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## **The New York Bar Foundation Aims to Double Grants To Help Meet Urgent Legal Needs Statewide**

The New York Bar Foundation has awarded more than \$4.5 million in program support fulfilling urgent legal needs across the state since 2008. The basic needs of communities, however, continue to grow.

Recognizing that more must be done to close the justice gap, The Foundation's board recently set an ambitious new goal for itself: double its grantmaking over the next three years.

"Programs funded by The Foundation help New Yorkers gain veterans' benefits, help domestic violence survivors escape a violent and dangerous home, and assist communities in recovering from disaster-related losses," said Cristine Cioffi, president of The Foundation. "Our grants change lives, but there is still much work to be done."

The Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the New York State Bar Association focuses its grantmaking on programs serving urgent legal needs, often in an innovative way. Currently-funded projects include:

- **Bridge the Gap Project** at Pace Women's Justice Center, White Plains. It provides legal services to low-income victims and survivors of domestic violence. These services help free vulnerable clients from abusive situations and safely move forward with their lives.
- **Elder Shelter Network** at the Legal Services for the Elderly, Disabled or Disadvantaged of Western New York, Inc., Buffalo. It offers victims of elder abuse an emergency shelter. Currently, an elder abuse victim has no options for immediate care outside of an often unnecessary admission to a hospital emergency room. These admissions further burden the health care system and leave the victims without a safe, secure place to get the treatment and care they need. An elder shelter network of nursing homes gives victims a place to stay while a team of service providers work to find a permanent, safe residence.

- Securing Seamless Education Services Project at the Children's Law Center of Brooklyn, Brooklyn. It provides education advocacy for disabled children in Family Court proceedings. Financially marginalized schools are unable to provide services to which children are legally entitled. When the child is involved with Family Court proceedings, the problem is exacerbated. This program assists low-income children in narrowing the achievement gap and lowering the dropout rate.
- Veterans Pro Bono Legal Services Program at the Volunteer Legal Services Project of Monroe County (VLSP), Rochester. Utilizing private attorneys, the project provides pro bono legal assistance to low-income active duty and retired military personnel and their families, as well as to veterans of recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The new initiative assists veterans seeking representation in the following areas: domestic violence, consumer debt, bankruptcy, foreclosure settlements, simple wills, health care proxies, and micro-enterprise.

“As attorneys, we are committed to helping fund legal services programs that serve economically disadvantaged individuals,” said New York State Bar Association President David M. Schraver.

“Members of the Bar can help by contributing to by The Foundation.”

“We hope and expect that the outcomes of our doubled grantmaking will be profound and have lasting, generational impact,” said Cioffi.

The board’s efforts in increasing funds include:

- Growing the numbers and contributions of fellows of The Foundation;
- Working toward securing major gifts and bequests;
- Increasing awareness of giving opportunities through dues check-off and special gifts to The Foundation; and
- Requesting *cy pres* allocations of remaindered funds where appropriate in class action settlements.

These contributions will allow The Foundation to increase both the size and number of its grants.

“The Foundation deserves strong support from New York attorneys, because the passion and energy of its board is coupled with its rigorous financial oversight and thorough grant selection process,” said Cioffi.

“The gifts we receive are directed back into the needs of our communities, enabling attorneys and other donors who care about access to legal services in New York to participate in the long-lasting, profound impact of The Foundation’s grantmaking. We need your help in growing The foundation and making significant changes.”

Since its founding in 1950, The Foundation has received charitable contributions from individuals, law firms, corporations and other entities. It provides grants to support law-related programs of legal services organizations, nonprofits, bar associations and other organizations throughout New York State.

The Foundation's goals are to promote and advance:

- Service to the public;
- Improvements in the administration of justice;
- Legal research and education;
- High standards of professional ethics;
- Public understanding of legal heritage; and
- Delivery of legal services to the poor and underserved.

For more information about The New York Bar Foundation or to make an online donation, visit [www.tnybf.org](http://www.tnybf.org)