

mba | Young Lawyers Section

What is the YLS?

An inclusive section of the bar, comprised of any MBA member in practice less than six years or under the age of 36. The YLS provides leadership, networking, professional development and service opportunities. And we have fun!

PCC CLEAR Clinic Pro Bono Spotlight

by Olivier Jamin,
Davis Wright Tremaine
YLS Pro Bono Committee

The Portland Community College (PCC) Community Legal & Educational Access & Referral (CLEAR) Clinic is a legal clinic operating remotely from the PCC Cascade campus in North Portland, providing a range of free legal services to people in the Portland metro area. These services include but are not limited to criminal record and eviction expungements, DACA renewals, housing and immigration court navigation, and legal name and gender-marker changes.

The CLEAR Clinic was launched less than a year ago by Rakeem Washington and Leni Tupper, both born and raised in Northeast Portland, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and protests against police violence, at a time where disparities in access to legal services were more pronounced than ever. “One important thing for us is to highlight the lack of access to legal services for folks across the community,” Rakeem said. “With our referral programs, four out of five people tell us that they have looked everywhere and no one has been willing to help. There is this big glaring hole in the legal system and its willingness to create avenues for folks to get help, and this is why we created CLEAR.”

In less than a year, Rakeem and Leni have provided legal services to more than 600 people, including over 400 criminal records expungements and about 100 DACA renewals. They have been helped by students at Lewis & Clark Law School, volunteer attorneys, and paralegals. “Volunteers are critical for us and can make a meaningful difference for the individuals we assist, and generally increase access to justice,” Leni said. “Only about 20 percent of folks who qualify for legal aid actually get it, so we are trying to make a tiny dent in the huge ocean of people not getting any kind of access to legal services.”

This lack of access also disproportionately affects marginalized populations. About 35 percent of clinic participants identify as Black, while approximately 20 percent identify as Latinx. For comparison, only

about six percent of Portland’s population identify as Black, while about 10 percent identify as Hispanic or Latino. “The overwhelming majority of participants have experienced or are experiencing some sort of marginalization,” Rakeem said, “and we see a lot of people in physical or mental pain looking for help in ways that the legal community may not be accustomed to. Another thing we are trying to focus on is to provide that space for people to come and speak freely when looking for help, knowing that they will find someone to listen.”

The CLEAR Clinic is hoping to spark a conversation in the legal community about who gets help and who does not, and hopes to continue building partnerships and finding more committed volunteers to help at the clinic. One criminal expungement may take less than an hour for an attorney to work on, but the impact for an individual is tremendous, creating a clearer pathway to housing, education, and employment. The CLEAR Clinic also recognizes that access to justice is not always synonymous with access to the courts or to a specific legal remedy, and works with social workers whenever possible to tailor services they provide to participants.

The CLEAR Clinic is making it easy for attorneys to volunteer by offering a variety of training materials on the legal services they provide, including manuals, videos, one-on-one sessions and a process to take on cases. With the help of additional volunteers, CLEAR hopes to continue reducing barriers to employment, housing and education in our communities.

If you are interested in supporting PCC CLEAR or learning more about volunteer opportunities with the clinic, please contact Rakeem Washington (rakeem.washington@pcc.edu) or Leni Tupper (alena.tupper@pcc.edu). Visit www.mbabar.org/probono for additional pro bono service opportunities.

YLS Award of Merit Recipients

by Annyika Corbett,
Schwabe Williamson Wyatt PC
YLS Board

2020-21... what a year. Despite all of the challenges our members faced this year, the four recipients of the YLS Award of Merit rose to the occasion. They revamped existing programs, identified needs within our community and came up with creative ways to meet those needs, all while ensuring compliance with COVID-19 precautions.

The Award of Merit recipients were selected based on:

- their demonstrated leadership within their committee or in the production/execution of a YLS event(s);
- exemplary contribution(s) to the quality of YLS programs and/or services for its members or the wider community;
- exceeding the standards defined in the MBA Professionalism Statement: “Professionalism goes beyond observance of the legal profession’s ethical rules and serves the best interests of clients and the public in general; it fosters respect and trust among lawyers and between lawyers and the public, promotes the efficient resolution of disputes, and makes the practice of law more enjoyable and satisfying;”
- and an enduring commitment to the YLS and its programs.

Our first two recipients, Hansary Laforest and Margaret Davis, the co-chairs of the YLS Service to the Public (STP) Committee, led the STP Committee as it navigated the shift from predominately in-person events to events conducted remotely or in compliance with social-distancing guidelines. A few of the successful events the STP Committee championed this year include a donation drive to collect used instruments for students in the David Douglas School District music program, a book drive to support the



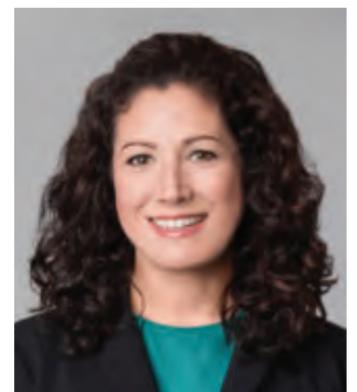
Hansary Laforest



Margaret Davis

Children’s Book Bank, and a donation drive in support of the Gateway Center for Domestic Violence Services. Laforest is a civil and commercial litigator with Sussman Shank. Davis is a staff attorney at Northwest Immigrant Rights Project.

Veronica Rodriguez, a member of the STP Committee and our third recipient of the Award of Merit, spearheaded a donation drive for essential household items in support of Impact NW. Impact NW works to prevent homelessness by partnering with people as they navigate their journey to stability and opportunity. Prior to October, when Rodriguez organized this event, need for these items was already acute due to the ongoing pandemic. Due to wildfires displacing and



Veronica Rodriguez

putting many families at risk in Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington counties, there was more need than ever for Impact NW services. Rodriguez is an assistant counsel in the OSB Disciplinary Counsel’s Office.



Meredith McMurray

Our final recipient, Meredith McMurray, is a member of the YLS Pro Bono Committee. McMurray has been a driving force behind the committee’s Wills for Heroes program, which provides basic wills and estate planning for first responders, including medical and hospital workers. Due to notary and execution requirements, holding a clinic during the pandemic was a massive undertaking; one that McMurray pulled off with the grace of a world-class orchestra conductor. McMurray is an estate planning attorney with Gevurtz Menashe.

Please join us in extending a heartfelt thank you to these four outstanding members of our community.

February Event Recap

by Cassandra Snelling,
Zimmer Bond Fay LLC
YLS Service to the Public Committee

Thank you to everyone who participated in the YLS Service to the Public’s February donation drive to benefit the Gateway Center for Domestic Violence Services. We were able to donate the following to the Gateway Center, 876 diapers, 13 boxes of tampons, eight packs of pads, 13 toothpaste tubes, 31 toothbrushes, 27 shampoo/conditioner bottles, 25 containers of deodorant, 18 bottles of lotion, 46 bars of soap, 13 packs of baby wipes, eight baby powder bottles, five packs of hair-ties, 10 combs, nine hair brushes, 10 bottles of body wash, 30 packs of Kleenex, 12 rolls of toilet paper, 15 loofahs, 10 packs of anti-bacterial wipes, baby bottles, baby binkies, and rattles.

Lastly, in total, \$750 worth of gift cards were donated!

The Gateway Center partners with various nonprofit organizations to provide a multitude of services to domestic violence victims ranging from safety planning, housing services, assistance obtaining restraining orders, crisis intervention services, civil legal assistance, public benefits assistance, and much more. Learn more about the organization at www.bit.ly/GatewayCtr.



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