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TWO NOMINEES FROM THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF MID-NEW YORK, INC. AWARDED NYSBA PRESIDENT'S PRO BONO SERVICE AWARD FOR 2022

(UTICA, NY) The Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York, Inc. (LASMNY) is proud to announce that Attorney Robert H. Wedlake and Mucci & Grace LLP have won the New York State Bar Association's prestigious President's Award for 2022. LASMNY recently nominated Attorney Wedlake and the law office of Mucci & Grace to the New York State Bar Association's annual Pro Bono Awards. Both nominees have been awarded the President's Pro Bono Service Award for 2022 for extraordinary pro bono service over the preceding year. They have been awarded under the categories of Sixth Judicial District and Small Law Firm, respectively.

"We provide free legal information, advice, and representation to people who are unable to afford a lawyer. Pro Bono attorneys work in partnership with LASMNY staff to expand our ability to provide civil legal services to a larger number of clients and communities. We are so grateful for all of our volunteers," Executive Director Paul Lupia, Esq. said.

Attorney Wedlake is a partner at Hinman Howard & Kattell, LLP and a member of the firm's real estate department and has been a long time volunteer in the LASMNY eviction defense program in Binghamton City Court. He is a skilled litigator who represents clients in corporate, real estate, and commercial litigation before New York courts and administrative agencies. Over the years, Wedlake has preserved thousands of dollars for tenants and enabled them to avert homelessness by negotiating additional time to vacate or obtaining dismissals of defective petitions. Attorney Wedlake gives this work equal priority with private cases. He has never canceled an appearance due to other clients or commitments. With the recent expiration of the eviction moratorium, the needs have become even more significant and more urgent. Housing cases are high stakes because a family can be homeless within 72 hours if the court issues a warrant of eviction. Attorney Wedlake's services are especially vital given these circumstances. For these reasons, he was awarded with the President's Pro Bono Award.

"All New Yorkers deserve legal representation. It's gratifying to see lawyers willing to put their expertise at the disposal of those who are suffering. We know that legal representation can be a lifeline for many families and are grateful for the opportunity to provide assistance. We are thankful for the network of the volunteer attorneys throughout our 13 counties in Central New York," Arlene Sanders, Esq, Director of Pro Bono Programs, said.

Mucci & Grace is a general practice firm based in Binghamton, NY. The firm practices primarily criminal defense, family, and matrimonial law. Despite their busy schedules, partners Chris Grace

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and Michael Mucci have been dedicated volunteers in LASMNY's Private Attorney Involvement Program. Since the firm's inception in 2015, they have gone above and beyond in its pro bono service, volunteering and supporting a wide range of pro bono initiatives.

Mucci & Grace has completed dozens of cases involving full representation. Mucci & Grace has worked with LASMNY on multiple divorce cases, many of which involved domestic violence has supported LASMNY in our annual 5k fundraiser, and has been generous enough to mentor several student interns. The NYSBA Small Law Firm Award is extremely competitive, with only one winner in the entire state of New York each year.

The President's Pro Bono Service Awards Ceremony will be held on May 2, 2022. At which, both winners will be officially awarded and thanked for their generous pro bono work over the past year.

To learn more or sign up to volunteer Pro Bono for Legal Aid please visit our website <https://www.lasmny.org/pro-bono-opportunities>.

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LASMNY has offices in Utica, Syracuse, Binghamton, Watertown, Oswego, Oneonta, Cooperstown, and New Paltz. We cover 13 counties in New York State.

LASMNY's mission is to provide free legal assistance to low-income people facing civil legal problems that impact the basic needs of life. Through legal advice, emergency legal services and legal representation, we help low-income people stabilize their finances, protect themselves and their children from domestic violence, obtain access to healthcare, avoid homelessness as a result of wrongful evictions, protect the family home from foreclosure and increase household income. We also target specific vulnerable populations with our services, such as senior citizens, victims of domestic violence, people with disabilities, refugees and immigrants, and veterans

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