



Dear Friends,

As the crisp air and vibrant colors of fall begin to embrace us, I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude to each of you for your unwavering commitment to our mission at MidPenn Legal Services. This season of reflection and renewal reminds us of the importance of community support, and justice - values that are at the core of the work we do every day.

We have much to be proud of as we look back on the past year. From expanding our services to new communities, advocating for vulnerable populations, and breaking down barriers to justice, our impact continues to grow. This progress would not have been possible without the dedicated support of our volunteers, staff, donors, and partners.

In that spirit of celebration, I'm excited to announce our Access to Justice Awards event on September 26th at Mount Nittany Overlook Event Center, Centre Hall, PA. This special evening will honor local legal champions who have gone above and beyond to ensure equal justice for all. It will be a wonderful opportunity to come together and recognize the tireless efforts of our legal professionals and community in advancing the cause of justice.

Following this, we are also looking forward to the I.D.E.A.L. Breakfast Event on October 10th, hosted in partnership with the LGBT Center of Reading. This event, held at the McGlenn Conference Center, Reading, PA will bring together voices from diverse backgrounds to foster dialogue on inclusion, diversity, equity, and access to legal support. We hope you will join us for this important gathering, as we continue to focus on advancing social justice in our communities.

As we move into the final months of the year, I encourage you to stay engaged with us during this exciting season. Whether through attending our events, or supporting us with a donation, your involvement is essential to the success of our mission. Together, we can continue making a lasting impact and ensuring that everyone in our community has access to the legal support they need.

Thank you for standing with us and for being an integral part of this journey.

Wishing you a healthy and reflective fall season!

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

The Justice and Equity Center receives a Torch Award

The World Affairs Council of Harrisburg has recognized MidPenn Legal Services with the prestigious 2024 Torch Award for our outstanding contributions in providing free, high-quality civil legal services to low-income residents and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. This honor highlights our unwavering dedication to ensuring access to justice for all, empowering both individuals and communities in need.



Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic

From 2014 to 2022, Elijah worked as both an independent contractor and later as an employee for Boeing Corporation. In December 2022, his life changed dramatically when he was diagnosed with leukemia and underwent a double amputation to remove part of his lower limbs. After the surgery, he received short-term disability from Boeing, but when it ended, he was let go from his position. Forced to apply for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), his initial application was denied, leaving him with no income and no financial support while awaiting his appeal.



In addition to his health and employment struggles, he faced a growing federal income tax bill of nearly \$20,000 due to his independent contractor work. Fortunately, Attorney Robert Hamilton from the Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic stepped in, helping Elijah gather essential financial information and filing an Offer in Compromise (OIC) with the IRS. Attorney Hamilton successfully argued that Elijah's economic hardship made it impossible for him to fully repay his tax debt.

The IRS accepted the OIC, and Elijah made a one-time payment of just \$20. Once processed, the remaining \$20,000 in tax debt was forgiven, providing much-needed financial relief during an incredibly challenging time.

Grant Award from Lancaster Law Foundation



In August, the Lancaster Law Foundation announced the recipients of its 2024 community grant awards, with a total of \$65,000 granted to initiatives that promote justice and equity within our community.

MidPenn Legal Services has been awarded \$15,000 to support a Family Law Attorney for the Safe at Home Program. This crucial initiative ensures that children are able to remain in safe and stable home and school environments by helping families establish clear custody agreements.

Community Outreach

On July 23, 2024, in collaboration with the BLOOM

Business Empowerment Center for the York County Economic Alliance, MidPenn Legal Services through its Manager of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Yinet Pérez Vega, Esq., presented for the Spanish-speaking population, the seminar “Navegando el proceso legal para establecer un negocio,” (Navigating the legal process to establish a business). York County has limited access to Spanish-speaking attorneys, creating a gap in providing legal education on critical topics to our local Spanish-speaking population. “It was an honor to provide this seminar, discuss the process to establish a business entity and at the same time discuss related topics of identity theft, tax duties and responsibilities, professional and business owner responsibility, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as applied to our daily duties and responsibilities as employers and standardized protocols to eradicate unlawful employment discrimination. We had a dynamic group that engaged in relevant discussions and problem-solving. Thank you BLOOM and MPLS for this opportunity.”

EDUCATION BLOOM Classes

PRESENTED BY **Fulton Bank** SUPPORTING PARTNER **FirstEnergy Foundation**

Join us for a weekly evening for 5 weeks for engaging and interactive presentations from experts in small business development! This is your opportunity to network with resources and fellow entrepreneurs!

Sopa de Letras de Tener un Pequeño Negocio 101 CADA MARTES DESDE EL 9 DE JULIO – 6 DE AGOSTO (6:30pm a 7:30pm) Estas clases ofrecerán información y recursos para aspirantes a empresarios que desean aprender sobre cómo establecer un negocio! Ubicación: YWCA York, 320 E Market St, York, PA 17403	Financial Management: The ABCs of 123s WEDNESDAYS FROM AUG. 21 - SEPT. 18 (5:30pm to 7:30pm) For entrepreneurs looking to be introduced to the basics of small business finance. Location: YWCA Hanover, 23 W Chestnut St, Hanover, PA 17331
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For more information and to participate in these programs, visit bloomclasses.org

2024 Refugee Health & Resources Fair

On September 7th, Yinet Pérez Vega, Esq., MidPenn Legal Services' (MPLS) Manager of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, along with MPLS DEI Committee Member Perla López Romero, participated in the International Service Center's Refugee Health and Resources Fair 2024. The event provided an excellent opportunity for MidPenn to connect with community members and share valuable information.

Perla López Romero, part of MPLS' Centralized Intake Unit, offered insight into MidPenn's intake process, while Yinet Pérez Vega addressed general questions about Pennsylvania's legal system. Topics included the judicial branch, the differences between civil and criminal law, administrative law, the role of the executive branch, law enforcement, and ethical rules of conduct. She also engaged with aspiring law students, offering guidance on the study of law.

The fair, attended by over 200 participants—including 180 refugee members—was a vibrant gathering of community, resource organizations, and activities. Yinet and Perla also took time to explore and collect information from other resources available at the event, further strengthening community connections.

[Text Link](#)



Across MidPenn's Offices

Congratulations to MidPenn Attorney **Yinet Pérez Vega** for being honored and named to the 2024-2025 class of Pennsylvania's Bar Association Leadership Institute (BLI).

"BLI provides an extraordinary opportunity to look inside the PBA, including PBA operations, governance, and leadership," said Nancy Conrad, PBA president. "The program assists BLI participants to define their path forward in leadership: in their practice, the association, and the profession. I look forward to assisting in this process and the development of leaders in the law." [Read more here.](#)



Congratulations to MidPenn Director of Development, **Eliz Nestorov**, on being appointed as a Social Justice Ambassador to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, representing Dauphin County.

"We are proud to announce the appointment of our Social Justice Ambassadors," said PHRC Executive Director Chad Dion Lassiter, MSW. For more information, [click here](#).



Victims of Crime Assistance

The VOCA grant, which covers Clearfield, Huntingdon, and Blair counties, has proven to be highly effective under the dedicated efforts of Benjamin Challingsworth, Esq. Over the last quarter, he managed an impressive 32 cases, with a significant focus on Protection From Abuse (PFA) orders.

Through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) program, MidPenn Legal Services was able to provide legal assistance to Ms. Cindy, a 70-year-old woman, in securing a 3-year Protection From Abuse (PFA) order with eviction against her adult son. Additionally, her son faced criminal charges, and our support ensured Ms. Cindy maintained a strong connection with Victim/Witness services, facilitating ongoing communication with criminal prosecution to safeguard her interests throughout the legal process. Ms. Cindy's situation was deeply distressing. Her son, experiencing a severe mental health crisis, threatened her life by pointing a loaded gun at her and making lethal threats. As a mother, she faced the painful conflict of being both a caregiver and a victim. Our services provided her with the guidance and support needed to navigate the legal system, secure her home, and remove her son permanently.

With the help of our team and the Victim/Witness program, Ms. Cindy began the vital process of grieving and healing after this traumatic experience. Her journey underscores the importance of comprehensive support for survivors, ensuring their safety and facilitating their recovery.

Upcoming Events

Access to Justice Awards

Join us next Thursday at 5:30 p.m. for the Access to Justice Awards at the stunning Mt. Nittany Overlook Event Center! This special evening will honor legal professionals and community members who have made significant

strides in advancing justice and equity. Don't miss this opportunity to celebrate local champions of equal justice.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Access to Justice

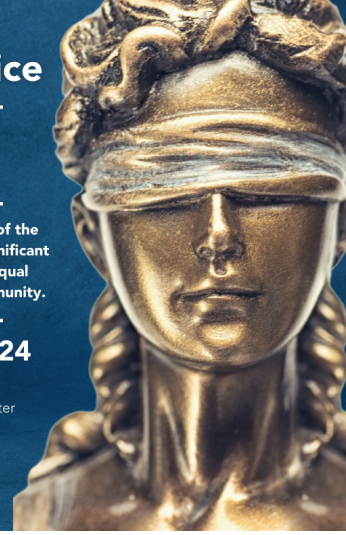


A celebration honoring members of the legal profession who have made significant contributions toward achieving Equal Justice for all members of our community.

September 26, 2024

5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Mount Nittany Overlook Event Center
559 North Pennsylvania Avenue
Centre Hall, PA 16828



I.D.E.A.L.
(Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility, in Legal Aid)
MidPenn Legal Services' Justice & Equity Center

Co-host: **LGBT CENTER**
OF GREATER READING

October 10th, 2024
7:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

The McGlinn Conference Center
450 St. Bernardine Street
Reading, PA 19607

Register at
www.midpenn.org/news-events

Sponsored By:

I.D.E.A.L. Breakfast

You are invited to the I.D.E.A.L. breakfast event, organized by MidPenn Legal Services' Justice and Equity Center and the LGBT Center of Greater Reading. The event is cost-free and is an important step towards initiating conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) issues from a civil legal aid perspective in Berks County.

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

[REGISTER HERE](#)

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

Happy 50th Anniversary Legal Services Corporation!

Join the celebration by pledging support for equal access to justice. Take the pledge to demonstrate your support for the civil legal aid that gives millions of low-income Americans access to justice, expanding their opportunities to build a better life for themselves and their families. [SIGN THE PLEDGE](#)



**Protecting
the Promise**

Support Equal Justice

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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 US

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