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[Home](#) / [Expert Opinion](#) / [McKnight honorees get special recognition](#)

McKnight honorees get special recognition

By: [Nora A. Jones](#) [October 13, 2016](#) [0](#)



U.S. District Court Judge Elizabeth Wolford (WDNY) spoke to McKnight Award recipients in an informal gathering at the home of past VLSP Board President Frank Novak.

"Pro bono work reminds you why you went to law school in the first place," said U.S. District Court Judge Elizabeth Wolford, speaking to an audience of 25, most of whom have logged many hours of volunteer legal representation.

"You are making a difference in people's lives in a very meaningful way. I congratulate you and thank you," the judge concluded.

The occasion was an invitation-only reception for the 2016 William E. McKnight Award recipients, and their colleagues who were recognized with the same award in 2007, 2008, and 2009.

McKnight Award

Volunteer Legal Services Project of Monroe County, Inc. created the William E. McKnight Award in 1986 to honor commitment to equal justice, naming the award after the young Nixon Hargrave (now Nixon Peabody LLP) attorney by that name who devoted a great deal of time to helping build the young VLSP organization and handling difficult and complex immigration cases for people with no means to pay.

The 2016 award recipients are Matthew Fero, partner at Fero & Ingersoll; Andrew Martin, a California transplant in private practice; and Gary Vangraafeiland, retired general counsel for Kodak. They were publicly honored at the Monroe County Bar Association's Law Day Luncheon earlier this year.

Special reception

The Sept. 22 evening reception was held at the home of past VLSP Board President Frank A. Novak (Harter, Secrest & Emery LLP), with current VLSP Board President Laura Smalley (Harris Beach PLLC) also on hand for remarks.



Frank Novak (Harter Secrest & Emery LLP) in his home with 2016 McKnight recipient Andrew Martin and his guest April Butler.

VLSP Executive Director Sheila Gaddis explained that when the board decided to host these annual receptions, members didn't want to overlook past recipients, so each year, along with the newest McKnight honorees, the VLSP board includes the prior McKnight Award recipients from three other years.

This year that included 2009 McKnight Award recipient Steven Levitsky (Handelman, Witkowitz & Levitsky), Sue Tebor (Harris Beach PLLC), and John McQueen (Nixon Peabody LLP); 2008 honorees Christopher Lindquist (App Div 4th), Nicole Fitzgerald (Harris, Chesworth, O'Brien, Johnstone, Welch & Leone LLP) and John Witmeyer (retired, Nixon Peabody LLP); along with 2007 McKnight recipients Cara DiPaola (now out of state), R. Thompson Gilman (Woods Oviatt Gilman LLP) and Leslie Swift (law clerk to

Judge Scott J. Odorisi).

Honor Roll

VLSP offers a wide variety of opportunities for attorneys to provide full representation to low-income clients or provide advice at monthly clinics. Practice areas include divorce, wills, unemployment, insurance, guardianship, consumer, bankruptcy, collections, child support, custody and visitation. Attorneys in our Micro-Entrepreneur Pro Bono Program render advice to low-income entrepreneurs.

Volunteer [Legal Services](#) Project of Monroe County announced its "Honor Roll" of attorneys and paralegals who recently took cases or staffed clinics.

September 2016 Honor Roll

Solo Practitioners: Frank Beretta; Thomas Corletta; Carl Darnall; Charles Genese; Charles Gremke; Jacqueline Grippe; Ardeth Houde; Michael Kieffer; Lisa Paine; Andrew Martin; John McQueen; Amado Marin; Hon. Patricia Marks; Andrew Martin; Robert Nicolais; George L. Parker; Tracy A. Powell; Barbara Orenstein; Paul Richardson; Ernest D. Santoro; Michael Schnittman; John Suda; Gary VanGraafeiland



2008 McKnight Awardee John Witmeyer (center) is joined by his wife Laurie Witmeyer (left) and VLSP Staff Attorney Ann Williams.

Attorneys at Firms: Thomas P. Durkin (Allstate); Sanjeev Devabhakthuni (Barclay Damon LLP); Gabriel Bouvet-Boisclair (Barclay Damon LLP); Edwin Larkin (Barclay Damon LLP); Danielle Mettler-LaFeir (Barclay Damon LLP); Anthony Piazza (Barclay Damon LLP); Paul Sanders (Barclay Damon LLP); Tara Sciortino (Barclay Damon LLP); Thomas Walsh (Barclay Damon LLP); **Nolan Lafler (Blitman & King LLP)**; Ed Hourihan (Bond, Schoeneck & King, PLLC); C. Bruce Lawrence (Boylan Code LLP); Thomas J. Cusker (Cusker & Cusker); Matthew Fero (Fero & Ingersoll LLP); Beth



From left: VLSP Staff Attorney Karen Chung, 2007 McKnight Award Recipient Tom Gilman (Woods Oviatt Gilman LLP) and his wife Kelly Nagle.

Wilkins (Harris Beach PLLC); Andrew Anderson (Harter Secrest & Emery LLP); Amanda Dwyer (Harter Secrest & Emery LLP); David Ferris (Harter Secrest & Emery LLP); Andre Lindsay (Harter Secrest & Emery LLP); Lucrecia Knapp (Harter Secrest & Emery LLP); Jesse St. Cyr (Harter Secrest & Emery LLP); Jon Webster (Harter Secrest & Emery LLP); David Wilks (Harter Secrest & Emery LLP); Bradley Kammholz (Kammholz Law PLLC); Michael Wegman (Lacy Katzen LLP); Gregory Fassler (Modica & Associates, Attorneys, PLLC); Steven Feder (Pirrello, Missal, Personte & Feder); Anthony Scalia

(Pullano & Fero PLLC); George Schell (Schell & Schell); Leah Tarantino-Cintineo (Underberg & Kessler LLP); Ericka Gruschow (Student, University of Buffalo Law School); Robert Hooks (Woods Oviatt Gilman LLP);

Government: Linda Kostin (Appellate Division); Adam Oshrin (Appellate Division);

Corporate Attorneys: Evan Thompson (Rochester Institute of Technology – Office of Legal Affairs); Mark Wright (University of Rochester Office of Counsel); Gary Cohen (Xerox Corporation)

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