



*Dear Friends,*

*As spring blooms around us, I am filled with gratitude for the resilience and strength displayed by each member of our community. Despite the challenges we have faced, your unwavering commitment to justice and equality continues to inspire us all.*

*At MidPenn, we are pleased to announce our new Guardianship Pilot Project, which we launched in December with funding from the Administrative Office of Courts (AOPC). This initiative is designed to provide legal counsel to represent alleged incapacitated persons aged 60+ who have not retained private counsel in guardianship proceedings. Our dedication to empowering individuals and families to navigate life's legal challenges with dignity and support is at the core of this project. As we embrace the spirit of renewal that comes with the changing seasons, let us also renew our commitment to serving those in need with compassion and determination. We believe that everyone deserves access to quality legal representation, and we are thrilled to be able to provide this service for vulnerable seniors.*

*Together, we can sow the seeds of hope and justice, ensuring that every individual who needs legal assistance has access. Thank you for your continued support and partnership as we work towards a brighter future for all.*

*With heartfelt gratitude,  
Rhodia D. Thomas, Esq.  
Executive Director*



## **Congratulations Rhodia**

Congratulations to our Executive Director Rhodia D. Thomas. Rhodia will be receiving Syracuse University's School of Education's Tolley Medal during the 2024 One University awards on April 19, 2024. The award celebrates the honorable work and dedicated service of outstanding members of the Syracuse University community. Read more: [Rhodia D. Thomas '77: Using Law](#)

[and Learning to Open Doors, for Herself and Others](#) | Syracuse University School of Education

## **Guardianship Initiative**



The Administrative Office of Courts (AOPC) has launched a pilot project in Dauphin County to provide legal representation to alleged incapacitated persons (AIP) and incapacitated persons (IP) aged 60 and above in guardianship proceedings where private counsel is not retained. The project is being funded through a grant and aims to increase the appointment of counsel and the frequency of attendance of the AIP or IP at guardianship proceedings. This initiative will help achieve the overarching goals of the grant, which include ensuring due process for the alleged incapacitated person, improving guardianship monitoring capabilities to prevent abuse and exploitation, and promoting alternatives to guardianship. The AOPC is planning to extend the project's scope to other counties in the MidPenn region in the future. For further information, please visit [midpenn.org](http://midpenn.org) or contact Nick Matash, Esq. at [nmatash@midpenn.org](mailto:nmatash@midpenn.org).

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## Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic

Bryan, who owned a thriving electrical contracting company for a decade, faced a significant challenge in 2019 when it was uncovered that the company's bookkeeper was engaging in fraudulent activities by withholding payroll tax deposits from the IRS. This deceitful act was carried out through the maintenance of dual sets of books, enabling the bookkeeper to embezzle funds from the company. Bryan's awareness of this financial fraud only came to light when alerted by the IRS Criminal Investigations Unit, leading to initial criminal charges that were later dismissed. Despite the dropped charges, the IRS deemed the client a responsible party, holding him accountable for the stolen funds. Consequently, trust fund recovery penalties totaling \$62,000 were imposed on the client for four delinquent payroll tax periods. The stress and turmoil endured during this turbulent period took a toll on the client's health, resulting in two severe heart attacks and necessitating a heart transplant surgery. Following a successful surgery, unfortunately, the client experienced a stroke that impacted both his memory and ability to work. Despite his resilience in recovering from the stroke, he made the difficult decision to close his company and filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy in 2020. Although this bankruptcy relieved a significant portion of his debt, it's important to note that the trust fund recovery penalty cannot be discharged through bankruptcy proceedings, leaving the client with a remaining personal obligation of \$62,000 to the IRS.



Bryan sought assistance from the LITC to settle the trust fund recovery penalty with the IRS. Attorney Robert Hamilton helped him in collecting his financial information and preparing an Offer in Compromise. Despite the challenge of having enough equity in his home, which could have led to obtaining a home equity loan to pay off the entire penalty, Attorney Hamilton successfully argued that the equity in the home should be ignored. This was due to Bryan's poor credit history and his health and mental state, which prevented him from earning the income he was making before his heart attacks. Eventually, the IRS accepted the Offer in Compromise for a payment of \$5,000, and the remaining \$57,000 in trust fund recovery penalty was written off by the IRS. This outcome was achieved through Attorney Hamilton's expertise in navigating the legal complexities and advocating for the client's best interests.

lient applied for assistance with the LITC and sought to settle the trust fund recovery penalty with the IRS. Attorney Robert Hamilton assisted the client in gathering his financial information and preparing an Offer in Compromise. Part of the challenge in getting the IRS to accept the Offer in Compromise was that the client had enough equity in his home that he could potentially obtain a home equity loan to pay off the entire trust fund recovery penalty. However, Attorney Hamilton was able to successfully argue that the equity in the home should be ignored due to the client's poor credit history, and the fact that the client's health and mental state prevented him from earning the income he was making prior to his heart attacks. The IRS accepted the Offer in Compromise for a payment of \$5,000, and once this balance was paid the remaining \$57,000 in trust fund recovery penalty was written off by the IRS.

## Veterans Multi-Service Center

The Funder Veteran's Multi-Service Center (VMC) has been instrumental in enabling MidPenn to provide assistance to very low-income Veterans and their families, who may otherwise not have qualified for our services. The income guidelines for this program are higher than those of our other funders, which has allowed us to serve this deserving population. In the first quarter of 2024, MidPenn was able to open seven cases and provide services to six adults and two children under this special funding. Our assistance included support in areas such as expungement, unemployment, housing, disability, and DHS services. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve our veterans and their families and are committed to helping them access the resources they need to lead fulfilling lives.



Margaret O'Leary effectively facilitated the acquisition of Social Security Disability Insurance for an army veteran during the reconsideration phase, sparing him the need to undergo a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge. This not only expedited the benefits process but also prevented a potential year-long delay in receiving the deserved benefits. Our intervention involved furnishing the agency with recent medical evidence substantiating the client's disability, as well as arranging complimentary transportation for the client from rural Pennsylvania to a crucial medical assessment that significantly bolstered his case.

Veteran's Multi-Service Center covers ten counties, Berks, Centre, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Mifflin and Schuylkill Counties.

## Grant Award from Adams County Bar Foundation



On May 1st, MidPenn Managing Attorney Nicole Sipe was awarded a grant of \$15,000 by the Adams County Bar Foundation to support a custody contract attorney position in Adams County. This grant will significantly expand the legal resources available in Adams County, enabling Attorney Andrea Singley to provide legal assistance in custody issues to low-income individuals who would otherwise not be able to afford an attorney. This initiative is a testament to the commitment of the Adams County Bar Foundation to support legal aid programs that help low-income individuals access justice. For over 10 years,

the foundation has been supporting similar projects, and we are grateful for their continued support. This project is a collaborative effort to ensure that everyone has access to legal representation, and we are proud to be part of it.

## Community Outreach

On March 21, 2024, a significant event took place as MidPenn Legal Services, in partnership with the York County Bar Association and the Inns of Court, organized a session on Language Access within the realm of artificial intelligence (A.I.). Led by the esteemed Yinet Pérez Vega, Esq., Manager of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, this educational initiative aimed to enlighten the legal community on the Ethical Rules of Professional Conduct concerning the utilization of artificial intelligence to enhance language access in legal practice and proceedings.



## Across MidPenn's Offices



**Congratulations** are in order for MidPenn Deputy Director for Legal Advocacy, **Laurie Baughman**, on being honored with the 2024 Louise Herr Award for her unwavering dedication and exceptional service to the legal community. This prestigious recognition was bestowed upon Laurie at the recent Lancaster Bar Association dinner, underscoring her significant contributions and commitment to the field. Such accolades not only highlight Laurie's outstanding professional accomplishments but also serve as a testament to her leadership and impact within the legal sphere.

### Ombudsman

The Schuylkill County Ombudsman, Eileen Barlow, recently led a successful PEER Training session at the Tremont Health and Rehab Center, culminating in a graduation ceremony on

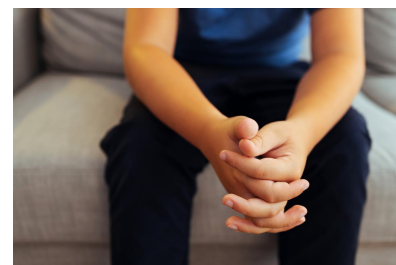


January 23, 2024. This marked the graduation of the 8th class from Tremont and the 34th class from Schuylkill County overall, with six residents completing the training. The program continues to thrive, with a total of 28 active PEERs currently participating in the county program.

Eileen Barlow and Ombudsman Volunteer, Linda DaRosa, recently participated in the Statewide Volunteer Conference held at Wind Creek Bethlehem from April 2 to April 4. During the event, Linda was honored for her remarkable dedication and commitment, having served the program diligently for 8 years. This recognition not only underscores Linda's exceptional contributions but also serves as a testament to the invaluable impact volunteers like her have on the community.

### Victims of Crime Assistance

The VOCA grant covering Clearfield, Huntingdon, and Blair counties, which Benjamin Challingsworth, Esq. covers continues to be a very productive grant and a great addition to our firm and those counties. We opened/assigned him 34 cases in the quarter, 3 custody cases, and 31 PFAs.



"The client was a minor child who was being abused by father looking for assistance with a Protection from Abuse matter. Client had previously dislocated his ankle and required a walker to get around. The Defendant, Client's Father had grabbed his walker and pulled it away from him, causing him to fall and risking serious injury to his ankle. With help of Counsel, Client was able to clearly and convincingly tell his story with assistance from Counsel at the Protection from Abuse hearing. Counsel was successful in keeping the focus on the violence that occurred and Client was granted a Final Protection from Abuse Order."

### Pro Bono Spotlight - "For The Public Good"

The efforts of the Penn State Law Family Law Clinic, along with Pro Bono Partner Susan Bardo, deserve recognition for their impactful work in handling sixteen cases since January 2024. These cases have encompassed a range of family law issues such as custody, divorce, support, and domestic violence, offering crucial services in Centre County. Additionally, Attorneys Dorothy Mott, Esq. and Kara Gendron, Esq. should be commended for their voluntary contributions to the Middle District Bankruptcy Bar

Association (MDBBA), particularly Attorney Mott who has successfully resolved two bankruptcy cases since January 2024, aiding clients in avoiding a total of approximately \$235,366 in debt. This collaborative effort exemplifies the dedication and professionalism of legal practitioners in providing essential legal assistance to those in need.

## Upcoming Events

### Milk Shake Day

Do you like milkshakes? We like milkshakes! The PA Dairymen's Association will be at the Dauphin County Bar Association's parking lot (behind our Harrisburg office) on May 21 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. selling Farm Show Milkshakes.

Proceeds support the 2024 Astonishing Advocates who are raising money to help provide legal services for families in need.

**FARM SHOW MILKSHAKES**  
\$6 PER CUP OF GOODNESS  
CHOCOLATE, VANILLA AND 1/2 & 1/2

PRE-SALE AVAILABLE  
Pre-order at link below.  
Then pay with cash or check  
at DCBA and pick up your  
shake voucher for use on  
May 21st.

EVERYONE WELCOME!  
BRING YOUR OFFICE,  
FRIENDS & FAMILY

**\$6.00**

**Milkshakes**  
SUPPORT THE  
2024 ASTONISHING ADVOCATES  
MAY 21 FROM 11 AM TO 3 PM  
DCBA PARKING LOT - 213 NORTH FRONT STREET

WACH Presents  
**2024 TORCH AWARDS**

Each year, The World Affairs Council of Harrisburg honors individuals and organizations that have demonstrated the highest ideals of tolerance, appreciation of diverse cultures, peoples, languages, and lands and promotes global understanding. Their high achievements in advancing civil rights and overcoming obstacles of intolerance and bigotry are an inspiration for our community and worthy of our acknowledgment and honor.

WACH Ambassador level board members will also be recognized.

May 22, 2024  
6:00 PM

This event will take place at:  
HARRISBURG UNIVERSITY OF STUDY ABROAD

Register:  
<https://tinyurl.com/torch24>

**HONOREES**

- Al Schmidt**  
Secretary of the Commonwealth
- Black Pastors United for Education**
- Bridget M. Whitley, Esq.**  
Dauphin County Clerk of Courts
- Capital Area Music Association**
- Catherine Hershey Schools for Early Learning**
- Dr. Mireille Rebeiz**  
Professor, Dickinson College
- Gary Blumenthal**  
iNvision Human Services
- Justice and Equity Center with MidPenn Legal Services**
- Pennsylvania Prison Society**
- Tika Ram Dhungana**  
President, Shree Vaishnav Parishad Harrisburg
- The Wednesday Club**

### MidPenn To Receive Award

MidPenn Legal Services' Justice & Equity Center is being honored at the World Affairs Council of Harrisburg's 2024 Torch Awards on May 22nd. The Torch Awards "honor individuals and organizations that have demonstrated the highest ideals of tolerance, appreciation of diverse cultures, peoples, languages, and lands and promotes global understanding."

MidPenn's Justice & Equity Center promotes diversity and inclusion throughout our program area through resource development and outreach.

[Find out more/register.](#)

### Expungement Clinic

MidPenn Legal Services and the York County Bar Association will host a FREE expungement and Clean Slate Clinic on Wednesday May 22, 2024 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Registration is required: e-mail [janelle.black@yorkbar.com](mailto:janelle.black@yorkbar.com) or call 717-854-8755 Ext. 204.

YORK COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION  
ESTABLISHED 1961 • YORK, PA

MidPenn LEGAL SERVICES

**EXPUNGEMENT AND CLEAN SLATE CLINIC** **May 22**  
**5:00-7:00 PM**

Location will be provided during registration

### SAVE THE DATE:

Join MidPenn Legal Services for a celebration honoring members of the legal profession who have made significant contributions toward achieving Equal Justice for all members of our community.

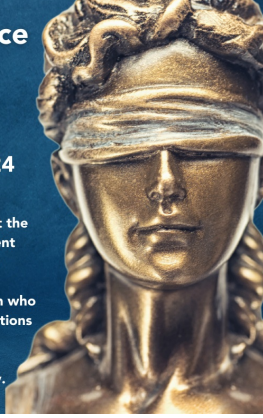
## Access to Justice



September 26, 2024

### SAVE THE DATE!

Join MidPenn Legal Services at the Mount Nittany Overlook Event Center in Centre Hall for a celebration honoring members of the legal profession who have made significant contributions toward achieving Equal Justice for all members of our community.



For more information click here: [Events Calendar](#)

Support Equal Justice

## Board of Directors

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Laurie Baughman, Esq., Deputy Director for Legal Advocacy

Carrie Bowmaster, Esq., Deputy Director for Operations

Virginia Diggs, Director of Human Resources

Elizabeth Truntz, Director of Finance - Shawn Geesaman, Director of Technology

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MidPenn Legal Services is a private, nonprofit law firm providing free civil legal services to residents in these Pennsylvania counties: Adams, Bedford, Berks, Blair, Centre, Clearfield, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry, Schuylkill and York. Contributions to MidPenn are tax-deductible as allowed by law. MidPenn Legal Services is a tax-exempt corporation under Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3). The official registration and financial information of MidPenn Legal Services may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1 (800) 732-0999..Registration does not imply endorsement. MidPenn may not expend funds for any activity prohibited by the Legal Services Corporation Act, 42 U.S.C..2996 et seq. or by Public Law 104-134. Public Law 104-134 §504(d) requires that notice of these restrictions be given to all funders of programs funded by the Legal Services Corporation.

Career Opportunities



MidPenn Legal Services | 213 A North Front Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101

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