

TOWER AND OISHEI FOUNDATIONS GRANT AWARD TO LEGAL AID BUREAU FOR MAJOR TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURAL OVERHAUL



The John R. Oishei Foundation has generously awarded a \$142,000 grant to Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo to enhance its enterprise technology environment. Part of the funds will match a \$86,950 grant awarded by the Peter and Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation to upgrade to a centralized, cloud-based Case Management System; to install a digital Document Management System; and to install WiFi. The award from Oishei Foundation will also allow us to acquire mobile tablets for use in the field and obtain additional Adobe Acrobat licenses for e-signatures and e-filing. The project began this summer and is expected to be completed within two years.

This funding will allow Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo to enhance service delivery in matters involving the essentials of life: housing, family justice, child protection from abuse and neglect, access to health care and education, financial independence, and access to due process and equal protection of the law.

“We are enormously grateful to the John R. Oishei Foundation for its extraordinarily generous award. Expanding access to legal assistance for low-income individuals in our community requires innovative use of technology. The overhaul of our enterprise technology is long overdue – it’s been over 15 years since Legal Aid Bureau

of Buffalo embarked on an infrastructural upgrade of this scale. Support from the Oishei Foundation and the Tower Foundation have provided us a remarkable opportunity to explore new ways to help build our programs’ capacities,” said David Schopp, Executive Director of Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo.

With the awards from both the Oishei and the Tower Foundations, the Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo is set to embark on a major infrastructural overhaul that will increase internal efficiency; increase holistic representation for clients with both criminal and civil matters; increase attorney collaboration and community impact; and better connect more individuals and children with essential legal and support services.

The John R. Oishei Foundation enhances the economic vitality and the quality of life for the Buffalo Niagara region through grantmaking, leadership and network building. The Foundation was established in 1940 by John R. Oishei, founder of Trico Products Corporation. For more information about the Oishei Foundation, visit www.oishei.org.

The Tower Foundation is a family foundation that supports and collaborates with nonprofit organizations and community partners in Western New York that share the mission of helping children, adolescents, and young people affected by intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, mental health issues, and substance use disorders. Peter and Elizabeth C. Tower formed the Foundation in 1990, helping realize their vision to better the lives of young people, after having successful careers and raising their family in Western New York. To learn more about the Tower Foundation, visit thetowerfoundation.org.



PAM NEUBECK RETIRES AFTER 18 YEARS OF SERVICE FROM CHILDREN’S UNIT

Congratulations to Pam Neubeck, Chief Attorney for our Attorneys for Children Unit, on her retirement from the Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo after 18 years of hard work, dedicated service and passionate advocacy on behalf of children in Erie County. Thank you, Pam, for making a difference in the lives of so many children when they needed someone to go to bat for them. Congratulations on a great and meaningful career! From the entire family at Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo, we will miss you and we wish you much joy and relaxation in your retirement! Judith Gerber will succeed Pam as new Chief Attorney of the Children’s Unit.

RAISE THE AGE LAW TAKES EFFECT



On October 1, 2018, New York State’s Family Courts implemented “Raise the Age” – whereby 16 year-olds will now be treated as juveniles in the Family Court rather than as adult defendants in the criminal justice system. The Bureau and other not-for-profit legal agencies have supported such a change for several years, realizing that New York was one of only two states that treated 16 year-olds as adults,

with all the attendant collateral consequences of a criminal conviction that can limit a youth’s future prospects.

The Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo has been the principal provider of legal representation to Erie County’s juveniles since the 1962 enactment of the Family Court Act. Our attorneys are experienced in all aspects of juvenile representation. To meet the needs of this new population of youth in Family Court under Raise the Age, the Bureau is hiring additional legal personnel to staff the Juvenile Part. In addition to providing each youth with a dedicated attorney, our clients will also benefit from an assigned educational specialist and child advocate. By providing a full range of advocacy services, we will work as a team to prevent our clients from further penetrating into the criminal justice system.

REMEMBERING FRANK MESIAH



It is with deep gratitude that we remember Frank Mesiah, former President of the NAACP Buffalo Branch and former member of the Board of Directors for Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo. Mr. Mesiah passed away earlier this year in April. He was a visionary leader in our community. We are grateful to Mr. Mesiah for furthering our mission of providing access to justice and due process to the most vulnerable individuals, children, and families. He will be greatly missed.

NEW YORK BAR FOUNDATION GRANT

The New York Bar Foundation awarded us a grant of \$10,000 to support our Coordinated Refugee/Asylee Legal Services Project to provide direct legal services and provide website accessibility to legal information in Burmese, Somali, Karen, French, Spanish, Nepali, and Arabic.

STAFF UPDATES

Paul Curtin, Deputy Executive Director

Seeta Persaud, Director of Development

Judith Gerber, Chief Attorney, Attorneys for Children Unit

Valerie Watson, Support Staff Supervisor, Criminal Defense Unit

Alisa Feller, Support Staff Supervisor, Criminal Defense Unit

LEGAL AID BUREAU MOBILE IMMIGRATION CLINIC



This summer, Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo, Inc. partnered with Burmese Community Services to hold our first Mobile Immigration Clinic at the Niagara Branch Library. The Mobile Clinic was intended to provide individuals with free and easily accessible legal services pertaining to immigration. Attendees had the option to reserve a spot to speak with an immigration attorney or provide intake information and schedule an appointment at a future date. Eleven people attended the event for legal consultation/intake.

[Pictured: Ye Myo Aung, Ashley Springsteen, Steven Sanyu, and Aung Moe]

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2019



Legal Aid's Criminal Defense Unit (CDU) will be expanding, thanks to recent legislative amendments intended to further constitutional access to counsel for indigent persons charged with a criminal offense. This year the NYS Office of Indigent Legal Services will be disbursing roughly \$925,000 to us, with similar amounts to follow in the next four years. The initial sum will allow us to hire five entry-level attorneys, a supervising attorney, an investigator, a social worker, and a paralegal. We will also be able to underwrite four summer internships. Ultimately, our CDU staff total will rise to 82, a significant increase from the present 36.

A Public Defense Career Fair held on October 19 at the UB School of Law facilitated on-site interviews of candidates for such employment and internships. Public-defense agencies from around the state met with a wide variety of law students as well as recent graduates. We are heartened by the enthusiasm for public-interest practice and anticipate making our first offers soon.

DONOR APPRECIATION PARTY



Our first donor appreciation reception was held on Thursday, September 20. Phillips Lytle graciously hosted in their beautiful space overlooking Canalside. We wish to thank everyone who attended! It was a great evening and opportunity for our community of supporters to connect with the leadership and staff of our organization. If by chance you missed this year's reception, we hope you will join us next year. The evening is open to all of our supporters who wish to attend. Thank you for your friendship and support and for all you continue to do to help us increase access to justice for all!



290 Main Street, Suite 400
Buffalo, NY 14202
716-853-9555
legalaidbuffalo.org

“A lot of people are waiting for Martin Luther King or Mahatma Gandhi to come back, but they are gone. We are it. It is up to us. It is up to you.”

- Marian Wright Edelman

YOUR GIFT TO
LEGAL AID CAN HELP:

Stop Child Abuse and
Family Violence

Prevent Homelessness

Secure Critical Life Saving
Benefits

Increase Access to Education

PLEASE GIVE TODAY

legalaidbuffalo.org/donate

MAKE A GIFT IN THANKSGIVING!

It's that time of year when we are thankful for the many blessings in our lives. Is there someone special you want to thank but you're not sure how? You can make a gift to Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo in their honor and we will notify them of your generosity. To donate, visit our website at legalaidbuffalo.org/donate or mail a check, payable to Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo, Inc., to 290 Main Street, Suite 400, Buffalo, NY 14202. For more info, contact Seeta Persaud at 716-853-9555 at ext. 677.

LOOKING FOR AN EASY WAY TO SUPPORT US?

When you shop at [Amazon Smile](https://www.amazon.com/smile), a portion of your purchases can go to support Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo. Sign up for Amazon Smile, select Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo, Inc. as your charity of choice and start shopping. A percentage of your eligible purchases will be donated to our organization at no extra cost to you!

Start with a Smile at
[smile.amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com) this Holiday Season

Support us and find all of your holiday essentials
including gifts, decorations, and more.

You shop. Amazon gives.

