

PROVIDING ACCESS TO JUSTICE THROUGH
ENGAGING THE LEGAL COMMUNITY IN
VOLUNTEER SERVICE TO THOSE IN NEED.

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2021 YEAR-END REVIEW

GREETINGS FROM THE VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROJECT OF CNY!

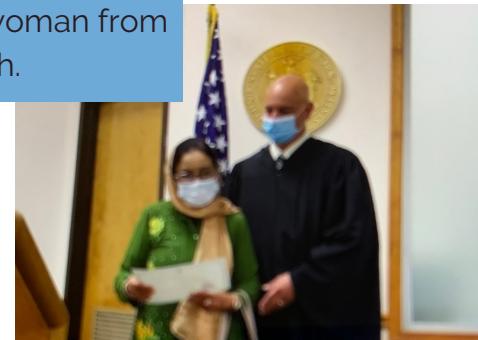
As you may have heard, we adopted a new organization name and logo this year to reflect the wider community of Central New Yorkers that our volunteers and staff serve. As our community recovers from the pandemic, access to free legal services for the most vulnerable is more important than ever – especially for those who have suffered direct losses due to Covid-19. We can't express enough gratitude to our volunteers and community partners for continuing to work tirelessly to ensure everyone in our community has access to the legal services they need.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE WORK BEING DONE

In November, VLP's **Veterans Program** was happy to partner with Syracuse University College of Law to provide legal services to veterans & their family members at the 2021 CNY Veterans Expo.



VLP's **Immigration Program** helped 250 clients, including two clients from Plattsburgh who obtained naturalization. One was a student from Peru, and one was a 70+ year old woman from Bangladesh.



Our **Housing and Eviction Defense Program** has been thankful for the support of volunteers during this difficult time. During this past year, our virtual Tenant Rights Clinic has helped hundreds of tenants better understand their rights and responsibilities. We have also continued to help tenants navigate Landlord Tenant court and avoid evictions despite the rapid changes in the law. We focused on community education and we are encouraged by cooperative efforts towards the goal of safe and stable housing for all.

VLP's Economic Opportunity Programs are working to create wealth, remove barriers to employment, and help small businesses succeed. 2021 saw the reinvigoration of our **Small Business Program** and **Reentry Program**, both in partnership with Centerstate CEO's Economic Inclusion Program. VLP's **Debt Program**, now in its second year, has saved Central New Yorkers from paying almost half a million dollars to predatory debt collectors so far. One client had been contacted by a collection agency demanding payment for a credit card that she never had. We drafted a "cease and desist" letter for her, demanding the agency provide proof of the debt. We also found reports of fraudulent activity involving the agency and advised the client to make a formal complaint to the Federal Trade Commission and to the Better Business Bureau. The company has ceased all collection activity against this client.

DEBT PROGRAM AMOUNT SAVED:

\$ 448,932

(MUCH OF THIS HAS BEEN IN INCREMENTS OF LESS THAN \$10,000)

CLIENTS HELPED:

112 & counting



One of our clients suffering with cancer was recently hospitalized. His wife who held his Power of Attorney and Health Care Proxy, was also suddenly hospitalized when she had a stroke. The client had an alternate POA, but that agent had passed away 14 months prior, and they had not had an opportunity to update the forms. A caseworker familiar with VLP's **Hospital Legal Clinic** reached out to us for assistance, and a volunteer attorney was able to consult with the family and draft a new POA on the day of the request.

TRANSGENDER NAME CHANGES COMPLETED IN 2021: 208

"When I opened that email I felt like I was in a dream. It took my breath away and my head was fuzzy. If that's what real happiness feels like, then sign me up. I can't thank you enough for everything you have done for me. You have literally changed my life."
- Name change client from the **LGBT Rights Program**



VLPs **Family Court Program** assisted a mother in regaining 50/50 custody after losing custody due to a substance use disorder. She did everything required of her before being able to petition the court for a modification. We worked with her to submit a petition, detailing all of her hard work with attached proof of her sobriety.

**... AND IT DOESN'T HAPPEN WITHOUT YOU.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**