

*This edition of Voices of Excellence examines homelessness, looking at how it affects people of all ages and backgrounds across New York State and the nation as well as discussing the struggles people without a safe place to call home face, the organizations making a difference in the lives of homeless individuals, and the efforts we can all make to better the lives of those less fortunate.*

## 2019 DIVERSITY PARTNER COMMITTEE MEMBERS



**Sheila Gaddis, Committee Chair**  
Rochester



**Jerry Mackey, At Large**  
Rochester



**Bob Heary, At Large**  
Buffalo



**David Cost**  
Albany



**Jennifer Leonardi**  
Buffalo



**Courtney Merriman**  
Syracuse



**Mark Whitford**  
Rochester

## QUOTE OF THE QUARTER

*“There is a lot that happens around the world that we cannot control. We cannot stop earthquakes, we cannot prevent droughts, and we cannot prevent all conflict, but when we know where the hungry, the homeless, and the sick exist, then we can help.”*

- US Congresswoman  
Jan Schakowsky

## Youth Homelessness

A teenage girl is being raised by her grandmother, but her grandmother becomes ill and requires long-term care.

A teenage boy is kicked out of his home because his mother and brother sell narcotics and are afraid he'll snitch.

A teenage boy runs away from home because he is being physically abused.

A teenage girl is kicked out of her home because her parents learn she is a lesbian.



Gregory Zini

Youth homelessness (defined for our purposes as individuals between approximately 12 and 21 years old) can result from any of these scenarios and countless others. The situations described above are all real experiences that I learned of during my time as a board member of Plymouth Crossroads, an organization dedicated to providing shelter to and assisting homeless young men between 16 and 20 years old.

According to the US Interagency Council on Homelessness, “Every night, thousands of unaccompanied young people go to sleep without the safety, stability, and support of a family or a home. In contrast to common perceptions, homelessness is not just an adult phenomenon; youth are resorting to abandoned buildings, park benches, makeshift shelters, and staying with friends and sometimes strangers. Many of these youth have experienced significant trauma before and after becoming homeless ... all youth have strengths, but youth experiencing homelessness often lack positive opportunities and supports to apply them.”

Homelessness affects youth across all economic statuses, races, genders, sexual orientations, geographic locations, religions—you name it. The image of a “street kid” is often associated with misbehavior, but that is so often not the case. The vast majority of homeless youth are innocent kids who simply find themselves in nearly impossible circumstances. Our local Buffalo shelters have provided homes for youth from the wealthiest suburbs in the area, the city, the country, and even the most indigent parts of the Deep South.

Successful programs addressing youth homelessness have a family atmosphere where participants bond over meals and through group counseling. Good programs also have one-on-one counseling. And the very best programs require accountability from the youth themselves, where they are responsible for cooking for one another; they work (and money is invested in a savings account so they have a nest egg when they transition out) and go to school; they refrain from substance use; and they develop their own surrogate family away from their home. In fact, the shelter becomes their home, with many participants often returning to visit the next generation. In addition to Plymouth Crossroads, Buffalo has successful organizations such as Compass House for individuals ages 12 to 17 and the TRY Program for homeless young women ages 16 to 20. I'm sure there are successful programs in other cities across the state as well.

A successful program turns a scared kid into a self-sustaining young adult. Indeed, these programs have nurtured future attorneys and many other successful professionals, some of whom you may even know. Consider what their lives would have come to without the support provided by a strong program for homeless youth.

## Friends of Night People: So Much More Than Just a Soup Kitchen



Located on a quiet corner in the artsy downtown Buffalo neighborhood of Allentown is an organization called Friends of Night People (FoNP), a 50-year-old charitable group dedicated to helping the poor, homeless, and destitute by providing free clothing, personal care packs, food, medical care, and counseling. On January 16, 20 Buffalo-office attorney and staff volunteers and I had the privilege to not only lend a helping hand for an evening but to witness the compassion and service shared by FoNP in addressing a huge need in our community and across the country.

After being given a tour of the facility by FoNP relationship manager Patricia Krehbiel, who joined the organization in 2018 after a private-sector career in marketing and public relations, some of our team members assisted FoNP's Chef Chris with plating hot meals and serving them along with drinks and snacks to 198 clients. In 2018 alone, FoNP served over 141,000 meals prepared by their full-time professional chefs. Other Barclay Damon volunteers handled kitchen prep work, washed dishes, cleared tables, took out trash, and sorted and distributed donated clothing.

Krehbiel described the organization as "so much more than just a soup kitchen ... it creates a safety net for individuals and families in need." Thanks to partnerships with the UB School of Medicine and Erie Community College, the facility has a medical clinic, a podiatry clinic, and an optical clinic. It also provides a laundry service,

mail service, and access to showers and lockers. Additionally, clients have the opportunity to be paired with a social worker for individualized counseling, and staff help clients connect to services that can provide housing, shelter, jobs, and employment training. All of these services are provided at no cost to clients.



Karim Abdulla

Whether rebuilding their lives after a natural disaster, dealing with family issues, struggling with addiction, or being impacted by the 2019 government shutdown, each of the FoNP clients has their own story, and the organization welcomes each person and family with empathy, compassion, and a desire to help.

"Our goal is much more than making sure that no one has to go to bed hungry," Krehbiel said. "It's about providing our clients with dignity and respect, treating them like family, and showing them that someone gives a damn."

During our time at the facility, we noticed that clients were grateful not only for the food but also for the camaraderie and our time. Our brief time at FoNP, however, paled in comparison to what we received in return and the amazing work the organization does on a daily basis.

The experience was gratifying and, for many, humbling and eye opening. It served as a reminder that while many of us face personal challenges, we are nonetheless fortunate to have a roof over our heads, warm clothes on our bodies, and food in our bellies. For many of the FoNP clients, that is not their reality. Spending a few hours with the FoNP clients also served to remind us that those less fortunate should not be ignored or looked down upon as "those people" because, as humans, we are all in this together.

To learn more about FoNP and volunteer opportunities, visit [friendsofnightpeople.com](http://friendsofnightpeople.com).

## FoNP Volunteer Attorney and Staff Reflections

### Randy Oppenheimer

"I was born into a life of opportunity and was never worried about missing a meal or concerned that my clothes would be inadequate for the weather. Appreciative of my advantages, I have donated clothes and money every year to help the less fortunate. But until my evening at the FoNP, I had not been of service to the poor—I had always been on the anonymous side of the bag at the drop off. This night, I emptied bags of donated clothes and sorted them for distribution from the 'store' where clients 'shop' for everything from socks to warm hats. I don't claim to understand the lives of the impoverished or feel their frustration and discomfort, but I got a small dose of the appreciation they feel for the help they're given on a daily basis. And I know the scene is nearly the same every day—the need is quite apparent."

### Patti Deeb Zipp

"I volunteered for the first time ever at FoNP with the Buffalo office group. My duty was to hand out new socks and underwear that were donated by individuals as well as cereal bars donated by Target. I shared my duties with Margaret Lamonds-Moss and Kim LaRocque. We had a fun time socializing with everyone. We laid out all the items on a table, and the men and women were so appreciative that they were receiving new items and were truly thrilled that they could pick out their own! I am so happy that I volunteered my services—such a good feeling to give back. Sign me up again!"

## Homelessness Statistics in Upstate New York

### Point-in-Time Count

- According to 2015 NYS Point-in-Time (PIT) count data, 9,066 people were identified as homeless in Upstate New York on a given night.
- According to 2015 PIT data, 734 homeless individuals (8 percent of the total homeless population) are unsheltered on any given night in Upstate New York.

### Substance Abuse and Mental Illness

- Of those counted in Upstate New York during the 2015 count, 1,733 homeless individuals (19 percent of the local homeless population) had chronic substance abuse.
- 1,963 homeless individuals (21.6 percent of the local homeless population) were reported as having severe mental illness.

### Veteran Homelessness

- 649 homeless veterans were counted in Upstate New York during the 2015 PIT count, 65 of whom were unsheltered.
- As a whole, veterans made up approximately 7 percent of the homeless population in Upstate New York in 2015.

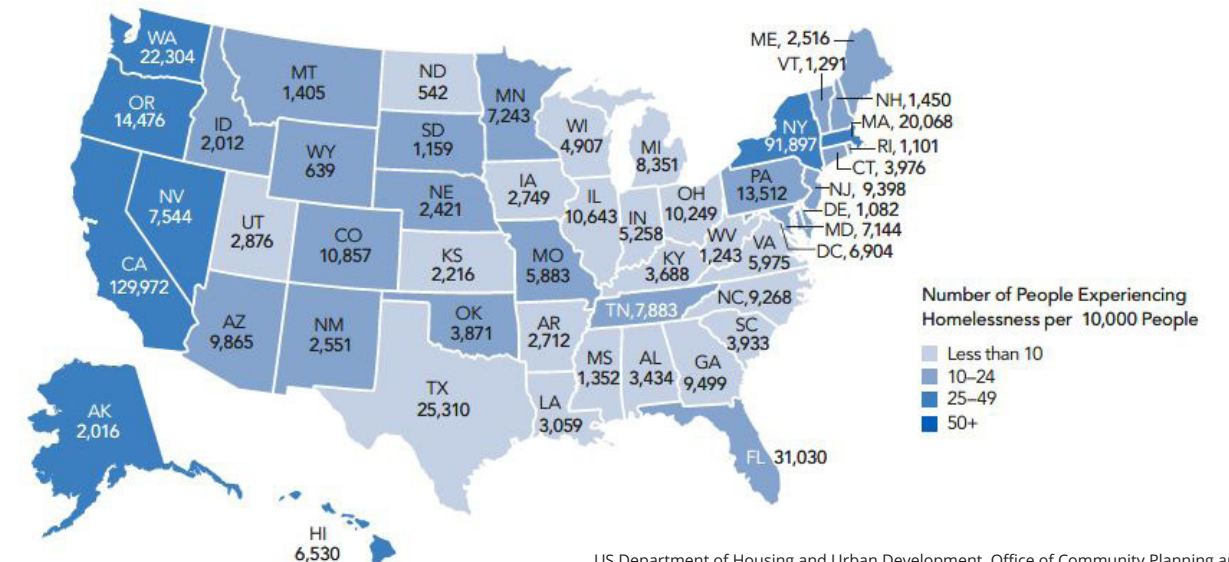
### Chronic Homelessness

- 1,086 chronically homeless persons were counted in Upstate New York during the 2015 PIT count.
- Chronically homeless persons made up nearly 12 percent of the homeless population in Upstate New York, lower than the 2015 national average of 15.8 percent.

Healthcare and Housing (H2) Systems Integration Initiative New York, Data Snapshots: Populations in Need. Accessed May 14, 2019. <https://www.hudexchange.info/onecpd/assets/File/NY-H2-Website-Data-Snapshot-Populations-in-Need.pdf>.

## Homelessness Statistics in the United States

### EXHIBIT 1.6: Estimates of Homeless People By State, 2018



US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development. "The 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress: Part 1: Point-in-Time Estimates of Homelessness, December 2018." Page 14. Accessed May 14, 2019. <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2018-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.

## New Faces Around the Firm

(Through April 30, 2019)

### ALBANY

Jennifer Cruz, *Law Clerk*  
Amanda Miller, *Associate*

### BUFFALO

Ryan Altieri, *Law Clerk*  
Kasey Barrett, *Associate*  
Shannon Howley, *Associate*

### ROCHESTER

Shawnike Harden, *Receptionist*  
Susie Thornton, *Legal Office Assistant*  
Christine Zirbel, *Paralegal*

### SYRACUSE

Emily Arthur, *Disbursements Coordinator*  
Kevin Boutelle, *Applications Administrator*  
Brandon Ellis, *Receptionist*  
Danielle Felber, *Administrative Assistant*  
Brianna Ferguson, *Human Resources Assistant*  
David Fulvio, *Associate*  
Brandon Hamm, *Technical Support Specialist*  
Katrina Heitzman, *Data and Reporting Analyst*  
Tracie Pellman, *Billing Coordinator*  
Mary Volcko, *Project Specialist*

### NEW YORK

Scott Fleischer, *Counsel*



## Office Updates

### ALBANY OFFICE

#### *Albany Law School Career Center Workshop*

As part of Albany Law School's career advice program, attorney Bella Satra held an interview workshop for students through the university's Career Center.

#### *Diversity Calendar*

The Albany Diversity Leadership Team has begun issuing its new diversity calendar of holidays and celebrations—look for it in your inbox at the beginning of each month!

### BUFFALO OFFICE

#### *Hospice Spring Bouquet Sale*

The Buffalo office participated in the 33rd annual Hospice Spring Bouquet Sale. Over the past 32 years, the Buffalo community has raised over \$5.8 million for Hospice Buffalo through this initiative that we are very proud to support each year. A special thank you to legal secretary Lynne Gilligan and paralegal Linda Gromek for coordinating the sale!

#### *11th Annual Monique Emdin Award*

In memory of Monique Emdin, a former Barclay Damon associate who tragically passed away from a rare form of stomach cancer in March 2008, the firm established the Annual Monique E. Emdin Memorial Award at the University at Buffalo School of Law in conjunction with Monique's church, Bethesda World Harvest International. The award is presented annually at the university's Students of Color Dinner to one or more graduating seniors who are members of groups traditionally underrepresented in the legal profession and who demonstrate a commitment to community service, including significant service in faith-based communities, and who have made a significant impact at the School of Law. On April 11, a group of firm attorneys attended the event, and Bob Heary presented the award to this year's winner, James Harrington.



### ROCHESTER OFFICE

#### *WOIS Senior Capstone Project*

In February, attorneys Stacy Marris and Mark Whitford and office manager Patrick Burke volunteered to sit on the morning panel for the World of Inquiry School's Senior Capstone Project, providing feedback on the students' proposals for their own community projects connected to a topic of interest. Barclay Damon will be further involved in the Capstone Project as it develops throughout the school year, culminating in a final presentation of each project in May.



#### *2019 Diversity 1L Summer Associate*

After interviewing several candidates for the 2019 diversity 1L summer associate position in the Rochester office, we are excited to announce that the University at Buffalo School of Law's Aldiama Anthony will join us this summer. Aldiama is a native of the Caribbean and moved to the United States approximately five years ago, graduating summa cum laude with a BD in criminal justice from Monroe College and completing a successful first semester at UB Law with a 3.86 GPA.

### *Diversity Potluck*

The Rochester office held its annual diversity potluck lunch on March 21. The food was amazing once again, and the Diversity Leadership Team appreciates everyone's willingness to participate and share a bit of their family's special food with the office. Culinary kudos to those who prepared the delicious dishes, and a special thanks to legal secretary Michele Charbonneau and GLC site manager Kati Negron for setting up!

### *Jeans Day*

In March, the Rochester office hosted a jeans day in support of the Boys and Girls Club of Rochester, which provides after-school programs for Rochester's youth.

### SYRACUSE OFFICE

#### *Jeans Days*

The Syracuse office hosted three jeans days in January, February, and March in support of Samaritan Center, Through My Eyes, and GiGi's Playhouses. The office raised \$430 for Samaritan Center, a local not-for-profit that serves the hungry and those in need in order to promote their welfare, dignity, and self-sufficiency; \$400 for Through My Eyes, a Syracuse City School District elementary school student organization that celebrates diverse student backgrounds and cultures; and \$416 for GiGi's Playhouses, which are awareness and educational centers that provide resources, specialized teaching, and support to individuals with Down syndrome as well as their families. The office chose to raise money for GiGi's in support of legal secretary Regina Carter's grandson Carter, who was born with Down syndrome.

#### *2019 Diversity 1L Mentoring Program*

The Syracuse office hosted its Diversity Mentoring Program kick-off reception with students from the Syracuse University College of Law on March 1. The event gave attorney mentors and law student mentees the opportunity to meet and tour the office. The program connects firm attorneys with 1Ls from historically underrepresented groups within the legal profession.

#### *Seven Generations of Stewards Lunch 'n' Learn*

The Syracuse office Diversity Leadership Team hosted a lunch 'n' learn from Seven Generations of Stewards, an organization focusing on Native American education and outreach, on March 5. A special thanks to attorney Ivan Zajicek for asking his wife and father-in-law to present, discussing topics such as their Native American culture, stereotypes, inter-tribalness, and respect for the Earth.

#### *2019 Community Day*

Thirty-eight members of the Syracuse office volunteered to participate in the annual Community Day event on April 25, cleaning up Lewis Park in partnership with the City of Syracuse for its Earth Day "Clean Up 'Cuse" program. It was a picture-perfect spring day spent picking up litter, sticks, and leaves; sweeping blacktop; and readying the playground and baseball grounds for use by community youth. Many friendships were made and fortified, all while giving back.

