight Vigil

February 12, 2009

6:00pm-8:00pm

Farmingdale State College Plaza and  
Multi-Purpose Room

Accepting donations of:

Unused baby items

diapers, formula, unopened toiletries

Non-perishable foods

For more information please call

The Nassau-Coalition for the Homeless at

(516) 742-7770 or Maria Dosso at 631 232-2400 x 3369

## Did You Know...

### Free Tax Filing Through ACORN

ACORN is currently offering free tax filing services for low income individuals at Touro's Public Advocacy Center, 225 Eastview Drive, Central Islip on Tuesdays and Thursdays 4-9 pm. You will need to bring the following to your free tax filing appointment:

- Government-issued picture ID
- Social Security Card
- The dates of birth of all family members you are claiming
- Form W2 for all jobs you held in 2008 and any other tax-related documents
- Form 1099-G if you collected unemployment insurance benefits in 2008
- Form 1099-INT if you collected interest from a bank account in 2008
- Documentation of any child care expenses, including the child care agency's identification number or the Social Security number of the provider
- Your spouse, if you are married and filing jointly
- A voided check or deposit slip for direct deposit of your refund



For more information, please contact The Touro Advocacy Center at 631 650-2312.

### The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC):

An Important benefit for low income workers

The EITC is a federal and state tax credit for low income families and individuals, both full and part time workers, including the self employed. The tax refunds can be substantial and are considered exempt income for public assistance, food stamps, Medicaid, Section 8 and SSI. But you must file a tax return to take advantage of this benefit. No matter how little was earned, low income workers can actually end up getting a refund which exceeds the amount of tax withheld! Voluntary Income Tax Assistance sites provide free tax preparation throughout Nassau and Suffolk. Call for the site nearest you at: 1 800 906-9887. ACORN also provides free tax preparation (see above). A free website is also available for filers: [www.icanefile.org](http://www.icanefile.org)

### Student Earned Income Exempt



Effective January 14, 2009, all of the earned income of a dependent child who is a full-time or part-time student is exempt and must not be counted as income when determining eligibility for public assistance.

### The Exempt Income Protection Act Protects Low Income New Yorkers from Abusive Debt Collection Practices

As we reported in our previous newsletter, the Exempt Income Protection Act (EIPA) which was signed into law last year and went into effect on January 1, 2009, prevents banks from freezing the first \$2,500 in a bank account when people's bank accounts contain directly deposited exempt funds such Social Security, SSI, Veteran Benefits, Unemployment, Child Support and others. Those who do not receive Social Security or other exempt funds will also have up to \$1,716 of their earned income protected by the law. This new law offers considerable protections limiting creditors' ability to restrain accounts, especially for direct deposit and low income account holders.

Banks may also not charge fees if the restraining notice is void, but amounts over \$2500 or \$1716 for non-direct deposit funds can be restrained and fees can be charged for related action on the account. When funds are actually frozen, an Exemption Notice will be sent along with the Notice and Claim Form within 2 business days, which will explain the procedures for releasing the account. An Exemption Claim Form must be returned to the judgment creditors attorney within 20 days with supporting documents and the account must then be released within 7 days unless the creditor serves an objection.



## *Law Services 2008 Holiday Wine Tasting Reception*



*(Continued from page 1)*

At the event guests raved about the delicious and appetizing food prepared by Quartz Caterers. The quality wines were donated by David Taub of Palm Bay International. Palm Bay also staffed the wine table with informative and most hospitable pourers.

James Dunne of *Vino U* hosted an exceptional, fun-filled wine tasting seminar. Guests described his presentation as “fantastic”, “fabulous” and “riveting”. Mr. Dunne demystified wine and gave the participants a basic introduction to the science of winemaking, as well as wine tasting and food pairing. Beginners walked away feeling much more confident about selecting wines. They said they gained deeper insight from a real wine professional.

Nassau Suffolk Law Services’ major sponsors for this event included: David Taub of Palm Bay International Wines, Ruskin Moscou Faltischek, Inc, Travers O’Keefe, James Dunne of *Vino U*, All Sector, State Bank of Long Island, GEICO, Lazer, Aptheker, Rosella and Yedid P.C., Mutual of America,



*Wine tasting seminar expertly taught by James Dunne, VinoU*

Carole A. Burns, Esquire Bank, Law Offices of Frederick K. Brewington, Satty, Levine and Ciacco, PC., Touro College Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center, Randazzo and Randazzo, LLP, Dorf Associates, the Nassau and Suffolk County Bar Associations. Critical support was provided by Sentinel Printing, Island Diversified and Karma 411. Beautiful gift baskets were donated and raffled off to the lucky winners.

The gathering brought together enthusiastic supporters of Law Services. Guests remarked it was so much fun to meet outside of a business context to have a joyous time for a great cause. Everyone had such a good time; their only criticism was the event wasn’t long enough. No one wanted to leave!



Pictured above left to right, Sandra Graffeo, Esq. NSLS Child Support, Miriam Pismeny, Esq. NSLS VLP, Barry Smolowicz, Esq. NSLS Board member, Douglas Good, Esq. Chairman, NSLS Board, Linda Good, Jeffrey Seigel, Executive Director.



Pictured left to right - Lisa Levy, Esq. NSLS Mental Health Law, Carole A. Burns, Esq. NSLS Advisory Council member, Miriam Pismeny, Esq. NSLS VLP, Jane LaCova, NSLS Advisory Council member, Mr. LaCova, Barbara Mehrman, NSLS Advisory Council Member, Barry Smolowitz, Esq. NSLS Board Member and Jane Reinhardt, Esq. NSLS Mental Health Law.

# Legislative Update

*By Sheila Johnson*

**Maria Dosso**, Director of Communications, **Sheila Johnson**, Government Affairs Coordinator, and **Scott Karson**, Board Member, spent an entire day at a public forum hosted by the New York State Senate. New York State Democrats were soliciting feedback regarding the current and future budget cuts and capital expenditures in the areas of Health, Education, Higher Education and Social Services. The forum was held at the Brookhaven Town Hall on December 11, 2008.

The public forum was chaired by Senator Craig Johnson and Senate-elect Brian Foley. In attendance was Senator Suzi Oppenheimer, *Ranking Member Senate Standing Committee on Education*, Senator Velmanette Montgomery, *Ranking Member Senate Committee on Social Services, Children and Families*. Senator John L. Sampson, *Ranking Member, Senate Standing Committee on Health*, was invited, but did not attend.

The public forum was held to give organizations, school districts and local government an opportunity to discuss proposed budget cuts and how they would affect their organizations and their clients. The Senators wanted to receive input directly from stakeholders throughout New York State. They also sought ideas about cost saving revenue proposals. The meeting was an overwhelming success, as over 30 groups registered to testify. Sheila Johnson and Scott Karson testified at the hearing. Sheila provided a brief introduction to the services Law Services provides, explained how cost effective Law Services is, and pointed out a funding mistake that was made in last year's civil legal funding budget that needed to be rectified. She also sought to poignantly explain the plight of Law Services' clients, by using personal vignettes describing the myriad of legal and personal issues that clients face, and the Law Services programs that assist them. Scott Karson discussed the fact that New Yorkers, and all Americans, do not have a legal right to representation in civil matters, and the grave consequences that individuals face as a result. He also discussed the current economic climate, and the dire need for civil legal representation. Sheila and Scott implored the legislature to appeal to the Governor to provide adequate funding for civil legal services, even in these calamitous economic times. The testimony presented will be used to document the impact of current and proposed budget cuts on Long Islanders, and will guide the New York State in their upcoming deliberations about the New York State budget.

## **Recent Developments: Civil Legal Services Funding**

On January 7, 2009 the Legal Services Funding Alliance, a coalition of the 20 legal service programs outside of New York City released a press release responding to Governor Paterson's State of the State Address. Advocates for civil legal services (CLS) reacted strongly to Gov. David Paterson's State of the State message and his earlier proposed budget that cuts civil legal services funding to zero, completely eliminating state funding for the legal services that low-income New Yorkers depend on, particularly in difficult economic times.

On January 15, 2009 Governor Paterson announced the addition of \$1 million to the state budget for civil legal services. As of this printing, funding proposals are changing daily. Please check our website for updates.



# Law Services Winter 2009 Training Schedule



We will be conducting trainings at our Suffolk site: 1757 Veterans Hwy, Suite 50, Islandia . To pre-register, please call the Training Line at 631 232-2400 Ext 3357 or you may e-mail Cathy Lucidi at [clucidi@wnylc.com](mailto:clucidi@wnylc.com). The fee is \$30 per person per training session and is payable to "Nassau Suffolk Law Services". To confirm your phone reservation or e-mail reservation please mail your payment in advance of the training date with the registration form below. Space is limited so register early.

**The Domestic Violence Victim and Family Court : Tuesday, March 10, 2009 Islandia office 9:30-11:30.** Our Domestic Violence Project attorneys will explain family court proceedings in matters involving orders of protection, child support, custody and visitation. They will also offer legal suggestions and tips for advocates working with victims of domestic violence. Presentation by Larry Tuthill, Esq. and Frank Gulas, Esq.

**Crisis Intervention: Thursday February 26, 2009 9:30-12:30, Islandia office.** Back by popular demand! A comprehensive training which will cover topics from public assistance emergency applications to utility shutoffs. Everything you needed to know about legal problem solving in a crisis! Led by Maria Dosso, Esq.

Training Registration Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Agency Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Training(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Date and site of Training(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ Will be sent at a later date or on the date of the Training

Please return with applicable fee to: Nassau/Suffolk Law Services, 1757 Veterans Highway, Suite 50, Islandia, N.Y. 11749 Attn: Cathy Lucidi. This form may also be faxed to Cathy at (631) 232-2489





## Volunteer Attorney Recognized for Her Work

*By Rhoda Selvin*



### Nassau Recipient

After having moved from a career in the law to one in finance many years ago, **David Samber** came back to the profession in September 2008 as a volunteer in the Landlord/Tenant Attorney of the Day Project. At first spending two days a week at court, and now three days, he had represented ninety-four clients by the end of December. For this stunning record he has been named Pro Bono Attorney of the Month for February 2009.

One of his Landlord/Tenant clients was a single mother who lived in a rented house with her daughter, a high school senior taking all advanced placement courses. The client, who always paid her rent on time, had no way of knowing that the owner was not paying the mortgage--until she came home one day to find a notice from the bank on the door. It said that they now owned the house and that she must vacate so the house could be sold. Although she was planning to move to Miami after graduation, where her daughter had been accepted at the University of Miami, she certainly did not want to disrupt the girl's senior year. She went to court, where she discovered the waiting volunteer lawyers and was assigned to Mr. Samber. Conferring with the bank's attorneys, he pointed out that if the bank had done due diligence at the time of foreclosure, they would have seen that his client occupied the house and should have named her in the foreclosure. Since the bank did not name her, they would have to respect her lease. The case was settled by the bank's allowing the client to stay in the house through the school year and she agreeing to move at the end of June.

It has been a rewarding experience. "Like any job some days are more gratifying than others; but the good days are really good, and the headaches dissipate much more rapidly than did the headaches in the hedge fund business," he declared. "I can remember many days in my career coming home saying, 'I made a good deal today' but not many where as I do now say, 'I helped someone today.' Both are rewarding feelings, but I appreciate the opportunity that this program has given me to have some balance in my life."

### Suffolk Recipient

Twenty-two years after retiring, **Susan E. O'Grady** returned to the legal profession, this time devoting herself to pro bono work. Specifically, she became an in-house volunteer in the Pro Bono Project office in July 2007, giving six to eight hours of valuable assistance every week. For the more than 485 hours she has served through last month, she is the Pro Bono Attorney of the Month for February 2009.

Like other in-house volunteers, Ms. O'Grady interviews potential clients, refers cases (which entails making many phone calls to attorneys), and occasionally handles a case herself. In addition she has taken on a special chore: Every two weeks she looks over files of cases for which a referral has not yet been found to see if any deadlines are coming up or if any other immediate action is necessary. She praises Inez Lopez, PBP's paralegal, with whom she works closely saying, "Inez knows everything, and she has a wonderful sense of perspective -- and sense of humor. It's a lot of fun!"

A member of the Suffolk County Bar Association, Ms. O'Grady attended Hofstra University School of Law, earning her J.D. with Distinction in 1974. In 1976 she opened her private practice, emphasizing family law. She also worked extensively in the area of education rights for handicapped children, especially learning-disabled children.

Far from being idle in those twenty-two years after closing her practice, she found a new career. When her daughter, an investment banker, decided on a career change herself, the two women opened a high-end decorating shop in Huntington, specializing in floral arrangements made of dried and silk flowers, which they ran for ten years. After spending a few years in total retirement, Ms. O'Grady decided she had had enough of that and put her legal experience to work at the Pro Bono Project. "To keep my hand in and help some people," she said.

The Pro Bono Project and the indigent of Suffolk County are fortunate to have Susan E. O'Grady working for them. For her invaluable help to the administration of PBP and her deep concern for its clients, PBP is delighted to name her Pro Bono Attorney of the Month.



## LAW SERVICES IN OUR COMMUNITY

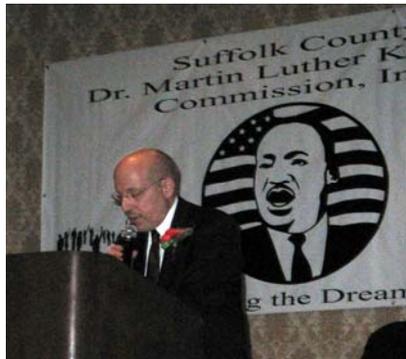


Law Services continues its strong ties within the community in an effort to collaborate with various agencies and insure that low income Long Islanders receive the services they so desperately need. If you happen to see any of our Law Services' staff at a community event, please stop by to introduce yourself and say hello. We'd love to meet you, and as always we thank you for your support!

**Jeffrey A. Seigel**, Executive Director of Nassau Suffolk Law Services was honored with the Suffolk County Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission Award on January 17, 2009. He received the award on behalf of Nassau Suffolk Law Services Committee, Inc.

The Suffolk County Martin Luther King Jr. Commission and Institute for Nonviolence is a unique organization dedicated to achieving social justice through education, advocacy, and training in Kingian Nonviolence to address the social ills of racism, poverty, and all forms of violence to achieve Dr. King's vision of the "Beloved Community".

Law Services was honored for representing the poor, the disabled, and disadvantaged in civil legal matters, and helping to build the "Beloved Community" on Long Island that Dr. King espoused in his writings and public speeches. This award recognizes the hard work of the staff and their undying commitment to basic principles of American justice. As Dr. King advocated, Law Services uses the law as a non violent tool to attain social justice. The event was held at the Hyatt Regency Wind Watch Hotel where Nassau Suffolk Law Services was proudly represented by staff, board members, and supporters. The luncheon was well attended by the Commission's other co-honorees and their guests who joined in the moving ceremony honoring the memory and vision of Martin Luther King, Jr.



**Dan Okrent**, Staff Attorney of our Senior Citizen Project spoke to a group of Nassau residents at the East Meadow Public Library on December 4, 2008 about the services offered through Nassau/Suffolk Law Services and The Senior Citizen Law Project.

Congratulations to **Denise Snow**, Staff Attorney of our PLAN Project who was recently honored with an award at the Suffolk County Minority Health Summit held on October 20, 2008 entitled "Developing Solutions for Today's Complex Problems." Denise was recognized for her dedication, commitment and support of community based initiatives and minority health improvement projects in Suffolk.



Denise Snow, Esq. far right with presenters from SCM HAC, far left Dr. Melody Goodman, Jewell Stafford. Photo courtesy of M.T.M Photography

Congratulations to **Angela Lampe**, Social Worker of our David Project for being honored at the 2008 Latino American Night held at Eisenhower Park with an award for her coordination of free legal services, support and advocacy.



**Sheila Johnson**, Government Affairs Coordinator and **Lynda Strecker**, Social Worker in the David Project attended the community forum, "We Work for You" hosted by Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy. The County Executive is hosting interactive town hall meetings that will focus on local community issues impacting area residents. The forums bring Suffolk County Government and residents and community leaders together to "engage in conversation about the issues that matter to them." The first forum was for Islip residents and over 200 Islip residents attended the event.

**Marcia Vogel**, paralegal in our PADD Unit, did a workshop on November 4, 2008 for Levittown's Superintendent's Day Conference entitled "Effective Communication With Parents", for approximately 30 special education teachers.

Marcia also represented Law Services at a Special Education Fair on November 9, 2008 at Vincent Smith School in Port Washington.



## Message from the Executive Director



(Excerpt from January 17, 2009 acceptance speech for Martin Luther King Jr. Commission Award)

Thank you for honoring me, on behalf of the Nassau Suffolk Law Services Committee, Inc. with the Suffolk County Martin Luther King Jr. Commission Award. Here, at Law Services, the lawyers, paralegals, social workers and support staff remember Dr. King as a great American, and respect and admire his civil rights legacy. On Long Island, we seek to build the “Beloved Community” Dr. King spoke about by representing the poor, the disabled, and disadvantaged in civil legal matters. The staff at Law Services witnesses on a daily basis the injustices that they endure. We provide quality legal services in a manner that respects the individual’s dignity and helps ensure that each person is afforded the full protection and benefits of the law. As Dr. King advocated, we use the law as a non violent tool to attain social justice. This award recognizes the hard work of the staff and their undying commitment to basic principles of American justice. Of course, none of them do it for the glory, but it means a lot to have tangible proof that their efforts are appreciated. With this award Law Services will rededicate ourselves to the principles that Dr. King espoused in his lifetime. We fully concur with Dr. King’s statement, so eloquently articulated in his famous *Letter From a Birmingham Jail*, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”.