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FROM THE SPECIAL EDITORS

A Commitment to Justice and Community

By Mary Frances Palisano and Lawrence Kravyn

For lawyers, service is a cornerstone of the legal profession, reflecting a duty to uphold justice and serve the public good. This principle goes beyond representing paying clients; it's about ensuring a fair and accessible legal system for everyone and serving the community in non-legal ways too. The most recognized form of this service is pro bono work, a term rooted in the Latin phrase pro bono publico, meaning "for the public good." Through pro bono efforts, attorneys provide free legal services to those who can't afford them from low-income individuals and families to public interest organizations. The American Bar Association encourages lawyers to contribute at least 50 hours of pro bono work annually. By doing so, New Jersey attorneys can help bridge the justice gap, representing individuals in matters ranging from family law and housing disputes to civil rights cases. This work is imperative and much needed as detailed by several authors in this edition.

Beyond direct legal representation through pro bono work or reducing rates to make legal representation more accessible, New Jersey lawyers serve in many other ways, as highlighted in this edition's articles. Our contributions often extend into non-legal community outreach, public service careers, military service, and active participation in bar associations. We promote civic engagement, take on leadership roles in our communities, and mentor young people, helping to shape the next generation of leaders. Many times lawyers also leverage their professional networks to fundraise for public interest projects and serve on the boards of nonprofit organizations, using their skills to connect people and resources to those in need. Our analytical and problem-solving abilities are valuable assets in any organization, allowing us to contribute meaningfully to a wide variety of causes and initiatives.

Ultimately, the act of service for lawyers is about more than just professional obligation; it's about upholding the integrity of the justice system and making a difference. By committing to service, we actively build trust in the legal profession and strengthen the bonds between the legal community and the public it serves.



MARY FRANCES PALISANO is a Director in Gibbons P.C.'s Business & Commercial Litigation Group, as well as the firm's Pro Bono Chair and Coordinator and Child Advocacy Team Leader. Ms. Palisano focuses her practice on representing children in school-law and special-education proceedings and handling criminal cases at the municipal, state, and federal levels. Under her leadership of the highly regarded Gibbons Cares Pro Bono Platform since 2013, firm lawyers have donated thousands of pro bono hours annually to those who cannot afford legal services or are underrepresented.



LAWRENCE KRAYN is a Deputy Attorney General with the Office of the Insurance Fraud Prosecutor. Prior to this, he served as an Assistant Prosecutor in Essex County from 2016-2021.

Whether through dedicated pro bono work, a career in public service, or active community leadership, lawyers have a unique and profound ability to make a significant and lasting impact on their communities and our state. The skills we develop in our profession are not only for the courtroom or negotiating deals; as we see in this edition, they are powerful tools for positive change. By embracing this commitment to justice and community, through service, New Jersey lawyers fulfill the highest ideals of our profession and contribute to a stronger, more just society for all.

In curating this issue, we sought to showcase a wide range of attorneys pursuing service in multiple practice areas. This edition provides both insight and guidance and can be read simply with an eye toward recognizing those committed to the public good or can act as a roadmap for those interested in getting involved. Akil Roper, Senior Vice President at Legal Services of NJ, kicks off the issue by challenging the antiquated ways in which we assess the need for pro bono attorneys. In pointing out better metrics for such assessments, he highlights why service and pro bono work is so integral to equitable outcomes. In “Rooted in Service: Fostering a Pro Bono Culture in New Jersey”, Emerald Sheay, a staff attorney at Volunteer Lawyers for Justice, discusses both the need for legal aid in New Jersey, and how integral and rewarding such service can be for the profession.

Mary Frances Palisano’s piece provides a detailed overview of what it takes for law firms to champion justice through pro bono and community outreach. As chair of Gibbons’ pro bono committee as well as their pro bono coordinator, her experience brings important insights to the issue from a private-sector perspective. Ralph Lamparello, managing partner of Chasan Lamparello Malton & Cappuzzo, PC, President of the New Jersey State Bar Foundation and a past President of the New Jersey State Bar Association explores how the Bar Foundation educates, empowers, and aspires through the work of volunteers.

From here, the issue takes a closer look at careers in the public service realm, community outreach and others ways lawyers in New Jersey are finding a way to make a difference, starting with Deputy Attorney General Lawrence Krayn’s look at the way New Jersey law and policy guide the public service mission of prosecutors. Robert Holup, an associate at Riker Danzig, discusses how volunteer activities, in the legal profession and outside of it, can help to hone professional development. Rebekah Conroy and Mary Toscano Carpenito discuss the New Jersey District Court’s programs that help participants with needs after incarceration, such as addiction solutions and legal resources. Col. Joseph H. Ruiz, Esq. focuses his article on the intentional balance required between military service and

being a practicing civilian attorney and the struggles and rewards of that career path. Andrew J. Provence, owner of Litwin & Provence, LLC, has been representing nonprofits since 1998 and shares his experience representing nonprofits outside of pro bono work. Scott Kobler, a partner at McCarter & English, LLP and Chair of the NJ PBS/NJ Spotlight, offers an interesting piece on how he has helped protect New Jersey’s news sources and several cultural institutions in need of a voice. And finally Erin Berman, a staff attorney with Northeast New Jersey Legal Services discusses how an attorney can grow their practice helping children with special education needs. So many thought-provoking articles that will hopefully encourage those to get involved.

We are grateful to each of the authors for sharing their experience, knowledge and time, which helped shine a light on the different types of service available. As evidenced in this edition, New Jersey lawyers possess a unique ability to effect positive change and make a difference in their communities through service. Beyond their traditional roles in courtrooms and corporate offices, these legal professionals can leverage their expertise in many different ways helping create a more just and equitable society for all. Kudos to all who engage in service and if you want to get involved there are plenty of resources in this edition for you to get started! ■

PRESIDENT’S PERSPECTIVE

Continued from page 5

on Oct. 22 to honor their commitment to justice. Information can be obtained on our website.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge a few extraordinary individuals who demonstrate how lawyers can blend their professional work with a deep commitment to service. They have been featured in the NJSBA’s Members Who Inspire series, which turns the spot-

light on members and highlights how they are making a difference in their career and outside of the law. The series allows members to share their unique stories, inspire future legal professionals and strengthen awareness of the profession and Association. Among the membership, we have Art Raynes, a Basking Ridge attorney who for 30 years has run a weekend program for children with autism. We also applaud Robert Holup, a rising star in the Association who helped spearhead much of the YLD’s charitable

work as Co-Chair of its Philanthropy Committee. Similarly, Lorraine Barnett, of South Orange, has worked for decades to keep the lights on at Haitian schools through tireless fundraising. They are remarkable volunteers and represent the best of the profession.

When lawyers use their skills to lift others up, they remind us why this work matters. The NJSBA proudly recognizes those who show that client service and community service are one and the same. Let’s continue to honor that duty. ■