Northeast Brooklyn Housing Development Corporation

From Empty Lots to Buildings and Gardens

by Elizabeth Brians

There are certain relationships that we all wish we could have, relationships marked by mutual respect and growth. This is just the sort of relationship that exists between Northeast Brooklyn Housing Development Corporation (NBHDC) and Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A. It is a relationship that began 12 years ago and has led to the revitalization not only of houses, but of an entire community.

When Joseph Holley, now executive director, decided to move out of the suburbs and back to the city he grew up in, he noticed that there were at least twenty abandoned buildings in his immediate area. At that point, "I went to the Assemblyman (William Boyland) and I said 'You have to do something about this, these buildings are abandoned and falling down.' He said, 'Organize it and I'll get you some funds.'" And that is how Joseph Holley came out of retirement to found the NBHDC, a non-profit multi-service organization whose initial goal was to renovate abandoned housing in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area and make it affordable to low-income families.

The organization began in 1985 with a table and a phone in one room of the Wayside Baptist Church. After securing funds and researching various locations, NBHDC began its first project, Hancock Manor, located on the corner of Ralph Avenue and Hancock Street. Holley hired a lawyer to guide NBHDC through the complicated legal and financial processes required to buy, renovate and manage low-income housing. Unfortunately, the lawyer created serious problems for NBHDC by failing to obtain the tax-exempt status it needed to qualify for funding programs. This is when Brooklyn A stepped in to help. In the words of Joseph Holley, "Calling Brooklyn A was the greatest move we've ever made. Any success NBHDC has had is due to Brooklyn A."

NBHDC has certainly had its share of success. Where there were once abandoned, run down, hazardous buildings and dangerous empty lots, there are now attractive buildings and gardens. NBHDC has renovated 250 units of low-income housing and manages another 150. It also plays a key role in programs that have built hundreds of new homes in the community for moderate and middle-income families.

Throughout this time, Brooklyn A has guided NBHDC through legal aspects of its work as an advisor and in-house counsel. For Joseph Holley, "The people at Brooklyn A are like family. Whenever I call they know who I am." Family is a word you are likely to hear Mr. Holley and the staff of NBHDC use quite frequently. Their work is not only focused on putting families in decent homes, but on family in the larger sense: community. The large scale renovations they have overseen have dramatically improved the appearance and spirit of the community. The guidelines for the new homes marketed by NBHDC require an income between $32,000-$70,000. Having a permanent population with a steady income means that there are resources to invest in small businesses, local churches and other community organizations.

For Mr. Holley, it was obvious that NBHDC couldn't simply fill the houses and leave the tenants and homeowners to get by on their own. It was necessary to ensure the continued on page 11
When I became the Project Director of Brooklyn A in late 1984, the program was reeling from the impact of a 25% cut in federal funding, which was then our only source of income. We were left with only nine lawyers between our two offices. Two of those lawyers, Paul Aciapnura, now Deputy Project Director in East Brooklyn, and Pat Murray, now Housing Unit Coordinator in Williamsburg, became the pillars upon which we rebuilt Brooklyn A. This year we celebrate their 25th anniversary of service with Brooklyn A. In no small measure, Paul and Pat have been responsible for Brooklyn A’s durability. They have exemplified unserving devotion and commitment to the goals of legal services and to Brooklyn A’s vision of neighborhood-based offices working shoulder-to-shoulder with local groups to deliver our services and to revitalize and rebuild our communities. They should be considered as two of the proudest achievements of their alma mater, Rutgers Law School, which in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s was the political and spiritual home of socially conscious people who wanted to be lawyers.

Paul is a model, to be emulated but not easily duplicated, of a legal services lawyer. He has served as counsel, advisor, broker, and partner to an inspired and inspiring group of community organizations and their leaders throughout Oceanhill-Brownsville, East New York, Cypress Hills, Bedford-Stuyvesant, and even the South Bronx. He has contributed extraordinary imagination, judgment, intelligence, skill, and plain hard work, in guiding those groups through so many projects and in fulfilling so many dreams. Together, Paul and his clients have fueled the revitalization of huge areas of Brooklyn that so needed and deserved it.

And he’s not slowing down! He has built a very capable Community & Economic Development team (Hillary Exter, Brian Glick, and Rafael Martinez) that is geared up for even more accomplishments for years to come.

Pat too, in different and important ways, has helped hold us together. For the last several years she has coordinated the individual housing work in Williamsburg, one of the key jobs in the office. This large unit is responsible for preventing evictions and averting homelessness particularly among the most vulnerable members of our community: families on public assistance with young children. With all the difficult changes in housing and welfare law, in the dire circumstances that our clients face, and the challenges for our program, Pat has been a rock, ensuring the delivery of these critical services to so many of the large numbers of people who need them. Pat, like many of the leaders of our Units and the most experienced members of our staff, leads by example—taking on the largest caseload, and doing everything possible to keep our clients in their homes despite the increasing obstacles put in our way and their paths. On top of all of that, she does what may be the hardest thing of all, she takes care of the extremely burdensome administrative and reporting requirements that provide no reward or emotional satisfaction, other than the payments from the City that enable us to survive.

I’m not very good at saying thanks, but both personally and on behalf of Brooklyn A, I want to express our deepest appreciation for the commitment and sacrifices, for the constancy and continuity that Paul and Pat have contributed over these past twenty-five years!

—Marty Needelman

**Congratulations Paul...**

Paul J. Aciapnura was honored for his public service work by the New York County Lawyers’ Association at its annual meeting on May 27, 1999.
Barbara Samuels: Brooklyn A’s Best Kept Secret

by Mark O’Brien

When advocates in Brooklyn A’s SSI Disability Unit must face down unyielding bureaucrats in the Social Security Administration, they need only look down the hall to find the woman who literally wrote the book on SSI disability law—Brooklyn A’s Senior Staff Attorney Barbara Samuels. Her three-volume treatise, Social Security Disability Claims: Practice and Procedure, is widely recognized as the standard text in the field, and Barbara herself is a leading teacher and mentor to disability advocates throughout the city.

A native New Yorker, who now lives in Cobble Hill, Barbara joined Brooklyn A in 1986 after spending her early legal career at Chicago’s Legal Assistance Foundation. After six years as a full-time Brooklyn A staff attorney, representing children and adults seeking disability benefits at administrative hearings and appeals, Barbara was tapped by Legal Services for New York City to serve as Coordinating Attorney for SSI/SSD in its citywide Legal Support Unit. For the past seven years, she has split her time between the two offices, managing to juggle a large caseload at Brooklyn A despite her abbreviated work week. To co-worker Victor Torres, the benefit of having Barbara on hand to consult on complex cases is only too clear. “When you bring a question to Barbara, nine times out of ten, she can cite the appropriate regulation off the top of her head, chapter and verse. More importantly, she’s able to put it in the most simple manner possible, making it understandable for co-workers and clients alike.”

Earlier this year, Barbara’s vital contribution to the city’s legal services community was recognized when she was selected as a recipient of an Association of the Bar of the City of New York Legal Services Award. The Awards, which recognize the vital work of attorneys who provide legal assistance to poor people in New York City, were presented by John McKay, President of the national Legal Services Corporation, at a reception held at the City Bar on May 12, 1999.

Recalling her first encounter with disability law as a young lawyer in Chicago, Barbara reveals the empathy and passion for justice that fuels her commitment: “One day a woman walked in the door seeking help with her denial of SSI benefits. Despite the fact that she had been diagnosed with diabetes, asthma and depression the Social Security Administration had determined that she was able to work as a caretaker for children or the elderly. “Now I knew nothing about disability law, but I knew that this was the most outrageous and sexist thing I’d ever seen. Just because she was a woman she was supposed to be able to take care of others. I knew nothing about disability law, but I took the appeal anyway. I won the case, and I was hooked from then on.”

Over the years, Barbara has witnessed seismic changes in policy, attitudes and law governing eligibility for disability benefits. Unlike the harsh results of welfare reform, the impact of these changes has passed largely unnoticed by the general public. In 1994, for example, the Social Security Administration implemented a “redesign plan”. Changes, which were, in theory, intended to streamline the administrative process—an admittedly long and complicated process that clients have a hard time understanding—led in practice to widespread denials of benefits to eligible applicants. Increasingly, legal service programs found themselves forced to do the work that the agency itself should have been doing to assist applicants to document and present the medical cases underlying their claims.

Barbara sees the prospect of new standards of disability eligibility that would be devastating to the neighborhoods that Brooklyn A serves. “Clients we see today are in a far more tenuous state than those we represented 10-12 years ago. Today, welfare is less available as a safety net and this creates tremendous stress. When you lose your benefits, you lose Medicaid and are forced to interrupt medical treatment. This in turn jeopardizes your eligibility for a disability claim.” For many who are able to maintain Medicaid eligibility, the switch to managed care has brought further peril. In a system where primary care physicians act as gatekeepers to further specialist treatment, less choice often translates into less access to regular care—a particularly vexing problem for those with complex medical problems.

In the face of these challenges, Barbara’s personal response is twofold: to continue direct client representation and to help prepare the next generation of legal services advocates as well as providing support and technical assistance to seasoned advocates. “I like it when I can help people. There’s something so rewarding about being able to be constructive, to make a positive change in a client’s life. I also like being able to help young advocates.”

Mark O’Brien is the Pro Bono Coordinator at Davis Polk & Wardwell. He is currently on leave of absence, working on www.probono.net, a web site that provides internet-based support for pro bono lawyers handling cases on behalf of public interest law offices and legal services programs in New York City.
Keeping them Fair

by Elizabeth Ratner

Every day, some 500 New Yorkers make their way through Manhattan to one of three overcrowded public benefits offices to take advantage of their due-process right to a "fair hearing." Sitting in small rectangular rooms opposite a "City Representative" and a tape recorder, they nervously begin to plead their case: their right to an increase in their monthly food stamp allowance, their wish to pursue an education rather than a dead-end workfare job, and their right to continue to receive public assistance benefits despite missing an appointment with their agency caseworker. As they speak, the Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) who will decide their fate either listens or doesn't, scribbles hidden notes and, depending on his or her personality, occasionally interrupts. Five minutes later, sometimes ten, the hearing is over. For many public benefits recipients, this will have been their first real chance to tell their case. It will often be their last hope for any kind of redress.

Of course, not all fair hearings are as fair as the name might suggest. While some 2/3 of all cases are decided in favor of the appellant - meaning the welfare, food stamp, or medicaid recipient - there are far too many examples of cases which are lost because the ALJ grants only a cursory hearing or fails to help "develop the record" as is his or her job. In these instances, the appellant has almost inevitably gone to the hearing alone, without a lawyer or other legal representative, and the ALJ has simply written the case off as an automatic loss.

The difference between hearings where an advocate is present and those where one is not is dramatic. At Brooklyn A, for example, the advocates in the Government Benefits Unit have virtually unblemished fair hearing records. Thanks to their hard work and dogged dedication, hundreds of individuals have won fair hearings which they otherwise might have lost. They have won exemptions from work assignments they are too sick to perform, reopenings of cases that were wrongly closed, and thousands of dollars in critically needed benefits that the Human Resources Administration (HRA) had refused to pay. "Without us," explains Lisa Pearlstein, the Senior Staff Attorney in charge of the Williamsburg Government Benefits Unit, "fair hearings are less likely to be fair. With us, they usually are. When an attorney or advocate is present, it is much easier to force a hearing officer to fully explore the facts and listen to the presentation of the issue." Keeping hearings fair is at least half the battle-and half the purpose of the welfare rights advocate.

The right of public benefits recipients to a fair hearing was established nearly 30 years ago in the landmark law suit, Goldberg v. Kelly. The decision, which was handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1970, marked the first time that a public assistance recipient was accorded specific due process rights when his or her benefits were denied, discontinued, reduced, restricted, or suspended. By treating government benefits as an entitlement, the Goldberg judgment gave people the right to receive "adequate and timely notice" of an agency action against them and to challenge that action in an oral testimony before an "impartial decision maker." It has since become a critical procedure, a much needed and frequently invoked safeguard against the vagaries of the social services system.

Over the years, federal, state, and even city governments have made repeated attempts to weaken the Goldberg decision. Since the passage of the welfare reform act in 1996, this tendency has become even more pronounced. As the goals of the welfare bureaucracy have shifted from providing services to reducing the rolls, government and agency officials have grown more and more intent on undermining the fair hearing process and reducing the number of recipient victories. Towards this end, New York City has most recently instituted "Mandatory Dispute Resolution (MDR)," a new pre-hearing procedure designed quite explicitly to thwart the fair hearing process. So far, it seems to be working.

As of now, MDR is operational only in Staten Island and is considered by HRA to be a "pilot" initiative. While the details of the program remain somewhat vague, shrouded in a certain amount of secrecy, the most essential and troubling facts are all too clear: (1) Cash assistance recipients who request fair hearings are required to meet with representatives from HRA to "present the problem, help resolve issues, and review evidence as necessary:" (2) evidence not brought forth at the meeting cannot be introduced at the hearing; (3) the recipients are often told that they don't have a case and are encouraged to withdraw their request for a hearing; and, most disturbingly, (4) their cases can be closed if they fail to show up for the appointment.

Already, people are feeling the negative effects of MDR. In one particularly egregious instance, a woman who had requested a hearing to correct an agency under-budgeting error was slapped with a full case closing notice for failing to appear for MDR. And this is only the beginning. Notes Lisa Pearlstein: "If MDR is allowed to go forward, it will seriously compromise the fair hearing process. It's a clear violation of the due process rights on which hundreds of public assistance recipients rely every day to keep food on the table and pay their rent."

Elizabeth Ratner is an AmeriCorps*VISTA Volunteer working in the Government Benefits Unit of Brooklyn A's Williamsburg Office.
Greenpoint/Williamsburg: Environmentally Sensitive Sites

This map begins to tell the often hidden story of the terrible environmental burden borne by Greenpoint and Williamsburg, an area of 4.9 square miles with a multi-ethnic population of 151,098. These two neighborhoods are home to more than their “fair share” of toxic citywide public and private facilities and problems. Examples are (1) transfer stations handling more solid waste per day than does the NYC Sanitation Department, (2) an underground oil spill larger than that caused by the Exxon Valdez, (3) the largest sewage treatment plant on the East Coast, and (4) the only radioactive nuclear waste storage warehouse in the city. The map also shows how the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway and its arterial truck routes criss-cross the neighborhoods, creating excess noise and pollution. Plans to shut down the huge Fresh Kills landfill by 2001 in Staten Island will dramatically expand garbage storage in the area.

Williamsburg community groups and Brooklyn A plan to launch the North Brooklyn Environmental Justice Project to deal with this horrendous situation. Stay tuned!

Legend

- Right-to-Know Site
  Facilities that are required to report their inventory of potentially hazardous chemical substances under New York City's 1998 Community Right-to-Know regulations.

- Toxic Release Inventory Site
  Facilities that are required to report their inventory of potentially hazardous chemical substances pursuant to the federal 1986 Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA). EPCRA primarily requires an inventory of substances present in large quantities (over 10,000 pounds) while NYC’s Right-to-Know law mandates the reporting of many more substances at lower quantities (from 500 pounds to less than one pound).

- Waste Transfer Station

- Marine Waste Transfer Station

- Truck Routes

- Highway

Source: NYC DEP 1997 Data (Map) Dept. of Sanitation Permitted Transfer Stations 1998 (Charts)
ABDUR RAHMAN FARRAKHAN
Oceanhill—Brownsville Tenants Association, Inc.

by Brian Glick

Abdur Rahman Farrakhan, President and Chief Executive Officer, of the Oceanhill Brownsville Tenants Association (OHBTA), has for many years been a key leader in the struggle to revitalize East Brooklyn and low-income communities throughout the City. Firmly grounded in the principles of Islamic theology and working his way up from positions as a tenant and union organizer and private sector property manager, Mr. Farrakhan now administers a growing community-based organization with a staff of more than 300 employees and an annual budget of well over $3 million.

A major participant in the New York City Community Management Program, which helped to pioneer, OHBTA has expanded its vast housing portfolio to encompass projects funded through HUD, Enterprise Foundation, and a range of NYC programs. OHBTA founded and operates security and construction companies which are in transition to worker co-ownership. OHBTA is also in the process of opening a restaurant, a meat and poultry store, a fruit and vegetable market, a dairy store and a hardware store.

Mr. Farrakhan has served as a long-time board member of the Association for Neighborhood Housing and Development (ANHD) and a leader of the Community Housing Association of Managers and Developers. He has extensive experience in labor negotiations, negotiating contracts with unions, government agencies, and others. He oversees all OHBTA construction projects and its extensive housing management portfolio, and identifies and responds to government and foundation RFPs and RFQs.

Mr. Farrakhan accepted Islam under the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, leader of the Nation of Islam, and continued his studies under scholars who led a transition to traditional Islam. His studies have led him to Egypt, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia, as well as the Caribbean, the Far East and throughout the United States. He remains a devout practitioner of traditional Islam, whose religious beliefs and practices are central to his identity and world view and continue to inspire his work. Mr. Farrakhan was appointed as one of the first of three Muslim Chaplains in the NYS Department of Corrections, Division of Ministerial Services. He worked for nine (9) years, and continues as a volunteer chaplain, in the New York City Department of Corrections while still volunteering his time with the state correctional system. He also serves as Imam of Masjid Al-Jamiyah, located at 547 Howard Avenue, Brooklyn, NY.

Mr. Farrakhan's experience is buttressed by his education, most notably at the Non-Profit Institute of Columbia University's Graduate School of Business. Mr. Farrakhan holds an AAS degree from CUNY/BMCC and also holds the following licenses: New York Real Estate Broker, Certified Housing Manager, and Public Housing Manager.

Mr. Farrakhan is particularly proud of the fact that in addition to his own family, he has made a long-time commitment to being a foster and adoptive parent to 23 children. Today, 6 of the children are still living with his family. Many of the children now enjoy outstanding careers as policemen, teachers, family daycare providers as well as a public school assistant principal, and a musical producer.

By John D. Feerick

"Trailblazer" and "Precedent-setter" are words frequently used to describe Patricia Hynes. To her work she has brought a unique combination of excellence, professionalism, integrity, and dedication to the public good. She has served as a federal prosecutor, a leading trial lawyer and litigator, and a contributor extraordinaire to the organized bar and non-profit organizations and charitable causes. Her accomplishments have earned her a prominent place in the history of Women Lawyers in the Twentieth Century.

One of three sisters in a working class family, Pat Hynes was born and raised in Queens. Her mother was a homemaker and her father a quality control worker for the Long Island Railroad. She attended Mary Louis Academy, excelling as a debater, and then went on to Queens College, where she enjoyed considerable academic success as a history major. She entered Fordham Law School in 1963, one of six women in a class of 220, where she was selected an editor of the Fordham Law Review. Throughout her school years she worked at various jobs, secretarial and otherwise, to cover her expenses and tuition.

Following Law School graduation in 1966, Pat achieved one milestone after another. She became the first woman to serve as a clerk in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York, for its Chief Judge Joseph C. Zavatt. She then joined the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District where for the next 15 years she gained national prominence as a prosecutor, serving in the Civil Division, as chief of the Consumer Fraud Unit, as Chief of the Official Corruption and Prosecutions Unit, and finally as Executive Assistant United States Attorney.

In 1982, she became a member of the distinguished firm of Milberg Weiss Bershad Hynes and Lerach, LLP and a few years later a named partner, one of the first women to do so in a major law firm. Pat Hynes has disarmed and overwhelmed many a male colleague almost twice her size by her passion for the law, competitive spirit, and powerful advocacy.

In recognition of her many accomplish-
ments in the courtroom in significant prosecutions and cases, she was elected a fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers and has been included on the lists of Best Lawyers in America, Most Influential Women Lawyers in America, and the World’s Leading Litigation Lawyers. Equally impressive, however, are her contributions to volunteer activities and charitable causes.

Pat Hynes has held leadership positions in the American Bar Association, including being at present the Second Circuit Representative to the Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary and previously as chair of committees within the ABA’s Litigation Section. At the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, she was the first woman to chair its Federal Courts Committee and served as a member and officer of that Association’s Executive Committee. She currently serves as an officer of the Federal Bar Council and as a director of the New York Legal Aid Society.

Amidst her work and professional activities, Pat Hynes has found the time to contribute generously in assisting inner city students and schools in the Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens, chairing Futures in Education, a non-profit foundation. • John D. Feerrick is the Dean of the Fordham University School of Law.

FRANCES A. RESHESKE
Con Edison

by Martha Liipfert

"I grew up believing that one person can make a difference," says Frances Resheske. "That in some way I could change the world. I do want to have a positive impact on people's lives," she says. As Vice President of Public Affairs for Con Edison, Ms. Resheske has the opportunity to make a positive impact on community programs, government relations, philanthropy and communications in New York City and the state.

Before Ms. Resheske joined Con Edison, she was general manager of Government Relations and Community Development for Brooklyn Union, with responsibility for corporate philanthropy and economic development. Another organization that benefits significantly from Ms. Resheske’s involvement is Queens Theatre in the Park, where she serves as Board President. Executive Director Jeffrey Rosenstock says, "Frances’ knowledge of theater, combined with her enthusiasm and incredible resources, is what make us so lucky to have her at the helm of our board. She also brings to her office a commitment to our organization so it can grow and flourish."

A summa cum laude graduate with a bachelor's degree in Government & Politics from St. John’s University, she also taught Contemporary Government & Politics and Public Administration there while working in the government arena. She is a Rockefeller Fellow and a graduate of Leadership America and Leadership New York. Raised in the Borough of Queens, she makes her home in Brooklyn Heights.

Before making her mark in the corporate world, Ms. Resheske held a number of important positions with city government, including Director of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs for Ports and Trade, and Director of Governmental Affairs for the Financial Services Corporation. In the Koch administration, she served as Queens Borough Coordinator and specialized in city planning, Board of Standards and Appeals, and Department of Buildings issues.

Ms. Resheske is a firm believer in grassroots community and political involvement.

“I make time to be involved in politics,” she says, “because positive change requires strong civic leaders. When you hold strong beliefs, you have to act on those beliefs.”

Ms. Resheske has been recognized many times for her efforts. She has been actively involved with a wide range of civic and professional groups including New York State Women in Communication and Energy and the New York Chamber of Commerce, chairing two environmental committees and serving on both the public policy and transportation committees. Among her many awards are Crain’s New York Business 40 Under 40 Rising Stars Award, the Women’s Agenda Star Award, the Brooklyn YWCA Women of Distinction, the Brooklyn Music School Award for Charity and Personal Involvement and, of course, recognition from Brooklyn A.

Ms. Resheske considers time to be the most valuable contribution anyone can make. “Each of us can change the world, beginning with our own part,” she says, “but we can do so much more when we combine our ideas, our strengths, and especially our time. It is the strength of our convictions, the depth of our compassion and the nature of our actions that make the difference." •

Martha Liipfert is a business writer in the Public Affairs Department at Con Edison.
JANE N. BARRETT, Partner, Spodek & Barrett, LLP; former Staff Attorney, Brooklyn A's Bedford-Stuyvesant and Williamsburg Offices.

"Immensely competent", "compassionate", and "passionate about her varied interests" are all phrases used by colleagues to describe Jane Barrett. Jane, a Brooklyn resident, is on the one hand vitally interested in her own neighborhood near Prospect Park and committed to her herb and flower garden, and on the other hand a vibrant advocate for New Yorkers and the mega-institutions which support and assist them. While she is the consummate New York professional, Jane's interests and experience far transcend the five boroughs.

A magna cum laude graduate of Vassar College, Jane received an advanced degree in Chinese Studies from the University of Michigan and her J.D. from New York University Law School. In addition to her work at Brooklyn A, where she specialized in landlord-tenant, welfare and poverty issues, Jane served as an Assistant Attorney General for the State of New York and Assistant Corporation Counsel for New York City before going into private practice.

She is in partnership with Ellen Spodek, a co-chair of Brooklyn A's Advisory Committee, in an active practice representing both defendants and plaintiffs in a wide variety of tort (accident, malpractice, landlord liability) cases.

Jane's global interests have taken her to China where, in the early days of détente following President Nixon's groundbreaking visit, she and other members of an anti-Vietnam War delegation met with Chinese Premier Chou En-Lai one midnight for four hours. She has traveled to Nicaragua during the horrific civil war in that country, and has climbed in the Himalayan Mountains. She has also traveled to Cornwall, England where she visited her ancestral home, sought-out and met members of her extended family.

Jane has made significant professional contributions to the well-being of the private, public and institutional clients that she represents and remains actively involved in issues and causes of interest and importance to her. Jane will soon embark on one of life's greatest adventures as she finalizes the adoption of a Guatemalan child.

JAMES KAUFMAN, Principal, Kaufman Goldstein & Gartner, P.C.; former Staff Attorney, Brooklyn A's Williamsburg Office, 1969-1972

"...An experience and time that marked me for life" is how Jim Kaufman describes his years with Brooklyn A. A graduate of Yeshiva of Central Queens, Forest Hills High School and Columbia College, Jim received his law degree from Columbia in 1968. After graduation he worked briefly for a small commercial law firm, decided against entering the family diamond business and instead joined Brooklyn A in December 1969, where he developed an expertise in L&T, family law, welfare and commercial matters. While he primarily represented individuals, he also did some class action work including a challenge to the implementation of a citywide rent control increase and a truth-in-lending federal action.

Jim left Brooklyn A in March 1972 to work for a small general practice firm, leaving the following year to open up a solo practice—with no clients. Jim formed a partnership with two other attorneys in 1976, and remained in practice with them for over 15 years. His current firm is an offshoot of that partnership.

While the scope of his practice has broadened with time to include trusts and estates, corporate, securities, business law, real estate, commercial litigation and matrimonial law, his passion for public advocacy remains undiminished. About his time at Brooklyn A Jim says: "I have never stopped thinking of my years in Legal Services, the people I met, the cases I worked on, the suffering I saw and tried to alleviate. The work was the most important, the most affecting and the most emotionally draining I have done in my career—saving people's homes, getting stolen welfare checks replaced, preventing babies from being taken from mothers and occasionally having to defend mothers who were neglecting or abusing their babies, and suing unscrupulous merchants who preyed on some of our clients."

By any measure Jim Kaufman's legal career could be considered successful. He has shared his commitment to others and to Brooklyn with those closest to him—one of his four children currently teaches high school at a Brownsville juvenile detention center.

This edition of Alumni Profiles are written by Fritz Kopeinig who is a financial services professional active in community development and a Co-Chair of Brooklyn A's Advisory Committee.
IMPLEMENTING NEW TECHNOLOGY
At a recent luncheon, Brooklyn A paid tribute to Davis Polk & Wardwell staff who volunteered their time and expertise to implement new Pentium-based hardware and software technology at our East Brooklyn and Williamsburg offices.

Pictured are: (front row, left to right) Denis Berger, Mark O'Brien, Robert Hendel, Frances Murtha, Eric Levinson, Kris Kim, Susan Wheeler-Rollet, Lisa Erdmann, Bruce Masters; (second row) Glenn Lepppla, Harvey Neville, Jr., Steve Saper, Marty Needelman, Keith O'Brien, John Farah, and Joanna Siudak. Not pictured are Dean Serio, Boyd Puettz, Raymond Gong, Greg Goode, Ogden Lewis, and Kareem Al-Amin.

A FELLOWSHIP FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
Brooklyn A thanked Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton (right) and The Chase Manhattan Foundation (below) for their generous matching grants that enabled Brooklyn A to take advantage of a two-year Equal Justice Fellowship awarded by the National Association for Public Interest Law (NAPIL) and the Open Society Institute (OSI). This is the nation’s largest postgraduate, public service legal fellowship program. There will be 140 Equal Justice Fellows working in low-income communities throughout the United States in 1999-2000. Brooklyn A’s NAPIL/OSI Fellow, Allison A. Dunlop, will join the Community and Economic Development Unit of Brooklyn A’s East Brooklyn Office in September and assume full-time responsibility for a community-school initiative in Cypress Hills.

Pictured above are (l. to r.) Marty Needelman, Paul Acinapura (second from right) and Cleary Gottlieb partners Tom Moloney, Steven Horowitz and Les Samuels.

Pictured at left are (l. to r.) Carol Horowitz, director of Brooklyn A’s Comprehensive Rights Unit; Hillary Exter, Senior Staff Attorney in Brooklyn A’s East Brooklyn Office’s Community and Economic Development Unit; John M. Imperiale, Vice President and Director of Community Relations, The Chase Manhattan Bank, and Chair of Brooklyn A’s Advisory Committee; Marty Needelman; and Lori Grange, Director of the NAPIL Fellowships for Equal Justice.
Brooklyn A Announces Major Domestic Violence Initiative

The U.S. Department of Justice has awarded a $313,000 grant to Brooklyn A to provide legal assistance to victims of domestic violence. This new Brooklyn A program will operate in partnership with the North Brooklyn Coalition Against Family Violence and the Kings County District Attorney’s Domestic Violence Bureau.

Our staff has worked closely with Evelyn Cardona, head of the Coalition, providing back-up assistance, support, and legal representation. Carol Horwitz, Robyn Fisher, Wayne Saitta and Marty Needelman were instrumental in creating the Coalition and remain active with its Board of Directors. With this new funding, Brooklyn A will expand services to families and victims of domestic violence by creating a comprehensive, neighborhood-based, client-centered legal assistance project.

The Project will be part of Brooklyn A’s Family Law Unit, headed by Beth A. Harrow, who has been its Coordinator for over 8 years. In addition to adding more attorneys dedicated to this work, a social worker (MSW) will be hired. The grant also permits the North Brooklyn Coalition to hire a caseworker of its own. Our new anti-domestic violence team will include Meghan Faux who was awarded a two-year National Association for Public Interest Law/Open Society Institute Fellowship. Meghan will join us in September. The team will represent victims of family violence in a wide range of family law matters including orders of protection, custody, visitation, child abuse and neglect, as well as with government benefits and landlord-tenant problems. The Kings County District Attorney’s Domestic Violence Bureau will play a major role, particularly in situations involving criminal prosecutions. Community outreach and legal rights education for victims, survivors and community service providers will be a significant feature of the project.

Special thanks go to Brooklyn A’s Carol Horwitz and Liz Ratner for their hard work and extraordinary efforts in writing the proposal and gaining support for this initiative.

Be A Partner!
Brooklyn A needs you now. Your donation will support our crucial representation of tenants, families, senior citizens, immigrants, and people with HIV/AIDS, as well as our community and economic development work with neighborhood-based organizations.

At a time when our individual clients and community partners need us the most, Brooklyn A is expanding its community-based programs. Your contribution will make a real difference in the revitalization of Brooklyn.

Yes, I want to invest in Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A.

Enclosed is my gift of:

☐ $50  ☐ $100  ☐ $250  ☐ $500  ☐ Other

Contributors of $50.00 or more will receive a bright red Brooklyn A T-Shirt.

NAME

TELEPHONE

FAX

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Beyond Preservation

"Calling Brooklyn A was the greatest move we’ve ever made. Any success NBHDC has had is due to Brooklyn A."
—Joseph Holley

This "complete community" entails providing a wide range of social services, from after-school programs and learning centers to community gardens.

As NBHDC’s goal has evolved to embrace an ever wider scope, so have its relations with other community organizations. NBHDC has developed mutual and highly productive relations with a wide array of community organizations, from the Urban Resources Partnership to the local police precincts. NBHDC’s involvement with other organizations acts as an example of the type of involvement in community affairs that it hopes to foster in its clients, as it empowers them to improve their own homes and neighborhoods.

Two recent projects, the Greene Avenue After School project and the Kosciusko Garden Learning Center, are particularly good examples of the transformations that NBHDC has helped to engender in partnership with other organizations. The Greene Avenue After School project began when Mr. Holley noticed that many of the neighborhood children were “just hanging out with nothing to do.” NBHDC raised funds and recruited volunteers from local businesses to transform an empty basement in one of their projects into a learning center. In a single afternoon the empty basement was cleaned and repainted. It was then filled with books and computers that were given as donations.

The Kosciusko Garden Learning Center was undertaken with a variety of New York City organizations. It transformed an empty lot strewn with garbage into a thriving garden, which has been established as a public trust so that its ongoing existence is ensured. Students from several local schools come here to plant flowers, learn about the water cycle, learn the names of various plants and how to attract birds, butterflies, and bees. By next spring, Mr. Holley expects there to be weddings in the garden.

What better image could there be of the hope that NBHDC has helped to restore in the community? Weddings in the spring, surrounded by flowers planted by children who are happy to have a chance to learn and play in a beautiful environment, this is the true testament to the success of NBHDC. Mr. Holley attributes it all to good old-fashioned hard work, respect for others and the ability to form long-lasting relationships with those who share common goals.

Elizabeth Briana is a student at Amherst College working on a low-income banking project at Brooklyn A’s Williamsburg Office.
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