

## Community Arts Groups Thrive with Help from Lawyers Alliance

LAWYERS ALLIANCE'S COMMUNITY ARTS CLIENTS are improving lives through dance, music, performing arts, cultural centers, documentary film training, therapeutic arts, after-school and in-school enrichment, residencies across artistic disciplines, and more.

Since the inception of our Community Arts Program Priority in 2012, we have dramatically increased client outreach, legal services and education to arts groups, resulting in more than 200 new business law and transactional matters for 174 nonprofit clients in three years. This includes services to more than 80 community arts clients during the past year. Lawyers Alliance is coordinating with the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) to assist additional community arts organizations with legal services.

Community arts organizations face an array of legal challenges in mounting their programs. Some of the challenges are specific to arts groups, such as complex intellectual property questions relating to the use or ownership of a performance or visual art piece, while others are similar to the challenges faced by all nonprofit organizations, such as Board governance and tax issues.

**Employment and Real Estate:** Community arts organizations may seek to hire temporary staff, such as performers or teaching artists, or need temporary space for an exhibition or performance of their work.



Photo: The Laundromat Project

**The Laundromat Project brings art, artists, and arts programming into laundromats and other everyday spaces, amplifying the creativity that exists within communities.**

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# 2015 Business Law & Leadership Gala



Honoree Rohan Weerasinghe with Citi's Global Head of Corporate and Investment Banking Raymond J. McGuire



Honoree Steven M. Cohen with District Attorney of New York County Cyrus R. Vance, Jr.



Former BronxWorks Executive Director Carolyn McLaughlin, Honoree Eileen Torres, and Lawyers Alliance Executive Director Sean Delany

On May 13, 2015, more than 460 leaders from the legal, financial, and non-profit sectors gathered at Gotham Hall in Manhattan for Lawyers Alliance for New York's Business Law & Leadership Gala. This event is the largest annual charitable gathering of business and transactional lawyers committed to pro bono legal services for nonprofits that are strengthening New York City communities.

**Aric Press**, Partner, Bernero & Press, served as the evening's Master of Ceremonies for the second year. He put the evening in context, explaining that, "With Lawyers Alliance's help, these nonprofit organizations are able to have a greater impact, house-by-house, neighborhood-by-neighborhood." Lawyers Alliance Deputy Executive Director **Elizabeth Guggenheimer** elaborated, saying, "I am privileged to be part of a wonderful staff and volunteer community that believes strongly in Lawyers Alliance's mission, providing legal and practical guidance to nonprofit organizations whose programs we admire."

The recipients of the 2015 Business Law & Leadership Award for distinguished service are:

► **Steven M. Cohen**, *Chief Administrative Officer and General Counsel, MacAndrews & Forbes Incorporated*

Mr. Cohen has combined a career in public service and private practice to make a positive impact on the lives of New Yorkers. He oversees the legal and administrative operations for MacAndrews & Forbes Incorporated, which manages a diversified corporate portfolio and whose philanthropic arm, the Perelman Family Foundation, is one of the nation's most generous supporters of women's health, education, and the arts. Mr. Cohen previously served as Secretary to New York Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, in addition to Mr. Cuomo's Counselor and Chief of Staff in the Office of the New York Attorney General. In his career in private practice, Mr. Cohen has represented corporations and individuals in complex commercial, criminal, and regulatory matters. He is a member of the New York University Board of Trustees, Chairman of the Bronfman Center at NYU, and a member of the Brooklyn Bridge Park Corporation Board of Directors.

District Attorney of New York County, **Cyrus R. Vance, Jr.**, presented the Award to Mr. Cohen, stating, "What makes Steve a valued counselor, a leader in our community, are qualities like his compassion, his devotion to the rule of law, and abiding sense of justice." Upon accepting the Award, Mr. Cohen said, "There are some people who have an opportunity to spend a career in public service and there are others who don't. And for those who don't, figuring out a way to give and be supportive is critical."

► **Rohan Weerasinghe**, *General Counsel, Citigroup Inc.*

Mr. Weerasinghe oversees Citi's global legal team, including business-unit general counsels, regional general counsels, and corporate deputy general counsels. Prior to joining Citi in 2012, he was Senior Partner at Shearman & Sterling LLP. During his 35 year tenure at the firm, Mr. Weerasinghe represented financial institutions and corporations worldwide on corporate governance, complex corporate transactions, and capital markets offerings.

He is currently a Trustee of the Carnegie Endowment for Peace. Citi attorneys have actively participated in Lawyers Alliance's volunteer network for more than 15 years, providing trusted counsel on corporate, regulatory, and employment issues. Most recently, Citi's legal staff conducted a pro bono clinic for nonprofits on board engagement and best practices in corporate governance.

Citi's Global Head of Corporate and Investment Banking, **Raymond J. McGuire**, presented the Award to Mr. Weerasinghe, stating, "He is a strong champion of pro bono legal services. For Rohan, this commitment is natural, it has been part of his outlook since his early days." Mr. Weerasinghe extolled the virtues of pro bono, saying, "I would strongly encourage everyone in this room who is not already involved to become involved in pro bono activities. No matter what your skill or interest, Lawyers Alliance can match you up with a nonprofit that can use your help."

► **Eileen Torres, Executive Director, BronxWorks**

Appointed Executive Director of BronxWorks in 2014, Ms. Torres has a long professional and personal commitment to serving the Bronx community. She joined BronxWorks in 1995, when it was known as Citizens Advice Bureau, and was named General Counsel in 2003, Interim Executive Director in 2013, and Chief Operating Officer in 2014. Over the past 20 years, she has helped the organization grow from 120 to 600 employees and from 10 to 30 sites, which today feed, shelter, teach, and support more than 35,000 people in the South Bronx each year. BronxWorks has been a Lawyers Alliance client since 1996, benefitting from quality pro bono legal help to advance its programs and operations.

Former BronxWorks Executive Director **Carolyn McLaughlin** presented the Award to Ms. Torres, stating, "I have known Eileen since she joined BronxWorks as an assistant when she was studying for the Bar in 1995. She passed the Bar and it has been my delight that she stayed at BronxWorks for 20 years." Ms. Torres said, "New York City needs its nonprofit sector to serve its most vulnerable population, and the nonprofit sector needs Lawyers Alliance. It needs its volunteer attorneys and staff attorneys to help us manage our risks as we implement new and innovative programs here in New York."

Board Chair **Ariel J. Deckelbaum** expressed gratitude to the 59 sponsors of the Gala, saying, "Your contribution and support of the organization is what keeps us going, literally." Lawyers Alliance Executive Director **Sean Delany** presented the evening's closing remarks, saying, "Business lawyers donating their time through pro bono service can make a profound difference in the quality of life in our City."

We invite you to view the sponsor greetings at [www.lawyersalliance.org/gala.php](http://www.lawyersalliance.org/gala.php). We especially thank our Platinum Chairs: Citi; Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP; Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP; Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP; Joseph Hage Aaronson LLC; MacAndrews & Forbes Incorporated; Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP; Shearman & Sterling LLP; Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP; and Williams & Connolly LLP.



**Former Lawyers Alliance Senior Staff Attorney Jean Berman, Legal Director Linda Manley, and Master of Ceremonies Aric Press**



**Brad Karp, Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP; Ariel J. Deckelbaum, Paul Weiss and Lawyers Alliance Board Chair; and Alastair Wood, Citi**

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— G A L A —

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# Community Arts Groups Thrive with Help from Lawyers Alliance

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**Case example:** Founded ten years ago, **The Laundromat Project** brings art, artists, and arts programming into laundromats and other everyday spaces, amplifying the creativity that exists within communities to build community networks, solve problems, and enhance the sense of ownership. Pro bono employment attorneys from Jones Day created employee and volunteer handbooks, performed a risk assessment of its internship program, and reviewed the template independent contractor agreement used to engage future teaching artists. Executive Director Kemi Ilesanmi noted that the assistance enabled her to complete the organization's first employee handbook in time for a staff expansion. Pro bono real estate attorneys from Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson LLP assisted The Laundromat Project with a new collaboration with another organization to establish a two-year arts residency program, which is being housed in donated space. Says Ms. Ilesanmi, "Fried Frank's work on the license, including advice about what negotiating points are important to remember, gives us the best possible support to help us do what we're doing."

**Governance:** Community arts organizations need to have sound business decisions and strong governance oversight in order to succeed.

**Case example:** **Wingspan Arts'** mission is to reach out and expose diverse groups, especially young audiences, to all forms of the performing, visual, media, and literary arts. Wingspan accomplishes this by engaging professional artist-educators who are inspired by the work they do and have a unique gift for sharing that inspiration with students. Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP

has assisted Wingspan with multiple legal issues, most recently with a corporate governance review. Paul Ashley, Executive Director of Wingspan Arts, says, "We have been able to attend to some critical governance issues over the years, including the Nonprofit Revitalization Act, that have maintained our ability to provide great arts programming at our partner schools."

**Contract Reviews:** Contractual agreements are at the core of nonprofit operations. They govern funding arrangements, facilities and office operations, employee benefits, and collaborations.

**Case example:** **ArtWorks NYC** provides New York City public school children with a guided introduction to visual literacy and the fine arts. Artworks runs a five session program (four in classrooms and one in either the Metropolitan Museum of Art or the Brooklyn Museum of Art) at approximately 20 schools, reaching approximately 2,200 third-grade students per year. Following the program, the students receive a pass for entry to the museum with family members. Pro bono attorneys from Latham & Watkins LLP assisted ArtWorks in reviewing and negotiating separate contracts to be used with the Metropolitan Museum of Art and AD Lubow, LLC. Liz Manocha of ArtWorks has high praise for the Latham attorneys saying, "The attorneys were fast, practical, and explained things clearly. Our documents were ready on time and our project moved forward as scheduled."

For more information on the Community Arts Program Priority, contact Senior Staff Attorney **Judith Moldover** at (212) 219-1800 ext. 250 or [jmoldover@lawyersalliance.org](mailto:jmoldover@lawyersalliance.org).



Photo: The Laundromat Project

**Pro bono legal assistance enhances The Laundromat Project's ability to provide programming such as community arts education.**

# Getting Organized During the Incorporation and Tax Exemption Process

This spring marked the release of the Sixth Edition of Lawyers Alliance's *Getting Organized*, a guide for nonprofit managers and attorneys representing organizations that seek to incorporate and secure recognition of tax-exempt status. Each year, Lawyers Alliance represents about 30 newly forming groups in incorporating and securing tax exemptions.

Lawyers Alliance and its volunteer attorneys take great pride in supporting these new organizations in their formative stages. In honor of the release of *Getting Organized*, we celebrate the work of hundreds of organizations that Lawyers Alliance helped form in prior decades. Below are three of the vibrant examples of organizations that are contributing today to the well-being of their communities.

**Bailey's Café** is a center for educational and cultural activity located in the Bedford-Stuyvesant/Crown Heights sections of Brooklyn. Formed in 2003 with legal assistance from Lawyers Alliance and volunteer attorneys from Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP, Bailey's Café focuses on two core areas: community building and service; and arts education and production. Bailey's Café has long-term partnerships with eight schools, more than 20 youth/community-based organizations, and more than 25 teaching artists, and serves 600 youth a year. In 2015, Lawyers Alliance and volunteer attorneys from Kaye Scholer LLP represented Bailey's Café in negotiating and finalizing its first lease. The new space, opened this spring, ensures that the organization no longer has to rely on donated space.



**Community Voices Heard**

**Chhaya Community Development Corporation**, formed in 2000 with legal assistance from Lawyers Alliance and the Columbia Law School Community Enterprise Clinic, advocates for the housing needs of New York City's South Asian community. Chhaya means safety or shelter in multiple South Asian languages, just as the organization brings safety and shelter to its community by focusing on housing and economic development. Chhaya's programs include tenant rights, financial capacity building, sustainable homeownership, energy efficiency, women's financial empowerment, workforce development, and civic engagement, serving 12,000 people per year. Since working on Chhaya's incorporation and tax exemption, Lawyers Alliance has continued to support its governance and administrative practices. In 2014, Lawyers Alliance and volunteer attorneys from Shearman & Sterling LLP revised Chhaya's employment policies governing its 13 full-time, two part-time, and two temporary employees.

**Community Voices Heard (CVH)** is a member-led organization, consisting of women of color and low-income families in New York State, that works to secure social, economic, and racial justice. Formed in 1996 with Lawyers Alliance's assistance, CVH works in grassroots organizing, leadership development, policy changes, and creating new models of direct democracy. Since its founding, CVH has assisted more than 60,000 low-income individuals. Subsequently, Lawyers Alliance and volunteer counsel from Sullivan & Cromwell LLP incorporated and secured tax exemption for Community Voices Heard Power, a social welfare organization that fights for the expansion of the social safety net; the improvement of public and affordable housing options; and workforce development. Through the years, Lawyers Alliance and volunteer counsel have represented CVH on 12 matters, including guidance on corporate governance, employment practices, regulation of advocacy and lobbying activities, and leasing of office space.

We look forward to continuing to serve nonprofit organizations that Lawyers Alliance helped form.

Visit our website at [www.lawyersalliance.org/publications.php](http://www.lawyersalliance.org/publications.php) to order the latest edition of *Getting Organized*.

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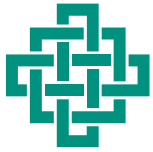
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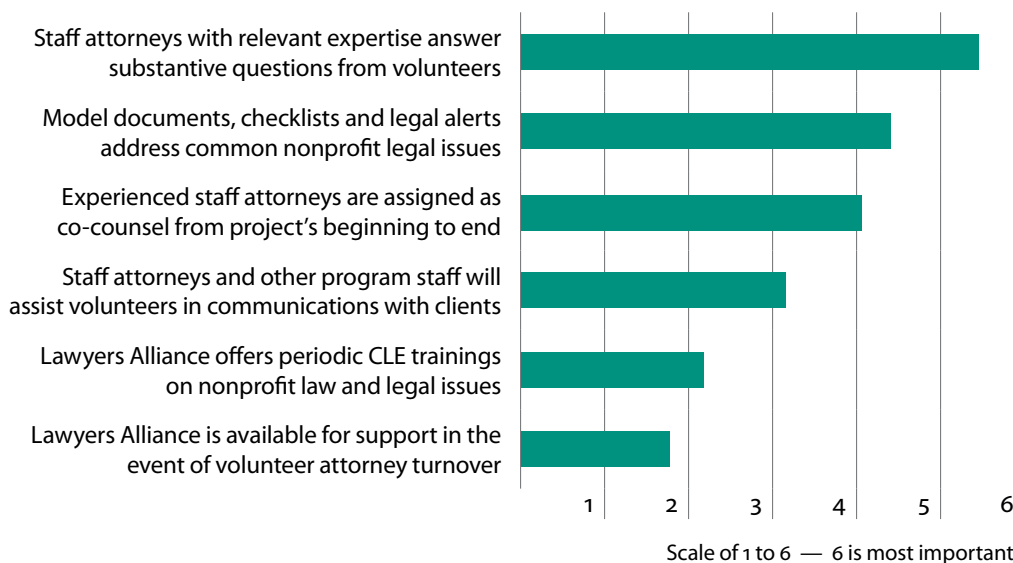
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## Volunteer Support at Lawyers Alliance

Lawyers Alliance's pro bono model includes four key features designed to optimize the experience of our clients and volunteers: client outreach, client screening, volunteer attorney support, and volunteer attorney recognition.

We recently asked law firm pro bono leaders what is *most important* about the volunteer attorney support functions provided by Lawyers Alliance:



Are you leveraging Lawyers Alliance's expertise? What do you think is the most important attorney support function? Contact **Ben Fraimow**, Program Associate for Pro Bono, at (212) 219-1800 ext. 203 or [bfracimow@lawyersalliance.org](mailto:bfracimow@lawyersalliance.org) and let us know!

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