

Annual Event Transcript - Andrew Cohn

I'm Andy Cohn, and I serve as Chair of the Board of the Volunteer Lawyers Project.

I'm very pleased to welcome you to VLP's annual appreciation event for our hundreds of hardworking volunteers.

While there were some hopes in the first half of 2021 that we'd soon be back to in person gatherings, that's not the case for all the reasons you know. VLP staff and all our volunteers have had to be creative and persistent in dealing with virtual court hearings, then shifting to in-person court hearings while still continuing some virtual court hearings.

Also VLP staff, including our staff at the Eastern Region Legal Intake, have had to work from remote locations as have most of our volunteers. All of this has required extraordinary efforts that reflect the high professionalism our volunteers and staff bring to everything they do on a daily basis in helping thousands of vulnerable people whom we serve, whose numbers have grown during this covid crisis.

I want to reflect a moment, on a sad recent loss at VLP: the death from cancer of board member and client caucus member, Timothy P Lee. Tim had served on the VLP board as well as the MLAC board for many years. VLP's executive director will say more about Tim in her remarks today, but I want to recognize what an excellent director and executive committee member and client caucus member Tim has been. Our hearts and our honor go out to all who were close to him.

With the Delta variant continuing to make court and administrative proceedings more complex, there will be more work to do in the coming year by VLP's able staff, and by you: our hundreds and hundreds of volunteers who put in long hours as faithful professionals serving our clients.

VLP's motto is: "We are your path to pro bono." But you, our volunteers, are the engine of pro bono. And for that we extend our profound gratitude and we're here to join in celebration to recognize your efforts.



Annual Event Transcript - Deb J. Manus

I'm Deb Manus, President of the Boston Bar Association, and a partner at Nutter, McClennen & Fish. Today, it's my honor to introduce Boston Mayor, Kim Janey.

Mayor Janey has been a voice for progressive leadership in the city, and a champion of inclusion and opportunity for all of the city's residents. Elected to the Boston City Council in 2017, she was the first woman to represent District 7, which includes Roxbury, parts of the South End, Dorchester, and the Fenway. In 2020, she was elected President of the City Council. Earlier this year, so many of us were moved and proud when Kim Janey became both the first Black person to serve as the Mayor of the City of Boston, as well as the first woman to serve as the Mayor of the City of Boston.

Today as Mayor, Kim Janey leads the city guided by the values she said she was raised with: the importance of education, the power of community organizing, and the fundamental principles of equity and justice.

Before running for office, Kim Janey built a career as a longtime educational advocate and a nonprofit leader. She championed systemic policy reforms to increase equity, excellence, access, and opportunity in Boston Public Schools. She placed a special focus on eliminating opportunity gaps and achievement gaps for children of color, immigrant children, English-language learners, children with special needs, and those living in poverty.

As mayor, Kim Janey remains focused on equity, economic justice, and civil rights. She has been steadfast in pushing for greater equity, accountability, and transparency in city contracting, in ensuring diversity in hiring, advocating for equity and education, housing that is affordable, and in supporting families impacted by trauma. Mayor Janey has been recognized with a number of awards including: the Boston NAACP Difference Maker Award, and the coveted Sapphire Award. This year, she was named as Boston's Most Impactful Black Woman. Of course she was! Last but certainly not least among Kim Janey's many accomplishments. Mayor Janey is a proud mother and a grandmother of three.

Please join me in welcoming today our keynote speaker, the Mayor of the City of Boston, Kim Janey.



Annual Event Transcript - Cynthia Wheeling

Hello, my name is Cynthia, but everyone knows me as Cindy, and I am a deaf full-time college student. I am originally from Louisiana, but lived in Massachusetts for 10 years before returning to Louisiana in 2018 after separating from my husband and realizing that I had no support system in Massachusetts.

While going through homelessness in Louisiana, my husband filed for divorce, and when seeking legal advice, I learned that I could not receive legal assistance in the state of Louisiana since the divorce was filed in Massachusetts. As I'm no longer a resident of Massachusetts, I couldn't find legal aid willing to provide advice, so while attempting to respond to the divorce paperwork myself, I contacted different attorneys and agencies and did extensive research online in an attempt to locate resources that could help me.

I eventually located the VLP organization online and inquired about getting legal advice for my divorce. I worked with Geraldine, who had never worked with a deaf individual, but was more than willing to meet with me via Zoom to provide legal advice with the assistance of an American Sign Language interpreter.

Divorce is an emotional and challenging process, and it is not easy to understand the legalities of the different aspects involved. Geraldine was able to meet with me on two separate occasions to provide me with instructions as to how to handle certain aspects of the divorce process, which I am thankful for, and I am now divorced, which means I can put that part of my life behind me. I just want to thank Geraldine and VLP for helping me. I understand volunteering as an attorney requires a lot of personal time, and I really appreciate the concept behind the VLP.

Thank you.



Annual Event Transcript - Judge Ginsburg

Good afternoon, everybody.

My name is Judge Ginsburg. I am the founder of Senior Partners for Justice, and it is a pleasure and an honor for me today to present the Gideon's Trumpet Award to Judge David Sacks.

For those of you who don't remember, the Gideon's Trumpet Award was given in honor of Attorney Tony Lewis of the New York Times, who wrote the book Gideon's Trumpet which established the principle in criminal cases that people are entitled to a lawyer.

And when Senior Partners had gotten 100 volunteers, I asked him to come and speak and he spoke, and he did a wonderful job. And I said, "What can we do for you?" He said, "Nothing." I said, "Yes we can! We're going to encourage civil representation, by naming our major award, after your book The Gideon's Trumpet Award."

And this year, Judge Sacks just popped up as the man who should get the award.

When Senior Partners first moved out west and we were trying to establish ourselves, we were looking for a little gravitas. And Judge Sacks, he used to come, we'd have luncheons out there every month and he would come every lunch, and he would volunteer to speak whenever I asked him. And when Senior Partners celebrated its 15th year, he came into Boston to be part of, and contribute to, the celebration.

I always said to Judge Sacks, "When you reach retirement, we're going to come after you and you are going to really help us," and he would smile. Well, Judge Sacks has reached the retirement age, but he's not retiring.

He has been very instrumental in doing something that I could never do. He was able to put together the Bar Association, the court, community legal aid to establish a conciliation program--help establish it--in the West, which is about to begin. First of course it will have to be remote. And then of course we want to have it in the courthouse.

Now Judge Sacks, his efforts have been recognized by the bench and the bar in that he has been named an Access to Justice Fellow. And that means that he is expected to perform at least 20 hours of pro bono work, every week. And he has elected to do that through Senior Partners for Justice, and I look forward to working with him and for him helping relieve the burden of making Senior Partners help everybody--to help those in need.

Thank you very much, Judge Sacks. We love you.



Annual Event Transcript - Emelia Andres

Good evening, My name is Emelia Andres and I am the Pro Bono Manager here at VLP. I want to start by saying thank you to all our volunteers joining us tonight for all of the work that you have done over the last year. We truly couldn't have accomplished what we did without the support of our attorneys, law students, and paralegals. Tonight I have the honor of recognizing three of our outstanding volunteers as recipients of the Dennis Maguire Award. This award was originally created to honor individuals on our volunteer panel who have dedicated their time and commitment to access to justice for all. Here are awardees:

Our first honoree is Sharon Jones, Sharon runs her own law practice in Boston and has been a volunteer with VLP for last 22 YEARS! Sharon has been focusing her time in the housing courts helping tenants prepare answers for eviction cases and providing advice for landlords. She also volunteers at our Family Law and Guardianship Clinic each Wednesday. She hopes to get back to our SERV clinic once we are back in person. Sharon we want to thank you for your dedication to VLP's mission for over two decades!

Our next honoree is Joesph D'Antuono! Joe has been a volunteer with VLP for the last 9 years, and has his own Law Practice. He volunteers in our Family Law and Guardianship, Consumer, and Housing units working with the Covid Eviction Legal Help Project (CEHLP). During the pandemic Joe expanded his reach to our Consumer and Housing units, learning new areas of law has allowed him to connect with people hit hard by the pandemic.

Our last honoree is Ted Papadapaloulos! Ted has concentrated his volunteer efforts with our Covid Eviction Legal Help Project or (CELHP), he has been working to assist landlords in the western housing court. He hopes that his pro bono work is able to provide a sense of calm and understanding for the clients that he works with, as well as providing a roadmap and tools necessary to succeed for what they are looking to achieve.

Thank you Ted and a big thank you to all of our honorees for carrying out VLP's mission each and every day you volunteer with us.



Annual Event Transcript - Rob Roberts

My name is Robert Roberts, and I am the Vice Chair of the VLP Board.

Thank you all for joining us tonight to celebrate our dedicated volunteers, whose work is absolutely integral to everything we do here at VLP.

As you've heard here this evening, the last year has presented new challenges for our clients and has underscored many long-standing issues faced by the most vulnerable in our community.

It thus more critical than ever that we continue our mission to increase access to our civil justice system.

VLP's volunteers, staff, and community of supporters help ensure fair outcomes for low-income clients in housing, employment, and consumer law disputes among a host of other issues.

And as we continue to help our clients navigate these challenges, I'd like to ask all of you to please continue to support VLP and our clients in any way that you can.

Continue to volunteer, continue to advocate for our clients, and if you're able, please make a donation to VLP by going to vlpnet.org and clicking donate.

Thank you once again for attending this evening's event, and I hope you have a great evening.

