

As we start the New Year, in which our firm will celebrate 100 years of service to our community, please take a moment to celebrate the pro bono accomplishments of our lawyers, paralegals and staff in 2018. A major focus of our pro bono work last year was helping immigrants, both in our local community and at the border. We also greatly expanded our work for children involved in parental neglect proceedings and continued to help indigents, veterans, inmates, and the sick and elderly address a variety of legal problems. In addition, we advised a broad range of non-profits that perform good works in our community, such as protecting the environment, fostering sustainable farming, reducing gun violence and supporting veterans. Altogether, we devoted over 3300 hours to pro bono work in 2018.

Helping Immigrants

We prepared successful parole applications for two transgender women from Honduras, who were held at the New Mexico detention center of U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement (ICE). These women had requested asylum at the San Ysidro, CA, Port of Entry and received favorable “credible fear” findings from U.S. asylum officers based on years of persecution and sexual assaults in Honduras, with no hope of police protection.

The conditions at the detention center were dismal, and both of our clients were suffering from serious untreated health problems. Our clients are now living with their sponsors and are receiving medical care and assistance in finding lawyers to represent them in their removal proceedings, which will probably not proceed for some time. **(Sarah Westby, Vaughan Finn)**



We represented six children who are escaping gang violence and abusive family situations in Central America by preparing applications on their behalf for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status in Connecticut Probate Court. One client, whose family story is representative, is a teenage boy who lived in a small farming community in Guatemala. His father abandoned him at birth; his mother later left to find work in the United States to support the family. Our client undertook the dangerous trip to Connecticut after his remaining family members refused to care for him and gang members repeatedly pressured him to join the gang, including ordering him to kill a family member. We are also representing two children from El Salvador in U.S. Immigration Court. Last year, we obtained predicate SIJS findings in Virginia state court for these children and, based on these findings, we are now opposing their removal from the United States and seeking permanent resident status for them. **(Alyce Alfano, Laurann Asklof, Alison Baker, Mabel Diamond, John DiMarco, Alfredo Fernandez, Hortensia Franco, Stephanie Gomes-Ganhao, Natalia Sieira Millan, Jaime Welsh, Sarah Westby)**

Through a referral from the Political Asylum/Immigration Representation (PAIR) Project, we helped an ICE detainee at the Etowah County Detention Center in Gadsden, Alabama, prepare a writ of habeas corpus to be released from detention. Our client came to the United States in 1991 when he was two years old. Although he believes he was born in Jamaica, that country has no birth records or other documents proving he was born there. ICE took him into custody in 2017, but has been unable to remove him to Jamaica because it does not identify him as a Jamaican national. We argued in the habeas petition that he should be released from ICE’s custody since it is unlikely that ICE will be able to obtain the necessary travel documents to have him removed to Jamaica and, thus, his continued detention is unlawful. **(Chris Drury, Jaime Welsh, Nikole McCarthy)**

We are partnering with Greater Hartford Legal Aid, Connecticut Legal Services and New Haven Legal Assistance to represent applicants for “U Visas” who are seeking temporary work permits while their visa applications are pending. The U Visa program was created as part of the Battered Immigrant Women’s Protection Act to strengthen the ability of law enforcement to investigate and prosecute cases of domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking. Our clients, who come from Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Brazil, are victims of severe domestic abuse, or their dependents, who assisted law enforcement in bringing the perpetrators to justice. **(Morgan Rueckert, Sue Murphy, Keegan Drenosky, Vaughan Finn)**

Representing Neglected Children

We represented 14 children, ranging in age from newborns to preteens, who were the subjects of parental neglect proceedings in the Hartford, Rockville, Middletown and Danbury Juvenile Courts. Our clients included babies who were born with withdrawal symptoms to drug-addicted mothers, four young siblings whose parents were engaged in a pattern of violence toward each other (while still managing to create a loving bond with their children), a 2-year-old who was found roaming the neighborhood alone, and 8- and 10-year-old siblings who called 911 when they found their intoxicated mother passed out on the floor. Despite these sad circumstances, our cases generally had good outcomes. Grandparents, or aunts and uncles, stepped in to provide a stable home for these children, or the parents made an extraordinary effort to change their patterns of behavior to avoid losing their children. Through our advocacy, we were able to achieve better outcomes for our clients. In our most hotly contested case, Lara Greenberg prevented the placement of a toddler with a wholly inappropriate out-of-state relative and instead brought about a transfer of guardianship to an aunt who has developed a loving relationship with our young client. **(Kristie Beahm, Jessica Colin-Greene, Alex Cox, Stephanie Gomes-Ganhao, Andrea Gomes, Lara Greenberg, Amber Sarno, Natalie Wagner, Jaime Welsh, Sarah Westby, Andy Zeitlin, Vaughan Finn)**



Representing Inmates in Civil Rights Matters

We represented an inmate at the Corrigan Correctional Facility who filed multiple actions against the Connecticut Department of Corrections, correctional officers and employees, and medical professionals, alleging that his Constitutional rights were violated because the defendants refused to provide him with adequate medical care and subjected him to excessive force. After deposing several correctional officials, and attending a mediation before U.S. Magistrate Judge Donna Martinez, the State agreed to a settlement of three of the actions, which included both a financial component and mandatory access to medical specialists. **(Chris Drury, Peter Murphy, Nikole McCarthy, Drew Kadow, Kristen Heidel)** Notwithstanding the Town of Waterbury's stated "no settlement policy" in matters involving allegations of police misconduct, we also obtained a financial settlement for an inmate who asserted that he was the victim of excessive force by members of the Waterbury Police Department. **(Morgan Rueckert, Mike Chase, Mike King, Alison Gaffey, Kristen Heidel, Drew Kadow)** We assisted the ACLU of Connecticut in its role as amicus curiae on behalf an inmate who successfully asserted in a federal court proceeding that the State could not "claw back" a damages award for malicious violation of the inmate's civil rights in order to pay for the costs of incarceration. **(Vaughan Finn)**



Drafting End of Life Documents

Our Trusts & Estates attorneys assisted the HIV population at a Hartford Wellness Center prepare living wills and advanced medical directives and drafted a power of attorney and health care directive for a 93-year-old woman in hospice care. **(Danielle Ferrucci, Laura Schuyler, Lyn Walker)**



Helping Individuals Recover Security Deposits and Obtain Pro Se Divorces

We continued our partnership with Statewide Legal Services by conducting clinics to help low-income persons prepare the court pleadings required to recover security deposits unjustly withheld by their landlords and to initiate pro se divorce proceedings. **(Julia Camarco, Alex Cox, Lee Duval, Stephanie Gomes-Ganhao, Latonia Williams)** We also advised a mentally disabled woman and a veteran about strategies to recover security deposits withheld by their landlords. **(Sarah Dlugoszewski, Mark Ostrowski, Ben FrazziniKendrick)**



Representing Non-Profits

The following are examples of the many non-profit organizations we worked with last year:

The **Saratoga WarHorse Foundation** connects veterans suffering from psychological wounds with thoroughbred racehorses to ease their transition back to civilian life. As one participant said, "If you are tired of the darkness and tired of

the long sleepless nights. . . I can't really explain what exactly happens when you have your 'connection' with one of these beautiful animals, but I left a lot of baggage in that pen." We helped the Foundation analyze its obligations under HIPAA, including how that law affects the questions it asks program participants, and provided advice on best practices for anonymous surveys and the impact of other privacy laws on the collection and storage of individually identifiable information. **(Damian Privitera, Bill Roberts)**



Simply Smiles, Inc., fights poverty experienced by native peoples in the United States and Mexico. A primary focus is the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Reservation in South Dakota where the poverty of the Lakota people is extreme and entrenched. Simply Smiles brings hope to the reservation by offering summer camps and youth programs, building community centers and new homes, and establishing a community garden. We successfully negotiated and drafted a 99-year lease of land on the Reservation on Simply Smiles's behalf. **(Dame Catalan, Sarah Westby, Lisa Zana)**. We also assisted Simply Smiles in navigating complex issues regarding employment classification and tax implications for various employees, helped it craft position descriptions for specialized term positions, and assisted with drafting portions of its employee handbook. **(Ray Casella, Chris Engler, Henry Zaccardi, Greg Jones)**. **Rose Frink-DeBaise, Jaime Welsh and Sarah Westby** also traveled to the Reservation to help build homes for Lakota families.



Legal Food Hub is a free legal services clearinghouse for farmers and food entrepreneurs in New England, with a focus on entities that increase access to fresh food and improve the impact of farming on the environment. Through LFH, we are providing legal advice about corporate documents and liability issues to **New Pond Farm**, a year-round environmental education center with a 102-acre working farm in Redding, CT. We also provided advice about a lease agreement to **Hidden Acres Farm** in Tolland, CT, which is operated by the only female African-American farmer in Connecticut. **(Greg Muccilli, Bill Rock)**



Blue Latitudes designs sustainable, creative and cost-effective solutions for environmental issues relating to offshore industry, including—perhaps most notably—converting hulking offshore oil platforms into artificial reefs that support marine life. In 2018, the co-founders of Blue Latitudes, marine biologists Emily Callahan and Amber Jackson, were named to Forbes 30 under 30 in Energy. This year, we helped Blue Latitudes with general contract matters and review of bylaws for its spin-off non-profit foundation—Blue Latitudes Foundation, a California nonprofit public benefit corporation. We also provided general guidance with respect to obtaining federal 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. Blue Latitudes' work is being recognized on a national and even international level, and we are excited to be playing a small part in its success. **(Miriam Lewis, Andrew Davis, Andrea Gomes, Robert Day)**



Connecticut Against Gun Violence is dedicated to enacting and protecting Connecticut gun safety laws that keep firearms out of the hands of dangerous people, assisting law enforcement in enforcing gun safety laws and advocating for federal laws that reduce the flow of illegal guns into Connecticut. We helped the organization with the creation of an employee handbook. **(Greg Jones, Shari Goodstein)**



Elm City Montessori School, New Haven's first public Montessori school, is a racially and economically diverse school that serves pre-K through 8th grade; like all Montessori programs, it stresses hands-on inquiry, multi-age classrooms and intensive parental involvement. We provided legal advice regarding the school's employee handbook. **(Ashley Marshall)** We also reviewed employee handbooks for the **Danbury Women's Center**, which provides prevention, crisis intervention and other support services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault **(Keegan Drenosky)** and **Our Children's Place**, a daycare center for babies, toddlers and preschoolers **(Jarad Lucan)**.

The Darien Arts Center is dedicated to promoting and providing a means of artistic expression for all members of the community in dance, music, visual arts and theatre. Its programs range from a "Young Composer" group to "Playwriting for Adults" classes. Our work for the Center in 2018 included revising its corporate bylaws; updating corporate records at the Secretary of State's office; analyzing facilities' leases and use of supplemental space; updating the Board of Directors' governance handbook; and revising and updating its employee handbook and personnel policies. **(Carolyn Cavolo, Keegan Drenosky, Christine Donnelly)**

