

MICROENTERPRISE *(continued)*

Stroock & Stroock & Lavan, through its VOLS-arranged match with the **Pratt Area Community Council** in Brooklyn, has provided legal services to a pastry chef on the appropriate corporate formation for his business; assisted a microentrepreneur on trademark issues; provided patent advice to an entrepreneur with an electric juicer invention; and assisted with a design patent for a board game invention.

UPCOMING VOLS TRAINING SESSIONS

- November 1—Housing Repair Training, 2–5pm at Legal Services for New York City. To register go to www.legalsupport.org.
- November 13—Lifetime Planning Training, 6–9 pm at Davis Polk & Wardwell. To register, contact Oscar Straus, ostras@volspobono.org.
- Sessions are co-sponsored by LSNY Legal Support Unit. CLE credit is available for both sessions.

Pro Bono Forum is published by VOLS. Your comments are welcome.



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VOLS PRO BONO FORUM

A Publication of *Volunteers of Legal Service*

FALL 2007

VOLS ELECTS NEW OFFICERS AND FIVE NEW DIRECTORS

The VOLS Board of Directors has elected **John S. Kiernan**, a partner at **Debevoise & Plimpton**, as chairman, and **John M. Aerni**, a partner at **LeBoeuf, Lamb, Greene & MacRae**, as president. **James H.R. Windels**, a partner at **Davis Polk & Wardwell**, has been elected as vice-president and **Lois F. Herzeca**, a partner at **Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson**, as secretary-treasurer. “This Board election marks a significant point of transition for VOLS,” comments Mr. Kiernan. “Former Board chair **Tom Moreland** and treasurer **Bob Egan** are two of the original creators of VOLS, serving on the Board and as leaders of the organization since its inception in 1984. Their vision, energy, wisdom and attention to the operational challenges of building and nurturing a pro bono organization over several decades have been pivotal to VOLS’s success. Although they are stepping down from their positions as chair and secretary-treasurer, they have, to our delight, agreed to continue serving as directors, and we look forward to many more years of working with them. **Paul Saunders** is stepping down, having served on the Board for eleven years and as vice-president. Paul has combined his dedication to VOLS with a fierce commitment to personal engagement in pro bono work, most recently evident in his leadership of Cravath’s work at the Children’s Hospital of New York-Presbyterian and Children’s Hospital at Montefiore in the VOLS Children’s Project. Paul has been a tremendous contributor to our organization and VOLS and the entire New York pro bono community owe him a debt of gratitude.” *(continued on pg.3)*

VOLS CHILDREN’S PROJECTS

(1) Launching of Children’s School-based Project

In this new project, VOLS is matching law firms with schools to address civil legal problems facing families that threaten to disrupt the education of their children. As examples, an eviction can lead to children having to withdraw from their school—a calamity for the children and family. Or an interruption in public benefits—cash or medical benefits or food stamps—can cause deep distress in the life of a family which will adversely impact on the education of their children.

The VOLS School Project is starting this fall at these three schools:

- **Public School 146**, an elementary school in East Harlem, matched by VOLS with the law firm of **Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson**.
- **KIPP Academy**, a middle school in the Mott Haven/Morrisana section of the Bronx, matched by VOLS with **Debevoise & Plimpton**.
- **The Bushwick Campus**, four high schools in Brooklyn on a single campus, matched by VOLS with **Simpson Thacher & Bartlett**.

Legal issues most likely to be dealt with by lawyers in the VOLS School Project are housing, public benefits and immigration. An introductory training session in these three areas for volunteer lawyer participants was hosted over the summer at Simpson Thacher, with a presentation on public benefits by **Don Friedman**, Director, **Empire Justice Center’s Long Island office**; on housing, by **Jennifer Levy**, Director, Housing Unit, **South Brooklyn**

Legal Services; and on immigration by **James M. Stillwaggon**, counsel, **White & Case**. Serving as mentors to the volunteer lawyers on an on-going basis on housing issues will be Ms. Levy and her colleagues at South Brooklyn Legal Services, and on immigration issues, **David Grunblatt**, a partner at **Proskauer Rose**, along with his colleagues in the firm's corporate immigration practice.

In selecting school sites, VOLS was on the lookout for schools where there would be a strong commitment to the project, and a welcome extended to the lawyers to integrate the project into the fabric of the school, so that the volunteer lawyers become a part of the team working to improve the chances for success for the children attending the school.

(2) Children's Hospital-based Project

In this project, lawyers work with social workers, doctors and nurses at eight hospitals as part of a team to improve health outcomes for poor children through the provision of pro bono legal services. Examples of cases:

Cravath. (a) Representation of child who has a brain tumor to secure placement in an appropriate school. (b) Restoring public benefits to non-English speaking mother who spends each day at the hospital with her sick child. (c) Having landlord remove lead paint from apartment. (Cravath is matched by VOLS with the **Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital of New York-Presbyterian** and the **Children's Hospital at Montefiore**. During the first six months of 2007, 44 lawyers and legal assistants at the firm participated in this project.)

Patterson Belknap. (a) Apartment of pediatric patient infested with rodents. Structural problems in apartment included crumbling wall, broken windows and broken electrical outlets. Upon intervention of lawyers, the Housing Authority provided temporary housing elsewhere for family while apartment was repaired. Another agency provided a cash grant to help with the family's expenses for the period out of the apartment and to recompense for furniture destroyed by rodents. Family has now returned to the apartment. (b) Mother born in West

Africa. Her four children are U.S. citizens, three of whom suffer from sickle cell anemia. Pursuant to the Violence Against Women Act, lawyers submitted petition to U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services on her behalf. Bureau has indicated that the petition is likely to be successful, entitling her to public benefits she previously could not obtain due to her undocumented status. (Patterson is matched by VOLS with **Metropolitan Hospital Center**. 25 lawyers and eight legal assistants participate.)

LeBoeuf, Lamb. (a) Assisted pregnant, homeless woman in obtaining Housing Authority apartment after she had had to vacate former housing due to domestic violence. (b) Obtained rent forgiveness of eight months from landlord due to substandard housing and rent overcharge on behalf of family with two boys suffering from severe asthma. (LeBoeuf is matched by VOLS with **Harlem Hospital Center**. 23 lawyers and two legal assistants participate.)

VOLS and **LeBoeuf** were honored this spring by the **Center for Community Health Partnerships** for our work with the **Harlem Children's Zone Asthma Initiative**. Others honored at the ceremony, held at the Children's Hospital of New York-Presbyterian, were the **Harlem Hospital Center**, **Department of Pediatrics** and the **Mailman School of Public Health**.

VOLS ELDERLY PROJECT NEWS

The **VOLS Elderly Project** is opening two new clinic sites, both in Harlem: **The Abyssinian Development Corporation's Abby Towers Residence** and the **Central Harlem Senior Citizen's Coalition**.

Pro bono legal services are provided in the VOLS Elderly Project to poor persons living in Manhattan who are over the age of 60. For the first seven months of this year, the project has served seniors on 873 matters. We conduct legal clinics each month at East Side and West Side senior centers and also provide services to clients from an additional 80 community-based agencies serving the elderly poor. Areas of legal assistance include wills, medical directives, powers of attorney, housing, consumer matters and Medicaid.

Providing legal assistance to homebound seniors is an important part of the project. Over half of the 300

Wills prepared for clients last year were done at the request of homebound clients.

New recruits to the project include lawyers in the legal departments of the **Bank of America** and **Citigroup**. Over 150 volunteer lawyers serve on our Elderly Project roster.

A recipient of the project's services writes:

I am still overwhelmed as to the courtesy and respect that was extended to me and how well the documents are prepared. Above all, **Katie Norman** [of **Skadden Arps**] was a wonderful experience. Not only is she intelligent and expeditious, but also a sensitive and caring human being, putting me at ease when discussing my concerns and wishes. Now that I have put "my life in order," I fell quite relieved. Thanks to you, we seniors can feel assured that we are not a forgotten segment of the Big Apple's population.

This fall, VOLS will publish a new edition of our *Guide to Burial Assistance and Funeral Planning for New Yorkers in Need*. The guide assists social workers and family and friends involved with making burial arrangements for poor persons. **Zvi Storch**, a law student at Brooklyn Law School, updated and expanded the guide while working at VOLS over the summer. We are indebted to **Davis Polk & Wardwell** for printing the guide.

To download a copy of the guide, go to our website, www.volsprobono.org and click on "The Elderly Poor"; then scroll down to "Guide" and click on the link. Single copies of the guide may be obtained by sending a stamped (\$1.99), self-addressed 9 x 12 envelope to Oscar S. Straus III, Elderly Project Director, Volunteers of Legal Service, 54 Greene Street, New York, NY 10013.

VOLS ELECTIONS *(continued)*

VOLS welcomes these new Board members:

- **Karen Artz Ash**, a partner at **Katten Muchin Rosenman**, where she serves as chair of the firm's New York Pro Bono Committee.

- **Melinda Dutton**, a partner in the healthcare division of **Manatt, Phelps & Phillips**. Prior to joining Manatt, she served on the staff at the Children's Defense Fund in New York.

- **Lizabeth Ann R. Eisen**, a partner at **Cravath Swaine & Moore** and active participant in Cravath's pro bono work in the VOLS Children's Project.

- **Caroline M. Gentile**, an associate professor of law at **Fordham University School of Law** where her scholarship focuses on the relationships among corporate governance, finance and law.

- **Cyrus D. Mehta**, a member and managing attorney of **Cyrus D. Mehta & Associates**, where he concentrates on immigration and nationality law.

IT IS LIFE TO EXERT ONESELF CONTINUOUSLY, AND IT IS THE BEST LIFE TO EXERT ONESELF IN THE BEST ENDEAVORS.

— Leon Battista Alberti, *Renaissance humanist and architect*

MICROENTERPRISE PROJECT NEWS

The VOLS Microenterprise Project provides pro bono legal assistance on business law matters to low-income microentrepreneurs who have the spirit and talent to start their own business, but may have little practical knowledge about running a business. VOLS matches law firms with economic development organizations working with microentrepreneurs. We welcome the **JPMorgan Chase law department** to the project. Its lawyers have been matched by VOLS with the **Business Outreach Center Network**.

From January 1 – June 30 of this year, 112 volunteer lawyers provided legal services on business law matters to almost 100 microentrepreneurs.

As examples of cases, **Hughes Hubbard & Reed**, through its VOLS - arranged match with the **Brooklyn Economic Development Corporation**, represents microentrepreneurs who have histories of mental illness, or are visually impaired. The firm's work has included incorporating new business entities; reviewing leases, proposed partnership arrangements and commercial agreements; and providing copyright; trademark and patent advice. Clients have included a computer repair technician, an interior designer, a DJ, fashion designers and musicians. *(continued on back page)*