

# ANNUAL REPORT 2021



CENTER FOR  
**ELDER  
LAW &  
JUSTICE**

It is the mission of Center for Elder Law & Justice to improve the quality of life for elderly, disabled and low-income persons through the provision of free civil legal services; primarily in Western New York. Our primary goal is to use the legal system to ensure that our clients may live independently and with dignity.

# LETTER FROM THE CEO

**This past year has challenged us to find innovative ways to meet the needs of the most vulnerable individuals in our region, as the world battled the pandemic. Along with grief and sadness, 2021 has also seen incredible joy and optimism with the widespread availability of the COVID-19 vaccine and booster shots. New York State has dealt with its own share of turmoil related to the pandemic, and in particular the tragic impact on residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities.**

With this type of tragedy, however; comes insight and awareness. As I write this, President Biden is preparing to announce a renewed effort to improve the quality of care in nursing homes across the country during his State of the Union address. Goals include ensuring sufficient staff, holding poor performers accountable, and keeping the public better informed. As you'll see in the pages that follow, our staff has been working tirelessly to shed light on these issues, particularly within Western New York.

As soon as it was safe to do so, we returned to in-person events in the community, reaching seniors through our Mobile Legal Unit, which provides "done-in-a-day" legal assistance. A particular focus of our overall outreach efforts this past year has been scams targeting seniors, which have sadly been on the rise.

CELJ has expanded to assist with eviction prevention, and anticipates a rush of housing cases as we move forward into 2022, due to the end of the eviction moratorium. We have been proud to partner with our fellow legal services agencies in the area, who have collaborated to meet this growing need. Along with the growth in this unit, we are also excited to expand the work of our MedLaw Partnership, which has proved to be a unique and essential service to patients in and around Buffalo.



As I look back on the past year, I am quite honestly astonished at what our employees have been able to accomplish, and how much we have grown as an agency. I continue to be extremely proud of our efforts to serve the aging population of Western New York, and know that it would not be possible without our friends, funders, and partners.

**Thank you – your support means access to the justice system for so many in need.**

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*Thank you to our board of directors, who dedicate their time and expertise to further our mission!*

President

**Steven Bengart, Esq.**  
*Bengart & DeMarco, LLP*

---

Vice President

**Jill K. Bond, Esq.**  
*Rich Products*

---

Vice President

**Ryan D. Ledebur, Esq.**  
*Lipsitz & Ponterio, LLC*

---

Vice President

**Edward C. Robinson, Esq.**  
*Hurwitz & Fine, P.C.*

---

Secretary

**Denise Gonez-Santos**  
*Erie 1 BOCES*

---

Vice President

**Holly Hejmowski, CPA**  
*Freed Maxick*

---

**Hon. Rosalie Bailey**

*Retired, Erie County Family Court*

**Kathrine Borowiak, CPA, CITP**

*Chief Financial Officer, Person Centered Services*

**Alan J. Bozer, Esq.**

*Phillips Lytle, LLP*

**Douglas J. Curella, Jr., Esq.**

*Office of Hon. Mark J. Grisanti*

**Sarah Galvan, Esq.**  
*Justice in Aging*

**Heather Giambra, Esq.**  
*Schroeder, Joseph & Associates, LLP*

**Hon. John F. O'Donnell**

*Retired, Erie County Supreme Court*

**Timothy M. O'Mara, Esq.**  
*Downey & O'Mara*

**Christopher Marks, J.D., MBA**  
*Jensen, Marks, Langer & Vance, LLC*

**Ann Monroe**  
*Strategic Consultant; Former Health Philanthropy Executive*

**James Schwegler, Esq.**  
*M&T Bank*

**Jamie Smith, Esq.**  
*Smith Vavonese*

**Holly P. Tucker, Esq.**  
*Principal Law Clerk, Office of Hon. Debra Givens, Supreme Court Justice*

**Paul Vallone, Esq.**  
*Hodgson Russ LLP*

**Robert C. Weissflach, Esq.**  
*Harter Secrest Emery LLP*

# NEW STAFF

**Peter Bartlett,**  
*Staff Accountant*

**Elika Bascombe,**  
*Paralegal*

**Elizabeth Dolata,**  
*Staff Attorney*

**Savannah Figueroa,**  
*Law Graduate*

**Shivani Francis,**  
*Bookkeeper*

**Gabrielle Gannon,**  
*Law Graduate*

**Heather Hopkins,**  
*Paralegal*

**Jennifer Icard,**  
*Paralegal*

**Amy Inzina,**  
*Staff Attorney,  
Pro Bono & Helpline*

**Chandler Jones,**  
*HR Coordinator*

**Mike Lee,**  
*Social Worker*

**Javier Mejia,**  
*Grants & Contract  
Specialist*

**Kimberly Marrero,**  
*Intake Specialist*

**Karen Morosey,**  
*Receptionist*

**Robert Neill,**  
*Staff Attorney*

**Kristen Orr,**  
*Paralegal*

**Tamar Rothaus,**  
*Chief Financial Officer*

**Maggy Rusch,**  
*Paralegal*

**Thomas J. Warren,**  
*Staff Attorney*

# PROMOTIONS

**Kelsie Abbt,**  
*Paralegal*

**Rachel Baldassaro,**  
*Supervising Attorney*

**Jesslyn Holbrook,**  
*Supervising Attorney*

**Liam McMahon,**  
*Development &  
Communications  
Coordinator*

**Kirtan Patel,**  
*Interim Director  
of Finance*

**Christopher Phillips,**  
*Staff Attorney*

# SERVING THOSE WHO SERVED

**Long-term care planning is never easy, no matter how much time you may prepare. Former Center for Elder Law & Justice (CELJ) client Robert “Bob” Brewer had to face the unexpected when he learned that his home was sold at auction due to back taxes owed.**

According to Bob’s closest family members and main advocates John and Claire Cieslewicz, Bob struggled with his experience serving in the Vietnam War, and was unable to make repairs on the house. These factors played a role in his falling behind on expenses.

The home’s new owner temporarily allowed Bob to stay while he looked for his next home, but once again plans changed when a foot infection sent Bob to rehabilitation. During this time, he set aside some belongings for his cousin John to pick up, including family photos, photos from his time in Vietnam, a picture of Bob receiving The Purple Heart Medal, and the Purple Heart itself.

---

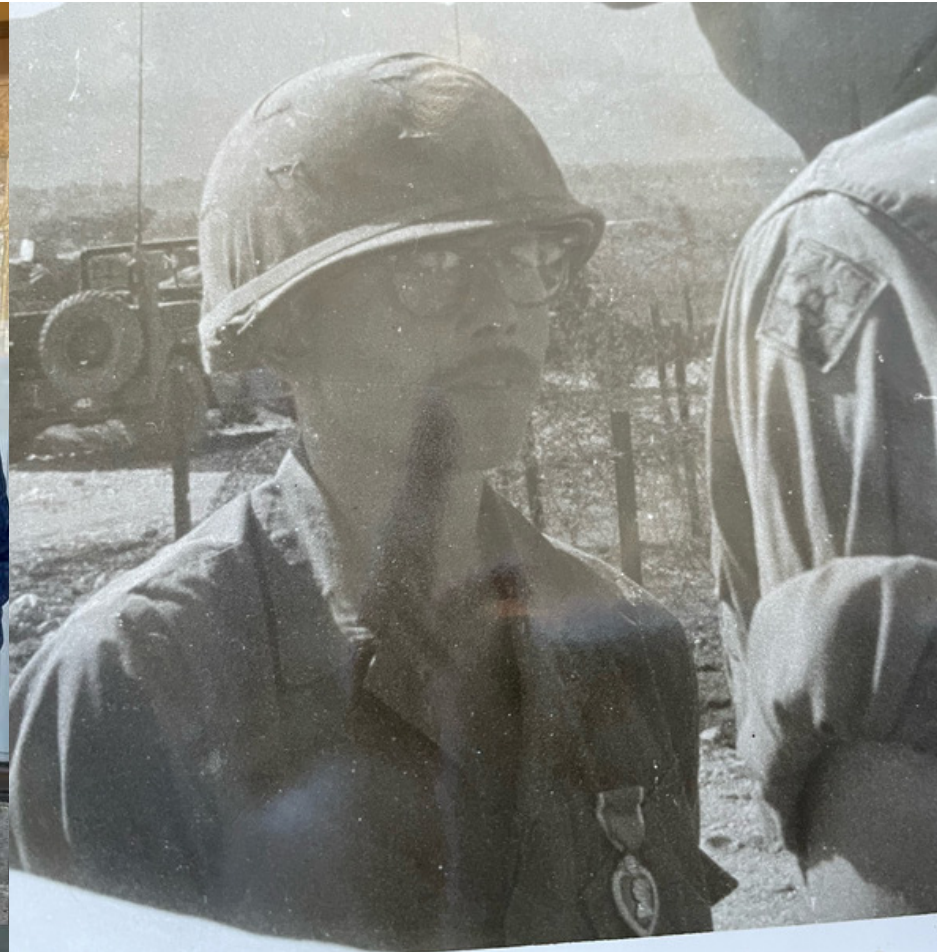
**When it came time to retrieve those belongings, Bob was unable to reach the new owner. According to Claire, “he started to get more and more upset, because now he knew that there was a good chance that the house was going to be razed.” The clock was ticking to recover these priceless photos and service medal. Claire set to work calling countless advocacy organizations asking for assistance. They didn’t know what to do if they couldn’t contact the new owner in time.**

---

Despite her efforts, Claire said that, “not a single person returned my call until I got to your office in Dunkirk.” Looking back, Claire said she felt “delighted. Thank god somebody is out there to help.”

Claire finally had somebody to speak to after connecting with staff paralegal Brenda Symans. Together, with staff attorney Alex Fehrman,

Bob now had somebody to advocate on his behalf. According to Claire, “We needed somebody to hear the desperation in our voices.”



**“Alex was delightful to keep in touch with me almost every week saying ‘I tried something else Claire, no luck.’ ... We finally got down to where we were going to issue a court order.” Finally, Alex was able to make contact with the homeowner and arrange for a pick up. “That’s all Robert wanted was his stuff, that was it,” said Claire.**

**Thanks to Brenda and Alex, and their willingness to listen when others would not, Bob was able to retrieve his memories that he seemed certain to lose otherwise.**

**4,607**  
Cases  
opened.

**4,634**  
Cases  
closed.

**10,466**  
People  
served.

**70.3%**   
of clients over the age of 60.

**86.4%**   
of clients at under 200% of the poverty  
level or more.

**29%**   
of clients identify as people of color.

**62,624** new visitors  
to our website.

We provided direct representation to

**600** individual  
victims of crime.



**784**

**cases handled  
by our Housing Unit.**

**Through our Elder Abuse Prevention, Foreclosure Prevention, Consumer, Housing, Income Maintenance, and Health Care Units,**

**we helped our clients recover or save  
\$3,984,390.77**

**Our services in the Kinship Care, Housing, Health Care, Foreclosure, Guardianship, and Elder Abuse Prevention Units**

**saved taxpayers across New York State  
\$889,542.00.**

**11,407 people**

**We reached  
through client presentations, tabling, our Mobile Legal Unit, and workshops or clinics.**

**2,733**

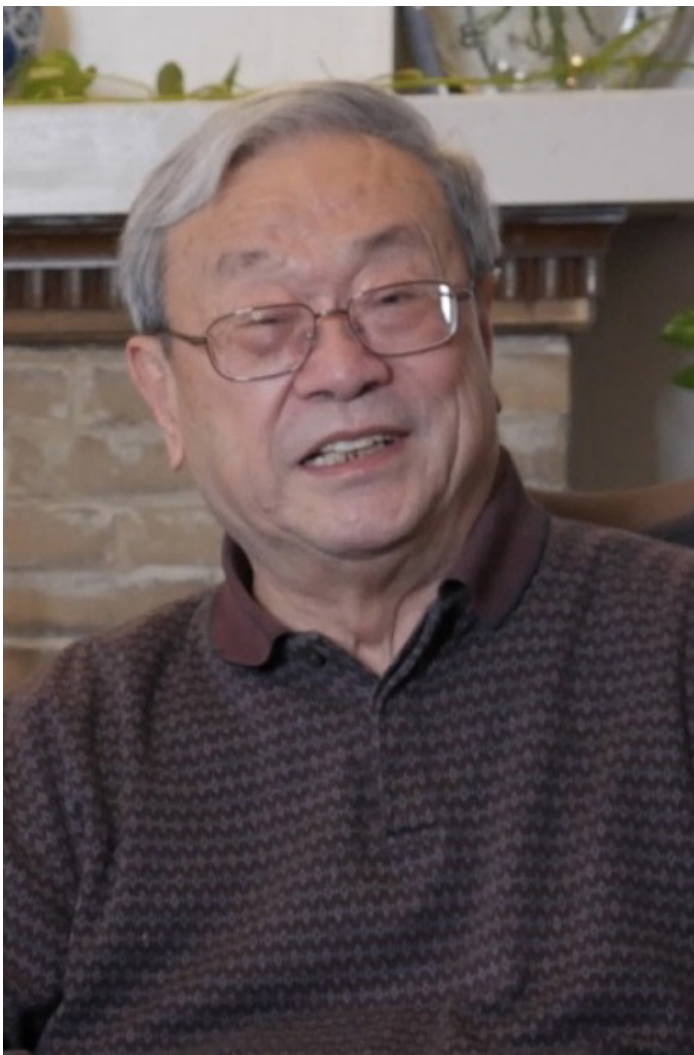
**professionals attended our presentations, trainings and CLEs; and we reached  
through radio and TV.**

**137,848**

# IS A POOLED TRUST RIGHT FOR ME?

**Not everyone familiar with our work knows the variety of ways in which The Center for Elder Law & Justice (CELJ) seeks to improve the lives of older adults and people with disabilities. One program making a difference for our clients is the Western New York Coalition Pooled Trusts (Pooled Trust).**

The Pooled Trust is a collaboration between CELJ, People, Inc., and Key Bank, and has been operating for over 10 years. It's a tool that allows disabled individuals to save a majority of their income and assets that they normally have to sacrifice in order to qualify for Medicaid (or sometimes SSI). These funds, known as a spenddown, are the "price," that individuals who almost qualify for public benefits must pay to the state to meet the income limit.



Disabled individuals, however, are allowed to take that spenddown and deposit into a pooled trust, where the funds can be used on anything that benefits the pooled trust member alone. It's not difficult to imagine the difference it can make in someone's life to retain those funds, and many pooled trust members would be quick to tell you exactly that.

Charles Sun is one such member who has been with our pooled trust for two years. "I use the pooled trust to deposit spenddown money and then I can use the money for the daily expense[s], such as groceries,

---

**“They are very friendly and always respond to my e-mail and requests very quickly. If they would recommend you to have a pooled trust, you should take it, it can really change your life.”**

---

and all the utility bills.” Without a pooled trust, Charles would not be able to use those funds to pay his bills.

The pooled trust can also help those who receive lump sums (for example, an inheritance or settlement) avoid losing access to public benefits as a result. It can even help community members who would otherwise have to go into a nursing home to instead age in place in the community. Pooled trusts serve as a powerful tool allowing disabled members of our community more independence and autonomy.

If that weren't enough, the Pooled Trust also helps disabled clients of CELJ and People, Inc. Typically, the state will collect what money they can recover when a Medicaid recipient passes away. If you are a pooled trust member however, the funds you leave behind in your account when you pass are placed in what we call our “afterfund.” Once a year, this fund is opened to a grant application process where by any disabled client or former client of CELJ or People, Inc. can apply for a grant to pay for much needed items they would otherwise go without. For example, clients have been awarded funding to pay for furniture, warm winter clothes, and appliances.



# IS A POOLED TRUST RIGHT FOR ME? (CONT.)

**George Mallory, former client of CELJ, will tell you what kind of impact this type of grant can have. George, together with his close friend and advocate Deacon Paul Bork, were approached by a CELJ staff member who suggested that they apply.**



According to Paul, “First of all we were very grateful that your Center was able to put together George’s will.” It was during the process of executing his will that staff noticed another need –funeral services –that an afterfund grant may have been able to meet.

The WNY Coalition Pooled Trusts are just one of many tools that CELJ has at its disposal to help clients live a more independent life, but it is

---

**“When we heard also about the grant...we were very pleased and it was unexpected but a real gift. This way, George can really receive the funeral that he would like and be able to have his last wishes honored.”**

---

also a powerful one. Be it access to funds that would otherwise be lost, or allowing those funds to continue to improve the lives of disabled individuals, the Pooled Trust can truly make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities.

**If you, or someone you know is interested in a pooled trust, call 1-866-362-5081 or visit [www.wnypooledtrust.org](http://www.wnypooledtrust.org)**



# THE MEDLAW PARTNERSHIP OF WNY



**Rachel Baldassaro**  
*Supervising Attorney,  
MedLaw Partnership of WNY  
JALBCA Fellow*

There have been many exciting changes and growth for the MedLaw Partnership of WNY during 2021. Despite the ongoing pandemic, we continued to see consistent referrals from our hospital partners, and CELJ provided full representation in 312 cases, which were referred through the MedLaw Partnership. MedLaw staff also consulted on an additional 245 matters.

**As a result of our advocacy, we helped clients to obtain more than \$1,017,116 in dollar benefits during 2021, an all-time high for the program.**

This year we were fortunate to have several new team members join the unit, who have each brought a unique skill set and expertise to the busy program. First, **Christina Deveso**, a paralegal joined our team in late December 2020, and has worked with clients in both the ECMC and Kaleida Health divisions of our program.



*Christina Deveso*

**We are thrilled to announce that these life-changing legal services will now be available to the patients of the John R. Oishei Children's Hospital of Buffalo.**



*Elizabeth Dolata*

Thereafter, **Elizabeth Dolata** joined the MedLaw team. Elizabeth worked in private practice prior to joining CELJ, and her work was focused on consumer defense.

The most exciting development in 2021, however, is the forthcoming expansion within the Kaleida Health division of the MedLaw Partnership. Expected to launch in early 2022, the medical-legal partnership with Oishei will be the first of its kind in Buffalo, NY, specifically aimed at improving the lives of children. By using the legal system to address

social conditions that impact these children and their families, we will be able to improve the quality of life and health outcomes for an even larger number of individuals living in WNY than ever before.

*The MedLaw Partnership is a medical-legal partnership between CELJ and area healthcare providers with the goal of addressing underlying social issues that impact a person's wellbeing.*

# HEALTH CARE ADVOCACY UNIT HIGHLIGHTS

**In 2021, the Health Care Advocacy Unit continued to work tirelessly to meet the demands of Western New Yorkers. CELJ represented clients in appeals and grievances involving Medicaid, Medicaid Managed Long Term Care, Medicare, and private health insurance companies, and represented clients in discharge appeals from facilities.**

As always, the unit continuously provided updates online through CELJ's blog. Some of the most heavily accessed articles covered information and updates about stimulus check payments, visitation to nursing homes, safe staffing for facilities, and the need for comprehensive long term care reform.

CELJ also worked with the New York State Legislature to advance legislation and policies to improve the quality of care and life of those who live in nursing homes and adult care facilities.

## A FEW HIGHLIGHTS:

During July 2021, CELJ Supervising Attorney, **Lindsay Heckler**, testified before the Senate Standing Committees on Aging, Health, and Labor, calling upon the Legislature and the Executive to implement policies that prioritize keeping older adults and persons with disabilities in the community. She advocated support of policies that improve the quality of care and life of those living in nursing homes. Lindsay discussed addressing the workforce shortage – a key step in achieving health equity. She also provided a local example of insufficient staffing, discussed the need to enforce standards to push the nursing home industry to evolve, and the need for staffing data in assisted living facilities.



*Lindsay Heckler*



# HEALTH CARE ADVOCACY UNIT HIGHLIGHTS

CELJ Staff Attorney, **Bria Lewis**, also advocated for the rights and needs of older adults through submittal of public comments to federal administrative entities:

- Comments were submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in response to its request for information on methods and leading practices for advancing equity and support for underserved communities through government. CELJ urged the OMB to understand that health disparities are not just based on race, ethnic and cultural differences within the population, but that age, sexual orientation, lack of access, personal, socio-economic, and environmental characteristics must be included in any assessment of practices. CELJ further emphasized to the OMB that advancing equity starts with a diverse and inclusive workforce and that agencies must have diversity trainings in order for staff to recognize and address unconscious biases.
- Comments were submitted to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in response to proposed regulation on the Skilled Nursing Facility Quality Report System, vaccinations of healthcare personnel, and the need to close the health equity gap in nursing home care.
- Comments were submitted to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services regarding the interim final rule on vaccinating long term care residents and staff. CELJ offered support to ensure the most vulnerable of the population are protected through vaccination, education, reporting, and enforcement.



*Bria Lewis*

# HEALTH CARE ADVOCACY UNIT HIGHLIGHTS

In February 2021, we issued a memo of support and public call to action for **Senate Bill 614B, Allowing Compassionate Care-Giving Visitors**, which creates a standardized program to allow personal care and compassionate care visitors at nursing homes and adult care facilities during a state public health emergency. This bill was vital in addressing the issue of social isolation for older adults. CELJ submitted comment to the Department of Health in response to emergency rulemaking for the implementation of this new law.

This unit was again busy with media engagements during 2021. **Supervising Attorney, Lindsay Heckler**, is often contacted to discuss issues impacting long-term care, and was interviewed by Buffalo News, WBFO, and the Syracuse Post-Journal. She was also featured on WGRZ Channel 2's Town Hall segment on the report released by New York State Attorney General, Letitia James, on Nursing Homes during COVID-19. Lindsay was interviewed by WBFO alongside **CEO Karen Nicolson**, when the two discussed the limitations of the safe staffing bill for nursing homes. **Staff Attorney, Bria Lewis**, was featured by WBFO in a story about nursing home visitation, and the ongoing regulatory changes. **Supervising Attorney, Kelly Barrett Sarama**, was interviewed on WECK Radio's "Medicare & More" show to discuss the work of the Health Care Advocacy Unit overall, and how civil legal services can help people in need.



*Kelly Barrett Sarama*

# CELJ IN THE COMMUNITY

**2021 brought a return to in-person events, although our staff continued to provide virtual education, presentations, and legal assistance.**

After transitioning our Free Senior Legal Advice Helpline to help callers statewide during the height of the pandemic, our staff and volunteers worked hard to maintain that service for those in need. The Helpline continues to reach New Yorkers from Buffalo to Manhattan, and takes both e-mail and voicemail messages in addition to answering calls live during specific hours each weekday.

The Mobile Legal Unit sprang back into action during the past year, nearly tripling the number of events throughout Western New York, where individuals could receive “done-in-a-day” legal assistance. While many of these events were in Erie County, we also ran the Mobile Legal Unit in Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Livingston, Monroe, and Niagara counties.

**2021 saw almost 152,000 participants – whether in person, or online.**

When looking at our overall outreach in the community, we again expanded by increasing the number of events, reaching more counties, and nearly doubling the number of attendees. Due to this increase, we were also able to open up nearly 200 additional cases. These numbers include presentations, Mobile Legal Unit events, TV and radio spots, workshops, and CLEs.

	2020	2021
<b>Total events</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>209</b>
<b>Attendees</b>	<b>85,395</b>	<b>151,988</b>
<b>Counties served</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>

## CONTACTS



**Helpline:**  
Erin Riker, Esq.  
716-853-3087  
x249



**Mobile Legal Unit/Events:**  
Kristen Orr  
716-853-3087  
x267

# IN THE NEWS – THE HIGHLIGHTS

The **Center for Elder Law & Justice** was mentioned on WGRZ Channel 2 and WIVB Channel 4 when it announced the federal grant awarded by the Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women to provide enhanced training and services to end abuse in later life in Niagara County.

---

**Supervising Attorney, Sarah Duval**, was featured on Lockport Community TV's "Young at Heart" to highlight World Elder Abuse Awareness

---

**Managing Attorney, Helen Ferraro-Zaffram**, was interviewed on WIVB Channel 4 to discuss the scams impacting older adults, and how CELJ can help.

---

**Staff Attorney, Katelyn Gindele**, was interviewed by WIVB Channel 4 about the Federal Trade Commission and scam prevention.

---

**Supervising Attorney, Lindsay Heckler**, is often contacted to discuss issues impacting long-term care, and was interviewed by Buffalo News, WBFO, and the Syracuse Post-Journal. She was also featured on WGRZ Channel 2's Town Hall segment on the report released by New York State Attorney General Letitia James on Nursing Homes during COVID-19. Lindsay was also interviewed by WBFO alongside **CEO, Karen Nicolson**, when the two discussed the limitations of the safe staffing bill for nursing homes.

---

**Supervising Social Worker, Kathy Kanaley**, was quoted by The Daily Reporter, which covered the Fraud Prevention event, hosted by State Senator George Borello. She was also featured on WBFO for her remarks on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day in Buffalo.

---

**Staff Attorney, Bria Lewis**, was interviewed by the East Aurora Bee to discuss our Mobile Legal Unit event with the Aurora Senior Center, and by WBFO regarding nursing home visitation changes.

---

**Staff Attorney, Brad Loliger**, was interviewed on WNY Tonight with Tammie Lee to discuss the work of the Center for Elder Law & Justice.

**Supervising Attorney, Kevin Quinn**, was featured by NY Focus, Food & Water Watch, and Environmental Advocates NY about the utility shutoff moratorium, and the ERAP program for rent relief.

---

**Supervising Attorney, Nicole Parshall**, was quoted in the Jamestown Post-Journal, which covered the press conference in Chautauqua County for World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

---

**Supervising Attorney, Kelly Barrett Sarama**, was interviewed on WECK Radio's "Medicare & More" show to discuss the work of the Health Care Advocacy Unit.

## NEW GRANT FUNDING

*During 2021 we were pleased to receive generous support from many area foundations and organizations.*

CELJ has received **Emergency Rental Assistance Program** funding to combat the homelessness crisis, collaborating with legal services providers throughout Western New York to form the **Western New York Eviction Prevention Program**.

---

The **Town of Amherst** awarded CELJ \$62,500 in COVID-19 funding to support eviction prevention.

---

The **Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Legacy Fund**, administered by the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo awarded CELJ's Guardianship Unit \$12,500 to cover the cost of COVID-19 testing.

---

**Foundation 214** provided a grant in the amount of \$76,000 to supplement the Family Guardian Support Project, which is funded in part by the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation.

---

**Erie County** awarded CELJ a grant of \$40,000 to provide education and outreach related to COVID-19 Scams.

# NEW GRANT FUNDING

**Judges & Lawyers Breast Cancer Alert** continued to support CELJ with a new grant totaling \$110,000, and \$120,000 was received from **Erie County Medical Center** – both to support the MedLaw Partnership of WNY.

---

The **Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women** awarded CELJ \$400,000 to provide enhanced training and services to end abuse in later life in Niagara County. Partners on the grant are Pinnacle Community Services, the Niagara County District Attorney's Office, and the Niagara County Sheriff's Office.

---

The **Albert and Elaine Borchard Foundation** awarded CELJ a grant in the amount of \$50,000 to support the work of the Health Care Advocacy Unit during the upcoming calendar year.

# AWARDS & RECOGNITION



**Karen Nicolson, Esq.** appointed Treasurer of the New York Legal Services Coalition, a statewide trade association of over 50 legal services program. The Coalition advocates on legal issues affecting low-income communities, identifies and promotes best practices, and provides technical assistance and resources for its members.

---



**On November 16, 2021, the Advisory Council to Support Grandparents Raising Grandchildren delivered its initial report to Congress.** It includes a comprehensive review of the joys, challenges, gaps, and unmet needs and 22 recommendations for how the federal government, states, tribes, territories, and communities can better support kin and grandparent caregivers. **Supervising Attorney, Sarah Hedden**, is a member of this Council.

---

# AWARDS & RECOGNITION



**Lindsay Heckler, Esq.**, named a Vice Chair of the Special Committee on Long Term Care Facility Reform, an Executive Committee of the Elder Law and Special Needs Section with the New York State Bar Association.



**Gabrielle Markle, Esq.**, named a member of the Advisory Board for the Office of Victim Services Seeking Solutions Summit, 2021.



**Denise Gonez-Santos**, named an Agent of Change by Lafayette International High School, Just Buffalo Literary Center and Torn Space Theater. Agents of Changes provide the community access to the arts, highlights local community members, and activates businesses and architectural assets in Buffalo neighborhoods.



**Jill Bond**, named a Power 200 Woman by Buffalo Business First.

# CELJ'S PRO BONO PROGRAM

**Update from Amanda Warner, Esq.,  
Director of Pro Bono Programs**

## Surrogate's Court Help Center

The Surrogate's Court Help Center continued to run solely as a phone based consultation program through 2021. While we hope to be able to bring back in-person consultations at Surrogate's Court in some capacity in 2022, the phone based consultation program is here to stay. This adaptation of the Help Center has proven to be a valuable service to low income clients, who often face mobility and transportation issues, inflexible work schedules, and lack of paid leave as barriers to seeking legal assistance. It has also continued to allow volunteers to more easily serve unrepresented and underserved members of their community at a time and place more convenient to their busy practices.



**The numbers: 20 pro bono attorneys provided consultations to 244 clients through the Surrogate's Court Help Center in 2021, cumulatively donating 228 hours of pro bono.**

## Contact us.

For brief legal advice and counsel through the Surrogate's Court Help Center, please call **(716) 853-3087, ext. 271** or send an e-mail to **[schc@elderjusticenyc.org](mailto:schc@elderjusticenyc.org)**.



## Wills Clinic

In September 2021, CELJ participated in the Wills and Estate Planning Workshop hosted by **New York State Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes**. This workshop is an annual community program held in partnership with the Center for Elder Law & Justice, Western New York Law Center, Neighborhood Legal Services, and other participating attorneys. The program's primary goal is to assist residents of New York Assembly District 141 in need of wills, powers of attorney and health care proxies, in order to help plan for the future and protect generational wealth such as home ownership, personal assets, and other possessions. These services are provided to the client at no cost. After a hiatus in 2020 necessitated by COVID-19, CELJ was pleased to be able to bring this service back to the community last September, with **21 CELJ staff and two volunteer attorneys assisting 45 clients with Wills, Powers of Attorney, and Health Care Proxies**.

## Attorney Emeritus Program

CELJ is fortunate to have a core group of dedicated volunteers who have committed to working with us through the New York State Unified Court System's Attorney Emeritus Program (AEP). This program is open to attorneys 55 years of age and older who have practiced for a minimum of ten years. In exchange for their commitment to devote 60 hours of pro bono to a legal services agency over their 2 year reporting cycle, retired attorneys in the AEP program can have their biannual CLE requirement and registration fees waived. AEP attorneys still engaged in the active practice of law must continue to meet the CLE and registration requirements, but may earn up to 15 CLE credits through pro bono time per reporting cycle (rather than the maximum of 10 credits through pro bono normally permitted).

In 2021, **CELJ's four AEP volunteers devoted over 392 hours** assisting clients and providing organizational support through our pro bono program, Surrogate's Court Help Center program, Senior Legal Advice Helpline, Guardianship Department, and the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program.

## Attorney Emeritus Program (continued)



Two AEP volunteers received statewide recognition in 2021 for their work at CELJ. On May 3, 2021, **Anthony Szczygiel was awarded the 2021 New York State Bar Association President's Pro Bono Service Award** for the Eighth Judicial District for his work with CELJ in 2020. On October 26, 2021, **Therese Wincott was honored at the AEP's National Celebrate Pro Bono Week Ceremony** in recognition of her substantial commitment to pro bono through CELJ since 2018, and particularly for the assistance that she provided to the Guardianship Unit with the tremendous backlog of cases caused by the pandemic.

## 2021 Virtual Elder Law Day Summer Series

In 2021 CELJ and the Erie County Department of Social Services (ECDSS) hosted their second Virtual Elder Law Day Summer Series. Historically, prior to 2020, Elder Law Day was a very popular day-long event hosted by CELJ and ECDSS that gave seniors and their caregivers a chance to attend presentations, meet with community vendors and receive free one-on-one attorney consultations. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, CELJ and ECDSS transformed the one day event into a virtual presentation series, offering weekly online webinars on legal

issues affecting older adults to assist them in making informed choices about their health, financial well-being, and long term health care needs.

The 2021 series ran from July 13, 2021 to August 18, 2021, and featured the following 17 presenters who shared their knowledge and expertise on a range of topics, including Medicaid, estate planning, irrevocable and pooled trusts, elder abuse, scam detection and prevention, kinship care, nursing home rights, asset protection planning for long-term

## 2021 Virtual Elder Law Day Summer Series (continued)

care expenses, advanced care planning, mortgage foreclosure and tenant protections, stimulus check FAQs, and issues facing older LBGTQ adults:

- **Linda Stravalaci Grear**
- **Gary S. Brown**
- **F. Alexander Fehrman**
- **Tatiana Robinson**
- **Jamie M. Smith**
- **Bria Lewis**
- **Kelly R. Gusmano**
- **Erin L. Riker**
- **Liam McMahon**
- **Christopher Phillips**
- **Sarah Hedden**
- **Deonna Jones**
- **Kelly Barrett Sarama**
- **Kevin Quinn**
- **Edward Robinson**
- **Katelyn Gindele**
- **Tracey Casseus**

Individuals interested in pro bono, internship, or volunteer opportunities should contact the Director of Pro Bono Programs, Amanda Warner, at **716-835-3087 ext. 241**, or via email at **awarner@elderjusticeny.org**.

## Pro Bono Impact

A total of 35 attorneys performed over 734 hours of pro bono through both limited and full scope client representation and CELJ program support. CELJ would like to thank the following Pro Bono Volunteers who contributed toward this substantial commitment:

- **Arthur Baumeister**
- **Charles Beinhauer**
- **Terrie Benson Murray**
- **Benjamin Cranston**
- **Victoria D'Angelo**
- **Joshua Dubs**
- **Thadeus Dziekonski**
- **Robert Feldman**
- **Sarah Frederick**
- **Henry Gartner**
- **Kathleen Garvey**
- **Garry Graber**
- **Linda Grear**
- **Jane Harrington**
- **Elaina Monte**
- **Mary Moorman Penn**
- **Nicole Mutignani**
- **George Riedel**
- **Barbara Schaus**
- **Daniel Schaus**
- **Amanda Scott**
- **Daniel Shonn**
- **Jamie Smith**
- **Tom Steffan**
- **Anthony Szczygiel**
- **Frank Vavonese**
- **Mary Virginia**
- **Therese Wincott**
- **Ruth Wiseman**
- **Michael Wrona**

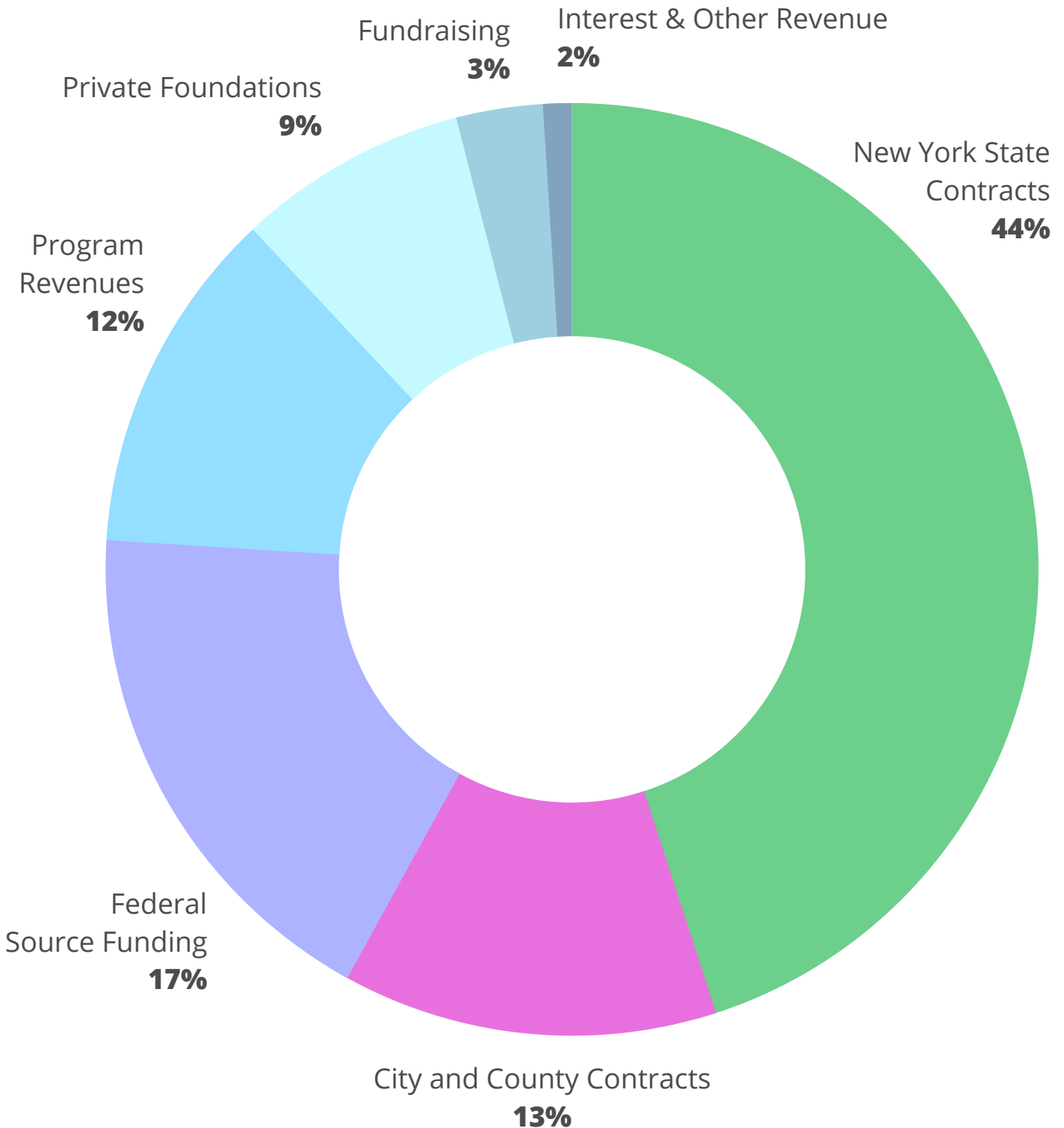
# FINANCIALS

Year Ending December 31, 2021



## 2021 REVENUES

Total revenue: **\$6,144,697**



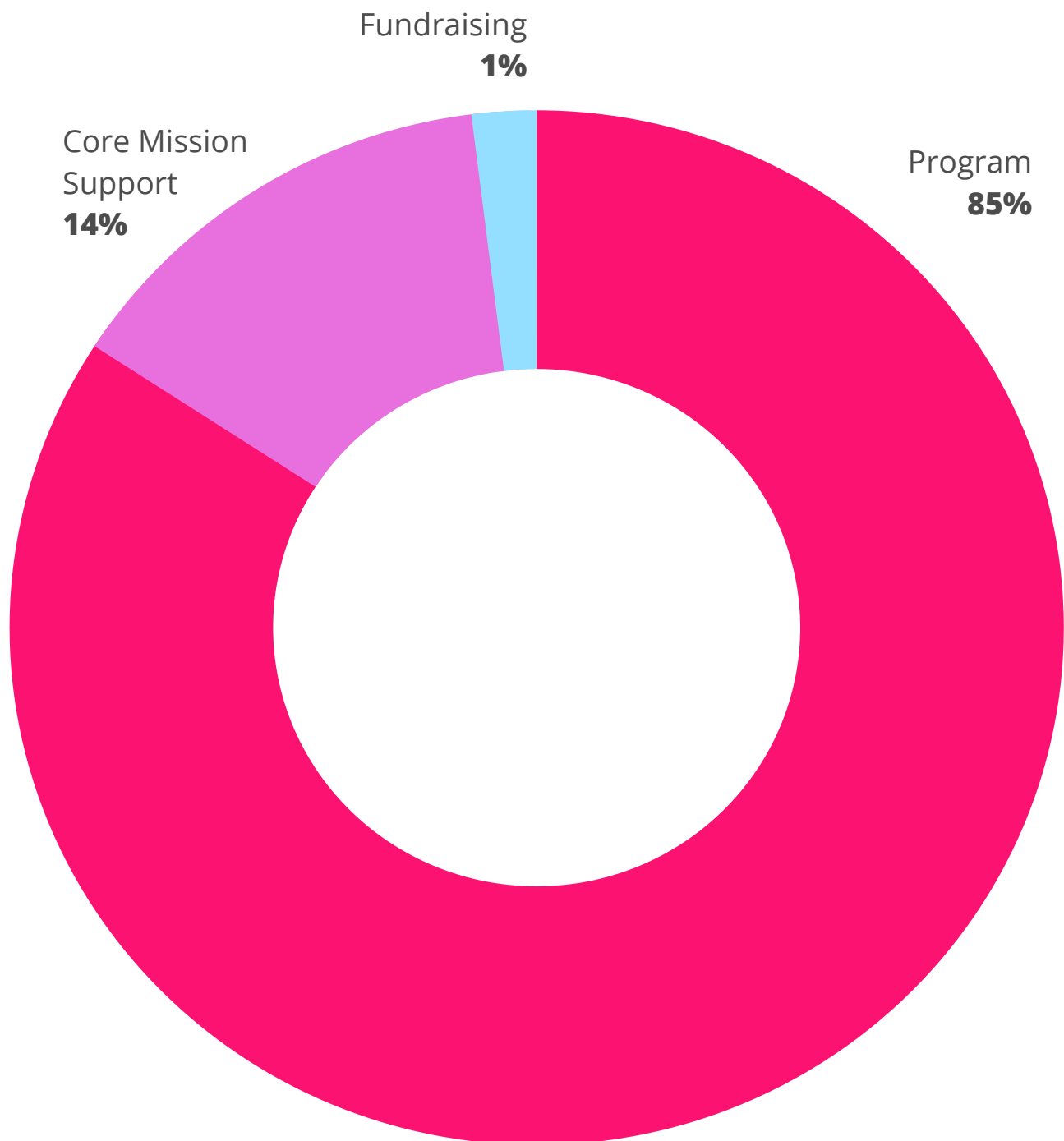
# FINANCIALS

Year Ending December 31, 2021



## 2021 EXPENSES

Total expenses: **\$5,539,813**



# THANK YOU!

## The following donors contributed to the Center for Elder Law & Justice during 2021.

*The following individuals are members of the Circle of Justice, our leadership giving society. These donors made gift totaling \$1,000 or more during 2021.*

### Individuals

Anonymous  
Steve & Mary Bengart  
Jill & Keith Bond  
Linda Marie Franchell  
Jeffrey Fuchs  
Sally Guthrie  
George Kannar  
John Lipsitz & Maria Scrivani  
Christopher M. and Jill Marks  
James McGovern  
Karen Nicolson & Thomas Smith  
Estate of Maureen O'Connell  
Hon. John F. O'Donnell  
Michael Olear  
Timothy M. and Kathleen M. O'Mara  
Pamela S. Pyle & James S. Brown  
Edward C. & Marla Robinson  
Estate of John P. Sokay  
Sara Diletti-Swenson  
Ronald and Margaret Talboys  
Cynthia Vance  
Robert Weissflach  
Sandra Wisbaum  
Hon. Diane Wray & Michael Hughes

### Organizations

The Albert & Elaine Borchard Foundation  
The Cameron & Jane Baird Foundation  
Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo  
ECMC Foundation, Inc.  
Evans Bank Foundation Fund  
Evans-Devereux Memorial Fund  
Fay & Fred Friedman Family Foundation Fund  
Foundation 214

Friedman & Ranzenhofer, PC  
Garman Family Foundation  
Hamberger & Weiss  
Judges & Lawyers Breast Cancer Alert  
KeyBank Foundation  
Lipsitz, Ponterio & Comerford, LLC  
The Little-Kittinger Foundation  
M&T Charitable Foundation  
The Manursing Fund  
The New York Bar Foundation  
Oddfellow and Rebekah Benefit Fund  
Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation  
Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Legacy Fund  
Smith Vavonese, LLP

*The following individuals are monthly donors who commit to an ongoing investment in our agency.*

Jim & Jane Duval  
Cheryl Fisher  
Karen Kaczmariski  
Marcia Ladiana  
Debra Ritz

### Individual donors

Muhammad Abbasi  
Natalie and Morton Abramson  
Marialu Alejandro  
Donald A. Alessi  
David and Joan B. Alexander  
Kathleen Alexander  
Chrystal Allen  
Nasrin Anwar  
James and Diane Arnone  
Tammy Astyk  
Madeline Augustine  
Hedwig M. Auletta  
Rosalie and Thomas Bailey  
Rachel Baldassaro  
Sean Balkin  
John Ballow  
Janet C. Barlow  
Kelly Barrett Sarama and Brian Sarama  
Winston Barrus  
Todd Bauer  
Thomas D. Beardsley  
Mark J. and Paget Becht  
Holly Beecher  
Mary M. Behnke  
Thomas W. and Mary Beth Bender  
Margot Bennett Mitschow  
Betsy and Joseph R. Bergen  
Patricia and Christopher Best  
Gary and Sheila Billingsley  
Victoria Billups  
Namizol Bilongo Diangani  
Dennis J. Bischof  
George Blair  
Lisa Bloch-Rodwin  
Edward S. Bloomberg  
M Scott Borden  
Kathrine Borowiak  
Mary M. and Charles Borzillire  
Diane F. Bosse  
Alan J. and Paula Bozer

# THANK YOU!

## The following donors contributed to the Center for Elder Law & Justice during 2021.

### *Individual donors*

---

Mary Brand  
Patricia and John F. Brill  
James V. Brocato  
Dorothy Brown  
Kristin Brown  
George and Melissa J. Brunn  
Thomas E. and Melissa Brydges  
Stephen J. Brzuskiwicz and Marie P. Grisanti  
Susan Brzykcy  
Craig Bucki  
George and Susan J. Bukowski  
Evan Bussiere  
Patricia M. Caluori  
Shirley Campbell  
Kathleen Carmody  
Charles Carra  
Alan S. and Susan Carrel  
Jerome D. and Judith E. Carrel  
Patricia Carrington  
Barbara M. Carver  
Linda S. Cash  
Robert J. Castellani  
Marilyn Cedrone  
Michael Chelus  
Robert Ciesielski  
Lynn A. Clarke  
Frederick B. and R. Maura Cohen  
David G. Cohen  
J. Michael and M.A. Collins  
Joseph R. and Mary Joan Connelly  
Caitlin M. Connelly and Benjamin Smith  
Ann Craig  
Wanda Crossley  
Deborah Cruser  
Ryan Cummings  
Douglas J. Curella  
Victoria D'Angelo  
Nerios C. Dela Cena  
R. Scott DeLuca  
Maryann W.R. Delzer

Zenon and Ksenia Deputat  
Linda Detine and James Glose  
Christina Deveso  
Shana and Matthew DiCamillo  
Nicholas J. DiCesare  
Rhonda DiPronio  
Thomas F. and Melinda G. Disare  
Marsha Dixon  
Gail Donaldson  
Brian W. Downey  
Alan Dressel  
Christopher Dressel  
John R. Drexelius  
Elizabeth Drzewiecki  
Thadeus J. Dziekonski  
Alexandra Dzielski  
Gayle Eagan  
Catherine B Eberl and Aaron J. Kern  
Chris Eberwein  
David L. Edmunds  
Clayton and Judith Ehrenreich  
Maria Elharaoui  
Lisa Embree  
Wayne J. and Carol M. Eschberger  
Pat and Marcia Eugeni  
Randy C. and Margaret Fahs  
Thomas C. Farley  
John Farnham  
Lois A. and William Farnsworth  
Wendy K. Fechter  
F. Alexander Fehrman  
Andrew Feldman  
The Zaffram Family  
Cheryl Fisher  
Lenora Foote-Beavers  
Leslie Fox and Steve Vathy  
Russell E Fox  
Deborah and Lawrence Franco  
Robert W. Frangooles  
Howard B. And Linda Frank  
Rhonda Frederick  
Peter Galie  
Anthony Galla

Sarah Galvan  
Henry Gartner  
Robert and Diane Gastle  
James D. and Lynn Gauthier  
Mary Gawrecki  
Patricia Gayle Costello  
Heather Giambra  
Katie Gindele  
David Giordano  
Eric Glazer  
Richard Godshaw  
Howard F. and Lillian Gondree  
Denise Gonez-Santos and Miguel Santos  
Gerald P. Gorman  
Jerome C. Gorski  
Garry Graber  
Gertie Graham  
Marilyn Gratto  
Leslie Mark Greenbaum  
Roy Griswold  
Rosemary Grosjean  
Ann and Charles Groth  
John Mark and Mara Gruber  
Nancy and Gilberto Guemes  
Dennis Gully  
Sally Guthrie  
Thomas Hagerty  
Donna Hall  
Barbara Hanavan  
Vincent O. and Casey Hanley  
Annette Harding  
John B. and Anne Haslam  
Patricia Hauret  
Douglas Hawley  
Mary Hayden  
Lindsay Heckler  
Sarah Hedden  
Michele Heffernan  
Holly Hejmowski  
Kathryn Hellman  
William Grant Hennigar  
Ann Herman  
Kathy Herrmann

# THANK YOU!

## The following donors contributed to the Center for Elder Law & Justice during 2021.

### *Individual donors*

---

Thomas and Sharon Hewner  
Shirley and Howard W. Hobin  
Susan Hogan  
Timothy Hoover and Amy Martoche  
Scott Horton  
Beverly Howard  
Cassidy Hughes  
Danielia Hunter  
Thomas R. and Martha M. Hyde  
Crystal Jackson  
Onnie M. Jackson  
Phyllis M. Jagoda  
Michaelene Jeziorowski  
Michael Johnson  
Karen Kaczmariski  
Kathy M and Michael Kanaley  
Kristie T. Kantor  
Leah Kary  
Linda Kasprzak  
Judith D. Katzenelson  
(Brownstein)  
Rakhil Khinkis  
Cynthia Kircher  
Peter G. Klein  
Robert Klump  
William Kokolus  
Rose J. and Robert Konowalski  
Marlene Kowalski  
Pamela Krawczyk-Greene  
Richard P. Kuchta and Joelle L. Hiller  
Michael and Andrea Kuettel  
Jenna Kuhnle  
Paul W. Kullman  
Robert Kutzuba  
Marcia Ladiana  
John J. LaFalce  
Nancy LaPaglia  
Sandra Lauer  
James A. Lazarus and Ann E. Victor-Lazarus  
L. Jean Leamon  
Ryan and Abigail Ledebur  
Catherine West and John P. Lefko  
Mary K. and John T. Lennon  
Susan Lew  
Renee Lewan-Hesse  
Linda Rae Lillis  
Andrew Lipkind  
Penelope H. Lips  
John Lipsitz and Maria Scrivani  
Sally Logan  
Leonard London  
Kathy L. Lonnen  
Kathleen Lorentz  
Theresa Lorenzo  
Albert Lowman  
Gordon W. and Eileen Lyon  
Marjorie V. Maas  
William Machin  
John Mackiewicz  
Margaret Makowski-Greenky  
Milan and Sheryl Malik  
James and Audrey Mang  
Deborah Marchetti  
Joanne and Anthony Mariano  
Edward J. and Linda Markarian  
Frederick J. Marshall  
Jeffrey Marthon  
Karen L. Mathews  
Karen M. McCafferty  
Jeremiah J. and Nancy McCarthy  
Michael McCracken  
Roslyn L. McLin  
Geraldine McMahan  
Meaghan McMahan  
Aileen M. McNamara  
Gerald McSweeney  
Javier Mejia  
Timothy W. Menasco  
Arlene Miles  
Craig L. Miller  
Lucy Mitchell  
Jamilla F. Mobley  
Jennifer and Andrew Moeller  
Kathleen Molloy  
Ann Monroe  
Acea M. Mosey  
Deena Mueller-Funke  
Marie Therese Mugaruka  
Ann Mumm  
Daniel Mumm  
David Mumm  
Gary Mumm  
Gayle Murphy  
Matea Naples  
Thomas W. Nelson  
Mark S Nemeth  
Robert B. Nichols  
Paul Noddin  
Edward C. and Dawn Northwood  
Joseph Notaro and Renee Heitger  
Steven and Sharon Ockler  
Tolulope Odunsi  
Randall and Rita Odza  
E. Jeannette Ogden  
Richard and Ludy Olszanski  
Diane Ostrowski  
Roberta O'Toole  
Robert and Donna S. Paganelli  
Gertrud and Gerhard Paluca  
Catherine Nugent Panepinto  
Gerald Paradise III  
Michelle M. Parker  
William J. Parker  
Kathy L. Parrish  
Frank J. and Joan W. Pascarella  
Danielle Pelfrey Duryea  
Ethelene Perry  
Mary Peterson  
Dave Pfalzgraf  
Christopher Phillips  
Patrick Phillips  
Joseph and Delores Picone  
Steven H. Polowitz  
Ilya and Luba Polyak  
Catherine M. Pulvirenti  
Theodore J. Pyrak  
Judith M. and Paul Quagliana  
Kevin Quinn  
Carol A. Radich  
Mary E. Rashkin



# THANK YOU!

## The following donors contributed to the Center for Elder Law & Justice during 2021.

### *Individual donors*

---

Shari Jo Reich  
Aven Rennie and Dennis Harkawik  
George E. Riedel  
Erin L. Riker  
Brooks Rimes  
Debra Ritz  
Christa Rivo  
David Roeder  
Amy Rosen-Brand  
Howard S. Rosenhoch  
Jane Rospochowski  
Marie Roth and Colleen Walker  
Arthur A. Russ  
Steven P. Ryan  
Frances M. Sansone  
Melinda Saran  
Julian Scharf  
Tim Schiavi and Elizabeth Ianni  
Kenneth Schiedel  
Geraldyn A. Schiffler  
Deborah Schlager  
Holly Schoenborn  
James Schultz  
James and Jodi Schwegler  
Robert and Ellen Scumaci  
Priscilla Sein  
Virginia Semo  
David Shapiro  
Richard J. Sherwood  
Lynette Shuford  
Monica R. and James Smith  
Karen Nicolson and Thomas Smith  
Anita Smith  
Jamie M. Smith  
Eugene Smolka  
Peter and Peggy Snajczuk  
Linda Snyder  
Rose Sobel  
John Soron  
Robert G. Spampata  
Mark and Madonna J. Spitler  
Jil St.Ledger-Roty

April Stack  
Heidi Stack  
Renee C. Stearns  
Sharon Stern-Gerstman and Daniel Gerstman  
Kathleen and Lawrence Stokely  
Roger Stone  
Paul Stutz  
Donna Hoelscher Suchan  
Steven Sugarman  
Charles Sun  
Ernest S. Surdam  
Kathleen M. Sweet and Brian T. Fredericks  
Brenda Symans  
Bonj Szczygiel  
Marsha Thompson  
Tyler Threehouse  
Holly P. Tucker  
Denis J. and Anna Uminski  
Paul Vallone  
Darla and Marc Van Tine  
Lawrence J. Vilaro  
Evelyn Voit  
Matthew X. and Paula M. Wagner  
Laurie Walsh  
Dennis E. Ward and Michele M. Iannelo-Ward  
Amanda Warner  
Katie M. Warren  
Michael Wasieczko  
Sasha Waskosky  
Helen R. Westmoreland  
Karen Wilcox  
Reginald Williams  
Deborah Willis  
Letitia Wilson  
Woodrow Wilson  
Ruth R. Wiseman Spivack  
Pamela Woods  
Erica Wrobel  
Gregory Yadzinski  
Jeffrey Ziembra  
Janelle Zorn  
Angel Zurek

### *Companies, Organizations, and Foundations*

---

Amazon Smile  
American Legion Frederick F. Cadille Post No. 1664  
Bickford Paper Company  
Brautigam & Brautigam, L.L.P.  
CMK Media LLC  
Estate of Norman J. Klajbor  
Evans Bank Foundation Fund  
Get Into The Right College  
JCS Elder Law, PLLC  
K-9  
Medtronic Foundation  
Michael Angelo Hair Fashions Inc  
Pace & Pace PLLC  
Private Client Wealth LLC  
Russo Law Group  
State Employees Federated Appeal (SEFA)  
Teamsters Local 264  
The Bennes Family Fund  
The Blackbaud Giving Fund  
The Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies  
The Lipsitz & Scrivani Family Charitable Fund  
United Way of Buffalo and Erie County  
United Way of Rochester

# THANK YOU!

**The following donors contributed to the Center for Elder Law & Justice during 2021.**



CENTER FOR ELDER  
LAW & JUSTICE  
**25<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL**  
GOLF TOURNAMENT

## ***Sponsors \$1,500+***

---

Advance 2000  
Bengart & DeMarco, LLP  
KeyBank  
Gibson McAskill & Crosby LLP  
Hodgson Russ LLP  
Jensen, Marks, Langer & Vance  
LLC  
Masiello, Martucci & Associates  
Mattingly Cavagnaro, LLP  
Olear Team at MJ Peterson  
PB Elder Law  
Phillips Lytle LLP  
Reich Emerson LLP  
Smith Vavonese, LLP  
The Coppola Firm

## ***In-kind***

---

Avalon Document Services  
Buffalo Sabres  
Douglas Curella  
Hamburg Brewing Company  
Moriarty Meats  
Try-It Distributing  
Wegmans  
Robert and Mary Weissflach  
Woods to Wedges

**This list includes gifts received between January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021.  
If you believe that you or your organization was inadvertently left off this list,  
please let us know by contacting [sdicamillo@elderjusticeny.org](mailto:sdicamillo@elderjusticeny.org)**





CENTER FOR  
**ELDER  
LAW &  
JUSTICE**