

2022 SPRING UPDATE



Providing access to justice through engaging the legal community in volunteer service to those in need.

Greetings from the Volunteer Lawyers Project of CNY, Inc!

As the warmer season approaches, we wanted to take a moment to connect with you about exciting program updates happening at our organization. VLPCNY is busier than ever this spring. With the Eviction Moratorium ending, Syracuse City Court has over 30 tenant households per day facing eviction. VLPCNY's amazing Eviction Defense pro bono attorneys are back in court every day fighting for stability for Syracuse families. Our team has prevented eviction for over 200 families in the past 3 months alone!

We are in need of your volunteer work.

Whether it's staffing our in-person Eviction Prevention, Talk-to-a-Lawyer, Surrogate's Court or Immigration Clinic, providing telephone- or video-based help with our Family Court or Debt Program, or taking on a full representation case with our Wills, LBGT+ Rights or Small Business Program, we need you now more than ever! Please [visit our website](#) to learn more about each program and connect with staff to get involved.



ACKNOWLEDGING GRANT SUPPORT

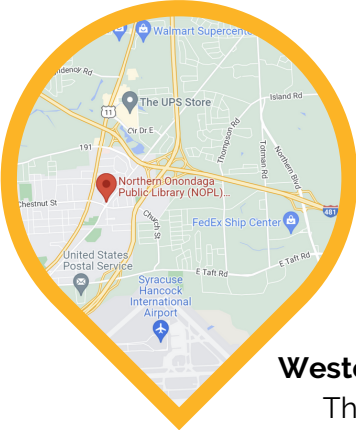
The New York Bar Foundation recently presented a grant to VLPCNY in support of our Economic Opportunity Programs. The Foundation assists non-profits with essentials-of-life issues and continues to highlight the need for access to civil legal services. VLPCNY is also grateful to have received funding from the Central New York Community Foundation for their support of our Immigration Program. This generous contribution allows us to continue supporting New Americans with legal services.

VOLUNTEERS, WE NEED YOU!

TALK-TO-A-LAWYER COMMUNITY CLINICS

Do you live or work nearby these locations? Can you spare some time to help out? Volunteer attorneys are needed to provide free legal advice, information and referrals regarding civil legal issues. Earn CLE credit! Contact Cheri at **(315) 949-2118** or **communityclinics@vlpcny.org** for more information.

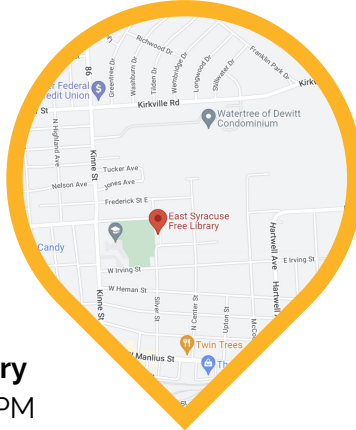
North Syracuse Library
Mondays | 6 - 7 PM



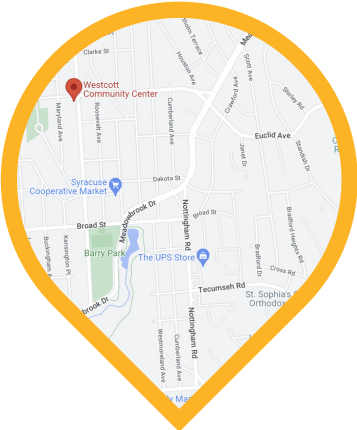
Central Library
Tuesdays | 12 - 1 PM



East Syracuse Library
Tuesdays | 5:30 - 7 PM



Westcott Community Center
Thursdays | 4:30 - 6 PM



White Branch Library
Thursdays | 4:30 - 6 PM



URGENT NEED FOR VOLUNTEERS TO FIGHT CONSUMER DEBT: JOIN US FOR A CLE

DEBT DEFENSE
THURSDAY, APRIL 28
NOON - 2:00 PM

This program provides an overview of complex debt defense issues related to credit cards, auto loans, education, and medical debt collection actions. Presented by Anna Anderson, Supervising Attorney at Legal Assistance of Western New York. This CLE is free to those who agree to volunteer with VLPCNY's Debt Clinic. [Learn more and register](#) with the Onondaga County Bar Association.



SUPPORTING OUR REFUGEE COMMUNITY

CNY has welcomed nearly 600 emergency arrivals from Afghanistan since July 2021. These community members were evacuated from Afghanistan as the Taliban took control of their homeland this past summer. Volunteer Lawyers Project of CNY and Hiscock Legal Aid Society (HLA), in partnership with Catholic Charities, InterFaith Works and Refugee and Immigrant Self-Empowerment are working to address the urgent immigrant needs of this community, whose asylum filing deadlines are approaching and many of whom have family at risk in Afghanistan.

VLPCNY and HLA are holding weekly immigration clinics to provide critical support to these Afghan evacuees. Local pro bono attorneys have generously volunteered their time to assist with the clinics and to provide direct legal representation. Syracuse University College of Law students are providing tremendous support with intake and client work. Paralegals, DOJ accredited representatives and other volunteers are also lending their support to address these urgent legal needs.

Our community is coming together in crucial ways to support these clients and ensure everyone is safe and welcome here. We will also be ready for Ukrainian refugees when they start to arrive in our region. For attorneys interested in volunteering, please contact Sara McDowell at smcdowell@vlpcny.org. No prior immigration law experience is required. We will train and support you!



ADVOCATING FOR FAMILIES

VLPCNY recently helped a client whose girlfriend sadly passed away from complications of diabetes, leaving a 6-month-old baby. While the client is not the biological father of the child, he has parented him since his birth. When the biological father was released from prison, he filed a custody petition. Maternal grandma also filed a custody petition. VLPCNY's client (the first to file) pursued guardianship, largely to be able to get the child his immunizations.

The Court's decision granted our client sole guardianship. The biological dad will receive supervised visits and grandma will spend one weekend a month with the child. Now, at 2-years-old, we are grateful this child's best interest has been addressed. The family can work together, ensuring he has a happy childhood, loved by many.

CELEBRATING & LEARNING TOGETHER

Our team is currently participating in a multi-part series of workshops on centering racial equity and justice in legal services, empathetic leadership and addressing systemic changes to promote equity in our work. Thank you to Professional Coach Michael Sgro, Professor Suzette Meléndez and Just Roots Consulting, for the engaging, informative sessions. VLPCNY is proud to prioritize ongoing trainings that broaden our understanding and help us better serve the community.

We are honored to be receiving two awards this spring. Our friends at RISE (Refugee & Immigrant Self-Empowerment) are celebrating us with the Collaborator Award at their annual Night of Nations event. We are also grateful to be receiving the Maye, McKinney & Melchor Freedom and Justice Award from the NAACP of Syracuse and Onondaga County. We are proud to be recognized by these tremendous partner organizations and look forward to continuing to work alongside them as we all ensure access to justice for our community, while disrupting inequality and dismantling racism.

Our agency also celebrates volunteer Erika Hooker for being awarded a New York State Bar Association President's Pro Bono Service Award for the 5th Judicial District. Erika, an associate attorney at Bousquet Holstein, volunteers regularly with our Eviction Defense program and serves as a pro bono coordinator and liaison with her firm. She also generously gives her time to our Elder Law Program, offering pro bono support to those seeking help with trust and estate matters. She is a compassionate, brilliant volunteer who exemplifies the spirit of our agency and what it means to work alongside our community in times of need.

Like Erika, all of our volunteers mean so much to VLPCNY. We simply can't do this work without you!



Want to support our work but can't volunteer at this time? [Make a charitable gift today!](#)
Together we are providing access to justice to those in need.