

and Justice for All

Volunteer Lawyers
for Justice
Taking Cases. Changing Lives.

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION

From the Executive Director



Fall is already upon us in what I can only assume is both the longest and quickest year of our lives. 2020 has brought unimaginable challenges to our communities, and yet I am so inspired by our volunteers, partners, and staff risen to the need by providing top-of-the-line legal services for our most vulnerable neighbors.

[The tsunami](#) of legal problems is coming though, and we need your help now more than ever! We are so grateful for the grants we received this quarter from the NJ Pandemic Relief Fund (NJPRF), Merck, Jewish Women's Foundation, and BlackRock that will be used to fund existing programs and initiatives to

address the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. NJPRF provided VLJ with a transformative grant of \$465,000 that will dramatically expand our advocacy for tenants facing eviction. Through this grant VLJ will [hire](#) four new attorneys and recruit and train 200 pro bono volunteers to serve along with us in the fight to stave off mass homelessness across New Jersey. This is a real call to action for all attorneys—and as all proceedings are now virtual, you can serve tenants across the state! [Can you help us?](#)

I hope you're also able to join us on October 21st for our [Uniting for Justice gala](#). This year's virtual event will not only be the culmination of our fundraising campaign and will include appearances by Paralympian [Lex Gillette](#) and celebrated chef/restaurateur [Richard Gussoff](#), but it will also be a time for us to come together in solidarity to fight for justice at a time when justice seems all too fleeting.

Thank you for your continued support of VLJ and the clients we serve.

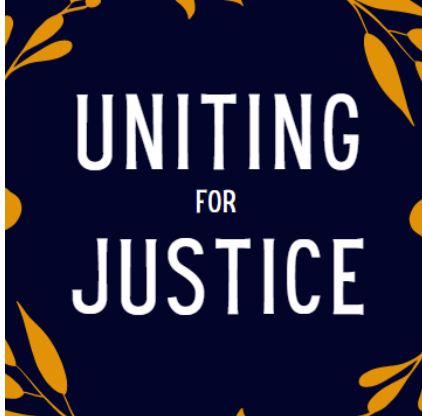
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cathy Keenan". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a light-colored background.

Uniting for Justice Campaign and Gala

Our **Uniting for Justice Campaign** kicked off earlier this week! Please [visit our page](#) to learn about the different needs and how you can support VLJ and our clients.

The Uniting for Justice Campaign will culminate in our virtual [Uniting for Justice gala](#). This year, we are honoring our staff and volunteers for continuing the hard work of supporting our clients during this very difficult 2020. Though many had to adjust to working from home, supporting their children's virtual schools,



navigating unexpected furloughs or job loss, and trying to stay safe and well during a global pandemic, our staff and volunteers knew that the people we serve were experiencing the same challenges, compounded with the existing challenges of racial injustice, poverty, and an unequal legal system. Our partners showed up and met our clients where they were, helping them navigate through their legal issues when even basic resources like toilet paper and WiFi were scarce. We're so proud of our staff and volunteers for committing to justice, and we're so grateful to our sponsors and donors who are supporting the Uniting for Justice virtual gala.

Our event is sure to be exciting! It's a celebration of all of us uniting for justice. Join us on October 21st from 7:30-8:30. Paralympian [Lex Gillette](#) will make a guest appearance and celebrated chef/restaurateur [Richard Gussoff](#) will share a recipe exclusively with our guests before joining us for a live Q&A.

Please [click here](#) to support the campaign. Learn more about the [gala event](#) and [purchase tickets here](#).

Good News



- VLJ congratulates **Michael Griffinger of Gibbons, P.C.**, who was selected by the New Jersey State Bar Association to receive the 2020 Pro Bono Lifetime Achievement Award. Currently a VLJ Emeritus Trustee, Michael's pro bono work has had a long-lasting impact, not just on individual cases, but by creating organizations (like VLJ) to address social justice issues and generational poverty in New Jersey. Michael's 55-year commitment to pro bono work is remarkable and we are thrilled that he will be honored with this award!
- Congratulations to VLJ Trustee, **Jessica Hodkinson of Panasonic Corporation of North America**, who was selected by NJBIZ as the General Counsel of the Year for a public company!
- Kudos to former VLJ Trustee and pro bono champion **Mary Frances Palisano of Gibbons, P.C.** received the Essex County Bar Associate Bernard Kuttner Pro Bono award!

Volunteer of the Month

VLJ is pleased to recognize Eric Weinstock from Lowenstein Sandler LLP as our September Volunteer of the Month. Eric is Senior Counsel whose practice focuses on counseling clients in the development and implementation of their estate plans, including tax and non-tax issues. Additionally, he counsels fiduciaries in the administration of estates and trusts, and

works with clients on the formation and management of charitable organizations.

Lowenstein has a long history of partnering with VLJ. A member of Lowenstein's pro bono committee for about 10 years, Eric was instrumental in the recent expansion of VLJ's estate planning services. He presented a CLE training to educate VLJ volunteers on the ins-and-outs of basic client estate planning such as wills, powers of attorney, and health care directives.



Eric also supervised one associate and four summer associates develop estate planning for five VLJ veteran clients, an initiative so successful that VLJ hopes to replicate it again in the fall with the firm's first year associates.

[Read more about Eric's pro bono service on our website!](#)

CELEBRATE
PRO BONO
www.celebrateprobono.org

National Pro Bono Celebration
October 25-31, 2020

VLJ welcomes two new staff members!



Paola, left, and Abigail, right

VLJ is pleased to welcome Paola Peralta and Abigail Oliver as our two new Legal Assistants.

Paola, a Paterson native, shared, "I am thrilled to join this team of dedicated professionals. Our goals and interests are so aligned and everyone was very welcoming." **Fun Fact:** Paola is a certified and registered yoga instructor!

Abigail, who lives in Hamilton, said, "It is an honor to work with VLJ's talented, experienced team of legal professionals. Joining this organization has already shown me how equal access to the law can change lives, and it is a privilege to work with VLJ to help provide that access to our clients."

Fun Fact: During quarantine, Abigail learned how to knit and just finished her first scarf! It is eight feet long and loosely based on Marta's scarf from *Knives Out*, her favorite movie.

GRANTS UPDATE

VLJ would like to recognize the support of these tremendous foundations that made grants to VLJ this quarter. Because of their efforts, VLJ will be able to amplify the voices of thousands of people in the legal system.



New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund
\$465,000 – Tenancy Program



Giving Together
Granting for Change

Jewish Women's Foundation
\$30,000 – Tenancy Program



PSEG
\$85,000 Veterans Legal Program

BlackRock®



Merck
\$50,000 Covid-19 Response

BlackRock
\$25,000 – Unrestricted

VLJ thanks summer interns & welcomes fall interns!

VLJ would like to thank our summer interns Fatima Abdelsalam (Rutgers Law School, 2L), Rachel Bauer (Rutgers Law School, 2L), and Sawyer Like (Rutgers Law School, 3L). It was a pleasure working with them this summer and we wish them continued success in law school and beyond.

VLJ is also pleased to welcome Hannah Eaves and Nadira Rahman as our fall semester interns. Hannah will be interning in partnership with the Newark Housing Rights Coalition and is a 2L law student at Seton Hall University School of Law. Nadira will join us thanks to generosity from AT&T and is a 2L law student at Rutgers School of Law. We are grateful to have their assistance this semester helping on critical programs like tenancy at a time when avoiding eviction is more important than ever.

UPCOMING TRAININGS

EVICTON DEFENSE DURING THE COVID-19
CRISIS

Thursday, October 29th - 12:00 - 1:30 PM
Wednesday, December 2nd - 12:00 - 1:30 PM

This free virtual CLE program will provide an overview of eviction defense for volunteer attorneys to assist tenants in New Jersey facing eviction in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis. Although lockouts are currently stayed by Executive Order, eviction complaints are still being filed against tenants, many of whom have suffered a hardship as a result of COVID-19. The court has announced plans to expand pre-trial settlement conferences where the parties may enter into agreements that could eventually lead to a judgment for the landlord and an eventual lockout. This program will provide a brief overview of New Jersey's anti-eviction law and what lawyers need to know to effectively assist tenants during settlement conferences. The presence of an attorney can be life changing for tenants, and this training will prepare you to be an effective advocate for your clients.

Speakers: Allison Nolan, Esq. | Volunteer Lawyers for Justice
Jessica Kitson, Esq. | Volunteer Lawyers for Justice
CLE Credit Hours: NJ 1.7

CLICK ON THIS IMAGE TO REGISTER!

