

The Importance of our 'Non-Legal' Partners to the Pro Bono Cause by Gail Broder Katz

On April 6, 2016, the Access to Justice Committee in conjunction with the Nassau County Bar Association, The Safe Center and Nassau Suffolk Law Services held the Second Annual Pro Bono Recognition Reception to honor and thank all those who serve the less fortunate in our communities. At the event, our 'non-legal' providers/partners were also recognized for their contributions to the pro bono effort. After all, volunteer/pro bono service is not limited to attorneys. We are often in need of the assistance of other professionals in a variety of disciplines. At last year's event, and again this year, we honored Real Time Reporting and Ultimate Process and Attorney Services, Inc. for the tremendous assistance and support they provided (and continue to provide) to our clients and their pro bono attorneys.

At this year's Reception, we were thrilled to add the accounting firm of Baker Tilly and Harold L. Deiters III, a partner at the firm, to the list of 'non-legal' providers. One of our pro bono attorneys is representing a Safe Center client, Ms. X, in a bitter and contentious divorce. The client's very wealthy husband was extremely violent and abusive throughout the marriage. Ms. X was positive that Mr. X had transferred large sums of money (marital property) in violation of the automatic orders prohibiting such activity during the pendency of a matrimonial action. He continually lied to the courts about his financial position, even pleading poverty to a Support Magistrate so he that he could have an 18B attorney provided to represent him. While Ms. X's attorney was able to locate some of the funds, it was clear that a forensic accounting expert was needed. Because Mr. X had deprived Ms. X of access to any marital funds she did not have the ability or resources to try find the transferred money. Fortunately, upon hearing of this situation, Mr. Deiters offered his services free of charge. He performed a detailed forensic accounting of Mr. X's business and was able to prove and demonstrate that not only did Mr. X transfer marital funds to another bank account, but that bank account was in another country! He traced the funds to their ultimate destination, a bank in the Middle East. Mr. Deiters' work uncovered a substantial sum of money that but for his efforts would have vanished from the 'marital pot'. Ms. X is extremely grateful for Mr. Deiters' assistance and he deserves to be commended for his efforts.

The volunteer attorneys do a tremendous job of representing the indigent citizens of Nassau County. But the representation often requires more than the legal services provided by our volunteers: service of process, court transcripts, translation of documents, and accounting services are often necessary parts of a case. The clients' resources are limited, if not non-existent, and so the generosity of our 'non-legal' providers is often a crucial component to the outcome of a case. Their assistance adds a whole other welcome dimension to the pro bono effort. It is gratifying to see the legal

and other professional communities working together for the sole purpose of improving the lives of our friends and neighbors in Nassau County.

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for information about the Project and how you can help.*