

# FALL *2023* UPDATE



## CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

With the fall season here, the team at VLPCNY is happy to share about program growth, community needs and volunteer highlights. It has been an incredible year for our organization. These past 12 months, we served **4,160 clients** in **53 counties** in New York. Our Immigration Program served its 2,000th client since inception, and among the many hard-fought victories were our first asylum and Special Immigrant Visa wins for Afghan Arrivals. Our LGBT Rights program completed its 800th name change for transgender and nonbinary individuals. All of our programs, including Eviction Defense, Family Court, Surrogate's Court, Small Business and Debt Defense, and our Veterans Program continued to see demand for services grow, and we have been expanding to meet that need as well. We launched a new Pro Bono Opportunities page on our website to make it easier for lawyers to get involved. It's bringing in new volunteers to help out clients who otherwise would have no legal assistance.

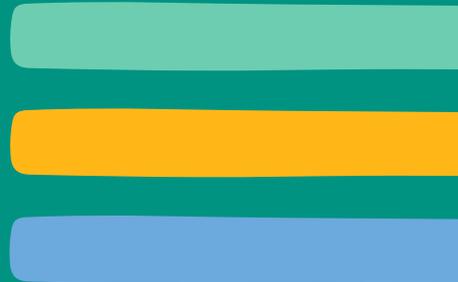
These outcomes do not happen in a silo. We are grateful for the amazing community of clients, partner agencies, volunteers, donors and friends who help bring attention to the services we provide, while wholeheartedly believing in the mission and promoting access to justice for all.



# FORT DRUM LEGAL SERVICES

In 2021, VLPCNY began a partnership with Fort Drum Soldier & Family Legal Services. Led by Naomi Godbey, Director of the North Country Immigration Program and New York State Office for New Americans Legal Counsel for the North Country, VLPCNY provides noncitizen members of our community with services to navigate complex immigration laws and policies, so that they may have stability and safety living in our community. She offers legal services to obtain citizenship, prevent deportation, assist in reuniting family members by obtaining legal status and/or immigrant visas. She also promotes awareness to the immigrant community regarding their rights through various community presentations. To date, Naomi has handled 411 cases at Fort Drum.

On October 5th, Naomi, VLPCNY and the New York State Office for New Americans were each presented a certificate of appreciation in recognition of the contributions made to the soldiers and families of the 10th Mountain Division. We celebrate Naomi Godbey's outstanding service to active duty military members.



***“Naomi is a critical member of our team and is passionate about providing legal services to community members in the North Country. She exemplifies the spirit of providing access to justice to those in need,”*** said Sal Curran, Executive Director of VLPCNY. ***“We are grateful to have a collaborative relationship with Fort Drum and are privileged to provide support to the brave individuals serving our country.”***



**Department of State  
Office for New Americans**

NEW AMERICANS HOTLINE: 1.800.566.7636

# UPCOMING FREE LEGAL CLINICS

## TENANTS' RIGHTS CLINIC

Are You A Renter Who Needs To Speak With A Lawyer?

**Free Legal Help Is Available!**



Drop in for a  
**FREE** Appointment!

**Wednesday, November 8**  
**Wednesday, November 29**  
**Wednesday, December 13**  
**Wednesday, December 20**  
**Wednesday, January 10**  
**Wednesday, January 31**

4:00 PM - 6:00 PM  
Salt City Market

484 South Salina St, Syracuse

**Questions about leases? Problems with a landlord?**  
**Concerns about maintenance?**

**WE ARE HERE TO HELP!**

*Please bring any documents related to the issue.*



## DO YOU HAVE DEBT?

*Free Legal Help Is Available!*

### White Branch Library

763 Butternut St, Syracuse

**November 8 & December 13**

5:00 - 7:00 PM

### Volunteer Lawyers Project Office

221 S. Warren St., Syracuse

**November 30**

1:00 - 3:00 PM

*Please bring any court documents  
or other documents you've received about  
the debt or lawsuit, in addition to a photo ID.*

We provide free legal advice and help with drafting court forms so you can fight debt. Program assists with **credit card debt**, **medical debt**, **student loans**, **car loans**, **lines of credit**, and **charge accounts**.

Email: [debt@vlpcny.org](mailto:debt@vlpcny.org)

Visit Our Site: [vlpcny.com](http://vlpcny.com)

**FREE CLINIC FOR  
LOW-INCOME CLIENTS**  
(THERE MAY BE FINANCIAL RESTRICTIONS)  
NO APPOINTMENT NECESSARY!

**Debt**

## WELCOME NEW STAFF

Expanded funding is allowing our team to grow. We are thrilled to welcome our new staff members:

### Shayla Kisacky

*Program Assistant*

*Eviction Defense Program*

### Jennifer Powell

*Immigration Staff Attorney*

*Afghan Legal Services*

### Anna Porter

*Pro Bono Coordinator*

*Immigration Program*

### Oneka Roach-Campbell

*CNY Immigration Program*

*Supervisor*

### Sara Rounds

*Immigration Data Special*

*Program Assistant*

### Tara Dion

*Program Assistant*

### Laura Cardoso

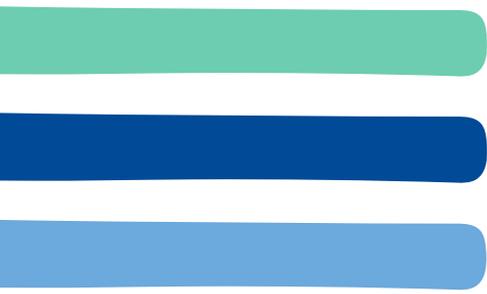
*Immigration Program Assistant*

### Grace Sullivan

*North Country Immigration Attorney*

# ADVOCATING FOR THE RIGHTS OF NEW AMERICANS

The immigration team recently hosted a Ukrainian TPS (Temporary Protected Status) Renewal Clinic. Staff and volunteers provided free application preparation for eligible community members. The team will also be hosting an Afghan TPS renewal clinic in early November, and other TPS application clinics throughout the fall. Interested in volunteering for a clinic or other pro bono opportunities with our Immigration Program? Contact Grace at [gzaiman@vlpcny.org](mailto:gzaiman@vlpcny.org).



We were thrilled to sponsor the Syracuse University College of Law Pro Bono Fair. Students were able to connect and learn more about how they can engage in pro bono efforts both during and after law school. Sara McDowell, Deputy Executive Director for Immigration Programs, introduced Rebecca Cohen, an attorney with Bousquet Holstein, PLLC, who worked with VLPCNY on a pro bono immigration matter. Rebecca spoke about her pro bono work in representing Naveed Saifi, an Afghan refugee, and his journey to seek asylum. Naveed spoke about the positive impact of VLPCNY and the successful resolution of his immigration matter. Paola Andrea Suarez Lujan (L'23), a law student who worked on Naveed's case, touched upon her own experience working on this case as a pro bono law student with VLPCNY. This is just one example of the positive impacts of community collaboration making a difference for those we serve.



# GETTING INVOLVED WITH VLPCNY

The launch of our Pro Bono Opportunities portal has been a great success. Thanks to generous funding from the New York Bar Foundation, we've created an easy online tool for volunteers interested in learning about cases in need of pro bono placement with our agency.

***"We've seen a dramatic uptick in volunteers getting engaged during the soft launch of this site and are hoping current and new supporters will find it easy to use and be excited about getting involved. There's an option for everyone - limited service, ongoing representation, remote volunteering, in-person clinics and a variety of program needs. Please help us spread the word!"*** - Pauline Smith, Pro Bono Coordinator

Ready to make a difference in our community? Click [\*\*HERE\*\*](#) to learn about pro bono opportunities with VLPCNY.



## EQUITY IN ACTION

This fall the VLPCNY Board of Directors enjoyed a retreat focusing on equity as a practice, aligning agency values and envisioning the future. The team has been working with a facilitator from Rebellious Root, a worker-owned cooperative dedicated to equity, social justice and collective liberation.

A revamped values and vision statement will be finalized and distributed to the community in the near future. Created as a community project with a collective mindset, this statement will encompass the culture and spirit of our work, guide our programming and communicate our priorities.



# RAISING FUNDS & CELEBRATING PRO BONO

Friends of the Volunteer Lawyers Project of CNY gathered this fall to celebrate the outstanding contributions of our pro bono panel while raising critical funds for the agency. Our **All In For Equity & Justice** event took place at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo and offered guests the fun opportunity to play casino games and win raffle prizes.

VLPCNY would like to extend a huge THANK YOU to the generous donors who helped bring the event to life. To view the list of supporters, check out our website [HERE](#).

The highlight of this exciting party was the time we took to acknowledge and give thanks to our annual Pro Bono Champions. These are the standout volunteers who bring their knowledge and passion to their tireless advocacy for their clients and community members, and in doing so promote access to justice.



***Congratulations, 2023 Pro Bono Champions!***

**Genevieve Halpenny**

**Andrew Greenberg**

**Rory Pelella**

**Joan Royle**

**Hancock Estabrook LLP**

