CRLS: NEW NATURALIZATION PROJECT

The Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo is proud to welcome Ashley Springsteen for the upcoming year as an Equal Justice Works Fellow providing legal services to immigrant and refugee communities in Western New York as part of the Legal Aid Bureau's Coordinated Refugee/Asylee Legal Services Project (CRLS).

Ashley was selected as one of twelve Equal Justice Works legal fellows to participate in the New York State Family Security Project (NYSFSP), which focuses on fostering family security and community education through the delivery of high-quality legal services to immigrant families across the state. NYSFSP is part of a broader state initiative known as Liberty Defense Project, a state-wide initiative announced by Governor Cuomo last year in response to the surge in demand for help that is overwhelming non-profit organizations serving immigrants.

This important work is also made possible by a generous $9,000 contribution to the Legal Aid Bureau from the Reverend A. Joseph Bissonette Memorial Fund. The Reverend A. Joseph Bissonette Memorial Fund’s generosity will help enhance the overall quality and reach of our services to immigrant and refugee communities in Western New York.

During her fellowship, Ashley will help immigrants obtain citizenship, conduct community outreach and education, provide holistic advocacy, and organize pro bono training. Helping immigrants, many of whom have Limited English Proficiency, navigate a complex maze of laws will improve their safety and security, improve their family stability, and enhance our communities as a whole. For more information about this project, contact Paul Curtin at pcurtin@legalaidbuffalo.org.
DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND EQUITY

On February 12, 2018, the Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee held an all-staff Diversity and Implicit Bias CLE training. The training addressed markers of difference, discrimination, implicit bias, and ethical matters. We are grateful to the Hon. Sharon LoVallo and Hon. Mary Carney for their invigorating participation and thought-provoking presentation on implicit bias in the court system.

Exclusion from opportunity is at the root of injustice. Structural barriers to enter and succeed in the legal profession still exist. The legal profession, where approximately 9 out of 10 attorneys are white, is still less diverse than, for example, the medical or engineering fields.

Additionally, a large amount of the need for legal services stems directly from a history of oppression and exclusion of people of color, women, differently-abled people, LGBTQ people, people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and many others. According to the National Legal Aid & Defender Association: “Most people don’t know that their problems are legal in nature, but they know when a system is meant to include them. Without deliberate outreach that is credible in a wide range of communities, the public will not be clear on its need for legal services nor feel confident in the ability of legal institutions to address those concerns.”

With these issues in mind, Staff Attorneys Jennifer Kimura and Seeta Persaud launched the Diversity and Inclusion Committee late last year. While Jennifer and Seeta Co-Vice Chair the Committee, Lisa Patterson, Executive Committee Board Member, serves as Chairperson to the Committee.

The Committee is comprised of members of management, staff attorneys, board members, and support staff. The Committee meets monthly to discuss recruitment, training, outreach, and other issues. The committee also works in collaboration with the New York State Legal Services Coalition which has its own standing diversity committee dedicated to diversifying the profession.

The legal profession provides a direct pipeline to many other prominent positions in our society, e.g.: heads of state, lawmakers, judges, prosecutors, heads of corporate and nonprofit and legal organizations. Membership in the profession needs to be as inclusive as the populations it serves. Thus, two of the overarching goals of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee are to develop best practices for diversifying the Legal Aid Bureau and to better cultivate relationships with the communities we serve.

For more information, please contact Jennifer or Seeta at jkimura@legalaidbuffalo.org or spersaud@legalaidbuffalo.org.
CELEBRATING OUR STAFF

Congratulations to the following staff members who were honored recently for their commitment to Western New Yorkers:

Congratulations to Staff Attorney Jennifer Metzger Kimura for receiving Buffalo Business First’s prestigious 40 Under 40 award! Jenna is a fierce advocate for the right to fair housing for Western New Yorkers!

Congratulations to Staff Attorney Jeff Priorre for receiving this year’s Robert M. Bennett Award for Service & Leadership from Every Person Influences Children! Jeff is a dedicated family law attorney in our Civil Unit.

Congratulations to Staff Attorney Lisa Strand for receiving the 2017 Humanitarian Award from WNYMuslims! This award recognizes Lisa’s commitment and work in the diverse Muslim community.

GIDEON V. WAINRIGHT AT 55

March 18th marked the 55th anniversary of Gideon v. Wainwright, the landmark SCOTUS decision in which the Court held that the accused have the right to counsel even if they cannot afford one. Indigent defense is a cornerstone of justice. Our dedicated staff at Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo, Inc. has fought for justice and the right to due process for Western New Yorkers for the last century. We remain firm in our commitment to fight for equal access to justice for everyone we serve regardless of socio-economic background.

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

The work we do would not be possible without the generous support of our donors. We would like to thank all of the individuals, organizations, and foundations that have supported us in the past and will continue to support us in the future. We would like to invite your business to become an annual sponsor. Your company name and logo will be included in all of Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo’s events, publications, website, social media and electronic marketing platforms. We are asking you to invest in us and in turn we will invest in you. To find out more information, please contact Seeta Persaud, our Development Director, at 716-853-9555 at ext. 677.
“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 Edelman Wright

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 Lana Mancuso at 716-853-9555, ext. 490.