

## David Schopp at the Helm of the Chief Defenders Association



*David is pictured here with the outgoing president of the Defenders Association, Tina Luongo, Chief Defender of the Legal Aid Society.*

We are honored that our Executive Director, David Schopp, has been elected to lead the Chief Defenders Association of New York alongside the many passionate public servants advocating to protect the due process rights of our communities. The Chief Defenders Association of New York is a recently created body uniting the leadership of New York State's providers of the right to counsel. The Chief Defenders Association was founded to advocate for people facing loss of liberty, family separation and related consequences in the legal system. We are excited and hopeful for the strategic direction of the Defenders Association and the year ahead!

## Sue Ministero Named New Chief Attorney of Appeals and Post-Conviction Unit

After serving as Investigative Counsel with the Offices of the New York State Inspector General for two years, Susan C. Ministero returned to the Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo in January to resume her former position as the Managing Attorney of our Appeals and Post-Conviction Unit. She previously served in that Unit for seven years as a Staff Attorney and was the Unit's first Managing Attorney when it expanded to represent indigent appellants in several counties throughout the Eighth Judicial District. **Susan has recently been appointed to serve as the Chief Attorney of the Unit. She looks forward to working with the talented and dedicated attorneys in our Appeals and Post-Conviction Unit.**



*Susan Ministero, Chief Attorney, Appeals and Post-Conviction Unit.*

# WHY DOES LEGAL AID MATTER?

**DEMOCRACY REQUIRES JUSTICE. JUSTICE COSTS MONEY.** You can have your home taken away, your children taken away, and can be a victim of abuse, but you have no constitutional right to a lawyer to protect you! Legal aid is necessary to help people enforce their rights or understand their responsibilities.

**FIGHT POVERTY AND ADVANCE RACIAL JUSTICE.** We focus on issues that deeply affect the lives and social mobility of people living in poverty by fighting to protect the essentials of life, such as **housing, the rights of workers, access to health care and education, protection from child abuse**, etc.

**CREATE MORE EQUITABLE SYSTEMS.** To advocate for reform, we focus on the intersections between poverty, the child welfare system, family preservation, the foster care-to-prison-pipeline, the criminal justice system, the re-entry of formerly incarcerated individuals into the community, and access to necessary services.

**REMOVING BARRIERS TO SUCCESS.** Many challenges faced by low-income Western NYers are actually legal in nature and can be fought with an attorney. Unaddressed, the challenges remain barriers to success, even when basic needs are met by other excellent service providers.

## WE IMPROVE LIVES



**\$3,745,601 in total quantifiable benefits to clients**



**Over 1,500 cases in housing, employment and consumer matters to stabilize housing and prevent homelessness**



**\$837,699 in savings to taxpayers; \$5 in savings to NYS for every \$1 spent**



**50,000 court appearances on behalf of children to escape abuse and avoid homelessness; over 200 cases in education matters to keep kids in school**



## Claudia Schultz and Rebecca Town Receive Awards in Recognition of Service

Claudia Schultz received the 2019 Wilfred R. O'Connor Award. This is an extremely prestigious recognition which is awarded annually by the NYS Defenders Association in recognition of a lawyer's career of service and lifetime achievement in the area of indigent defense. Claudia is currently one of the managing attorneys of the Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo and has been a criminal defense attorney for the past 39 years. From the beginning of her career, which began in Nassau County, Claudia has been the consummate client-centered defender. Claudia has served on the faculty for the NYS Defenders Association's well-known Basic Trials Skills Program. Claudia's longstanding commitment to the highest standards of legal advocacy for her clients exemplifies client-centered representation of the indigent.

Rebecca Town received the 2019 Kevin M. Andersen Award which is presented to a lawyer who has been in practice for less than 15 years. Rebecca is a staff attorney in the Criminal Defense Unit at the Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo, working at the intersection of indigent defense and criminal justice reform. Rebecca has nearly a decade of experience as a trial attorney litigating criminal cases from arraignment to disposition. Along with her work in the courtroom, Rebecca is very involved with the community. In 2019 she was elected to serve on the New York Civil Liberties Union Board of Directors.

The mission of the Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo is to provide access to justice and due process to the most vulnerable individuals, children and families in the Western New York community through quality legal representation and assistance.

[legalaidbuffalo.org](http://legalaidbuffalo.org)



*Rebecca Town (left) and Claudia Schultz (right).*

We are proud to have both of these committed advocates on our team!

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*“Equal justice under law is not merely a caption on the facade of the Supreme Court building, it is perhaps the most inspiring ideal of our society. It is one of the ends for which our entire legal system exists...it is fundamental that justice should be the same, in substance and availability, without regard to economic status.”*

- Lewis Powell, Jr.,  
former US Supreme Court Justice

**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](http://legalaidbuffalo.org/donate)

**WHAT WILL YOUR LEGACY BE?**

We need your help to continue the fight for justice for low-income people in our region. Please consider making a gift to Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo and leave your legacy of caring. You can make a bequest, a tax-free gift from your IRA or 401K or a cash gift. Legacy giving can provide you with income and/or tax savings. Call Executive Director David Schopp at 716-853-9555, ext. 450.

**HAVE ANY CHILDREN’S BOOKS TO DONATE?**

We are always looking for books that empower our young children and adolescent clients in our Attorneys for Children Unit. To make a donation, please contact Judith Gerber at 716-853-9555, ext. 532.