Dear Friends of the City Bar Justice Center:

Over the past year, the City Bar Justice Center changed the lives of thousands of New Yorkers through innovative pro bono projects designed to match private volunteer attorneys with low income clients in need.

We are proud of the work that we did together with all of you to improve the lives of immigrants, veterans, families facing foreclosure, micro-entrepreneurs, trafficking and domestic violence victims, homeless families and those returning from prison. Our Legal Hotline expanded its hours and now assists over 1,000 callers a month on the busiest general civil legal hotline in New York City. With the support of the New York Community Trust we were able to hire another staff attorney for our Legal Clinic for the Homeless, while the new Fragomen, Del Rey, Bernsen and Loewy, LLP Fellow expanded our Immigrant Outreach Project into a full panel of community education and naturalization clinics in partnership with the Children's Aid Society and others.

Two of our greatest accomplishments this year were the creation of the Lawyers Foreclosure Intervention Network, in partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, and the start of the Veterans Assistance Project. The City Bar Justice Center has become a leader in these areas, developing creative solutions to the community’s most urgent problems. Our most expansive work continues to be our immigrant outreach projects. With funding through the New York City Council, we provided legal assistance to more than 900 immigrants on issues aimed at helping them legalize their status.

Our many successes are made possible through strong partnerships with other city organizations, community outreach, and the training and mentoring of dedicated pro bono attorneys. The active participation of over 1,000 attorneys in our programs, leveraging millions of dollars in donated time, has made the City Bar Justice Center a vibrant and effective model for pro bono services. We know that our profession's strong tradition of pro bono work and an ethic of compassion and care for the less fortunate will continue to provide a useful guide in the upcoming year.

Thank you for continuing to support the City Bar Justice Center’s work. As we complete this report, the financial services industry at the heart of New York City is in crisis and many New Yorkers will lose jobs and be at risk of losing their homes before the dust settles. We predict New Yorkers will need more in the way of pro bono legal assistance in the coming year; with your help the Justice Center will be ready to meet this challenge.

Sincerely,

Patricia M. Hynes     Barbara Berger Opotowsky     Samuel W. Seymour     Lynn M. Kelly
As the nonprofit 501(c)(3) affiliate of the New York City Bar Association, the City Bar Fund leverages the strengths of the City Bar through the Justice Center to provide pro bono legal services to low income clients.

Maximizing the City Bar’s relationship with law firms, corporations, academic institutions, legal services organizations and nonprofits, the Justice Center provides legal services through volunteer attorneys working under the guidance of experts in the fields of economic, family and immigrant justice.

Pro bono work at the City Bar spans over four decades, with successive presidents providing leadership in stressing the special obligation of the profession, as guardians of the legal system, to ensure access to justice for all. Indeed, the first organizations in New York City dedicated to advancing pro bono legal services came out of the City Bar.

Today the Justice Center offers tremendous opportunities for attorneys to give back to the community while broadening their own network and experiences. Whether it involves helping young entrepreneurs realize their dream of opening a restaurant, winning a hearing for a homeless mother to get a back allowance, negotiating to keep an elderly couple in their home, drafting a divorce for an abandoned spouse starting a new life or helping a veteran get the disability upgrade that will keep a roof over his head, pro bono work at the Justice Center transforms the lives of clients and, quite often, the attorneys who help them.

29% of all New York City children are living in poverty

For every $1 spent, the Justice Center is able to deliver up to $9 in free legal services

35,000 homeless people stay in New York City shelters every night
The City Bar Justice Center’s projects are focused in three areas: economic justice, immigrant justice and family justice. The projects, complemented by a high-volume legal hotline and a pro bono program development clearinghouse, address the unmet needs for civil legal services in New York City. The Justice Center continues to adapt dynamically to the city’s evolving legal landscape, evidenced by the recent creation of a Foreclosure Project in the face of the nationwide mortgage crisis. Our model is efficient and effective: each project is developed and overseen by an experienced legal expert, coordinated by a dedicated staff member and delivered through pro bono volunteer lawyers and community outreach.

**ECONOMIC JUSTICE**

The Neighborhood Entrepreneur Law Project provides legal assistance to low-income micro-entrepreneurs in the initial stages of structuring a company or strengthening an existing business.

The Consumer Bankruptcy Project is one of only two pro bono bankruptcy projects in New York City providing legal assistance to low-income consumers with outstanding debts—assisting debtors filing pro se bankruptcy petitions and providing pro bono representation to debtors in contested matters.

The Elderlaw Project maintains the dignity and independence of elderly people by training pro bono attorneys who counsel and represent seniors in a variety of legal areas.

The Lawyers Foreclosure Intervention Network, co-sponsored by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, provides legal assistance to low-income homeowners facing foreclosure with the goal of keeping people in their homes. The Justice Center has also mobilized the New York legal community by coordinating a bar association foreclosure network for New York City.

The Legal Clinic for the Homeless staff and volunteer attorneys provide advice, advocacy and representation to residents of homeless shelters on a variety of matters related to public benefits. The Project sponsors legal clinics at homeless shelters, with services provided by a partnering law firm or corporate legal department.

The Cancer Advocacy Project provides cancer patients, survivors and their families with legal information and pro bono legal assistance on issues relating to discrimination in the workplace, health law, insurance issues, access to public benefits, advance directives and wills.

The Reentry Law Project provides individuals with criminal histories the legal assistance they need to overcome barriers to obtaining employment and housing, both of which are necessary for successful reintegration into society.

**IMMIGRANT JUSTICE**

The Immigrant Women and Children Project assists survivors of violence, abuse and human trafficking in legalizing their immigration status. Project staff train law enforcement, community-based organizations and NGOs about the legal remedies available to these crime victims.
The Refugee Assistance Project represents individuals who have suffered torture and other forms of persecution in their home countries and who are seeking asylum in the U.S. The project also assists with filing relative petitions and obtaining asylum-related benefits such as employment authorization, refugee travel documents and green cards.

The Immigrant Outreach Project is a collaboration of the Justice Center and community-based organizations, including the South Queens Boys and Girls Club, Children’s Aid Society and Brooklyn Law School. The Project provides accurate information about immigrant rights and options, as well as assistance in the preparation of naturalization applications.

FAMILY JUSTICE

The Uncontested Divorce Project recruits, trains and supervises volunteer attorneys and paralegals to assist divorce litigants in New York City.

The Contested Divorce Project provides self-represented litigants in contested divorce cases free personal consultations with experienced matrimonial practitioners at bi-monthly clinics held at the Justice Center.

The Child Support Advocacy Project prepares Family Court child support and modification and enforcement petitions for pro se litigants.

LEGAL HOTLINE

The Legal Hotline, which operates Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., assists over 1,000 telephone callers a month on a range of civil legal issues, including matrimonial and family law, housing law, domestic violence, bankruptcy and debt collection, public benefits, immigration, unemployment, child support, wills/estates and consumer issues.

VETERANS ASSISTANCE PROJECT

The Veterans Assistance Project recruits, trains and mentors volunteer attorneys to provide pro bono assistance to veterans in connection with the filing of disability benefit claims before the New York City Regional Office of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

THE CITY BAR PUBLIC SERVICE NETWORK

The City Bar Public Service Network serves as a clearinghouse for pro bono opportunities throughout New York City and develops innovative legal and non-legal volunteer placements for attorneys seeking public interest volunteer work. The Network works with nonprofits to develop pro bono and non-legal volunteer projects.

Finding—and Keeping—a Home

Last year, Ms. F. was living in a family homeless shelter where she cared for her disabled son. After five months in the shelter, she secured an apartment and was about to sign the lease when her public assistance case was closed in error. The Department of Homeless Services requires clients to have active public assistance cases at the time of lease signing, and so Ms. F.’s landlord threatened to give the apartment to someone else if she did not sign immediately. When Ms. F. came to the City Bar Justice Center legal clinic at her shelter, she was devastated. She had advocated on her own behalf, but her requests were not answered. With one phone call, Ms. F.’s volunteer attorney was able to convince the State to direct the City to re-open her public assistance case pending the outcome of her fair hearing. The next week, Ms. F. and her son packed their belongings and moved out of the shelter and into their new apartment.

— City Bar Justice Center Legal Clinic for the Homeless Project Team
Escaping Oppression

Mr. S. was expelled from Mauritania after being persecuted, arrested, imprisoned and tortured by the government for his Fulani heritage, as well as attacked as a member of FLAM, a political organization with which he was not affiliated. He spent the next decade fighting to survive in a Senegalese refugee camp and eventually fled to the U.S. By the time he came to the Justice Center, his case had been in immigration adjudications for more than five years. Mr. S.’s volunteer attorneys put together a compelling asylum claim, writing a comprehensive affidavit and memorandum of law and obtaining numerous supporting affidavits, country reports and articles about the continued uncertain plight of black Mauritanians. With the help of the City Bar Justice Center and a stellar pro bono legal team, Mr. S. was finally granted asylum in immigration court.

Rescuing the Dream of Home Ownership

Mr. and Mrs. O. purchased their single-family home in Brooklyn in 1975 for $16,500. In 2002, when the house was paid in full, a contractor canvassing the neighborhood convinced them to take out a mortgage to do some remodeling and introduced them to a lender. Through an unfortunate series of refinancings and lost jobs, a foreclosure action was filed, at which point Mrs. O. came to the City Bar Justice Center for help. A pro bono attorney volunteered to handle her case, and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, as part of its sponsorship of the Foreclosure Project, performed an analysis of the loan documents. They discovered that the loan was not in compliance with the Federal Truth in Lending Act. As a result, the bank will lose the house as collateral for the loan and Mr. and Mrs. O. will have several options for taking care of their debt. With pro bono assistance, this elderly couple will be able to rescind the transaction and keep their home.

Supporting our Troops through the Law

Mr. I., a Vietnam veteran, had been seeking disability benefits since June of 2005 for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder caused by mortar and rocket attacks. His case worked its way through two VA administrative levels, and was denied both times for lack of corroborative evidence, which was due to his having been assigned to a special operations unit. Volunteer attorneys worked with Mr. I. to discover new military evidence and obtain an affidavit from a fellow serviceman in support of his claim, and his Motion for Reconsideration to the Board of Veterans Appeals was successful. Mr. I. should soon begin receiving disability benefits backdated to his claim’s filing date of June 2005.

“Every case permits me to flex my legal skills, find the best solution to a problem, and use my education to improve not just my life, but the lives of people of my parents’ generation who might otherwise not have the same access to legal help.”

— Pro bono volunteer

“In the long arc of life it is certain that we shall be touched as well by tragedy as by good fortune. We should help while we can before our own needs exceed our capacity to help others.”

— Conrad Harper, President, New York City Bar, 1990–92
In addition to the City Bar Justice Center, the City Bar Fund supports the research, educational and public service activities of the following New York City Bar programs:

**OFFICE FOR DIVERSITY**

The Office for Diversity was created to work with New York City legal employers to foster more diverse work environments. In 2003, the Association announced the adoption of the Statement of Diversity Principles, the most recent effort by the Association to voice the commitment of the New York legal community to enhance diversity in the legal profession. The Statement defines diversity as an inclusive concept, encompassing race, color, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion, nationality, age and marital or parental status. The Office for Diversity annually tracks the progress of its 131 signatories – 111 law firms and 20 law departments – on key diversity representation metrics.

**THE NEW YORK CITY LAWYERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

The New York City Lawyers Assistance Program recognizes that depression and stress can impair an attorney’s ability to perform, resulting in personal and professional devastation. Each year the program responds to over 2,000 members of the legal profession and their families who are experiencing problems with alcohol, drugs, depression and stress, as well as other addictions and mental health issues. Free confidential help is offered to attorneys, judges, law students and their families in order to address the problem, identify the appropriate resources and begin the recovery process.

**CYRUS R. VANCE CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE**

The Vance Center seeks to promote internationally an ethic of societal responsibility in the legal profession; access to justice; legal reforms to strengthen democratic institutions; access to opportunity in the legal profession through the use of the resources and expertise of the Association, its committees and membership; and the development of partnerships across borders to support social justice.

The Vance Center’s current initiatives include:

**South African Visiting Lawyer Program** — The Vance Center conducts an intensive one-year fellowship program in corporate law for South African lawyers from previously disadvantaged communities to assist in developing the next generation of black lawyers in South Africa.

**Latin American Pro Bono Initiative** — The Vance Center is collaborating with lawyers in Latin America to promote and institutionalize pro bono legal services in leading law firms and law societies.

**AWARDS**

- Bernard Botein Medal for employees of the courts of the First Judicial Department
- Legal Services Awards, honoring lawyers providing full time, pro bono legal services to the needy
- Municipal Affairs Awards for outstanding young lawyers in the New York City Law Department
- Henry L. Stimson Award for Assistant U.S. Attorneys in the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York
- Kathryn A. McDonald Award to recognize service to the New York City Family Court
- Thomas E. Dewey Award to recognize outstanding Assistant District Attorneys in each of the five boroughs and in the Special Narcotics Prosecutor’s Office

**LECTURES**

- Herman Goldman and Mortimer H. Hess Lectures on trust, estates and taxation
- Milton Handler antitrust review
- Leslie H. Arps, Benjamin Cardozo and Orison S. Marden Lectures
- Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg Distinguished Lecture on Women and the Law

“I am inspired by the work they do every day, and I have really enjoyed being a part of their team.”
The City Bar Justice Center’s mission is to increase access to justice by leveraging the resources of the New York City legal community. Drawing upon our relationship with the New York City Bar, the Justice Center provides legal assistance to those in need; mobilizes lawyers, law firms, corporate legal departments and other legal institutions to provide pro bono legal services; educates the public on legal issues; fosters strategic relationships; and impacts public policy.

www.citybarjusticecenter.org

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