Davis Polk is proud to support Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A in its vital legal efforts to improve the quality of life in its neighborhoods.
6:00 P.M.
REGISTRATION & COCKTAILS

7:15 P.M.
WELCOME FROM THE
MASTER OF CEREMONIES
Rosanna Scotto
Co-Anchor, Good Day New York, Fox 5 News

POSTHUMOUS RECOGNITION
OF DENIS BERGER
Martin S. Needelman, Esq.,
Project Director & Chief Counsel, BKA
Paul J. Acinapura, Esq.,
General Counsel, BKA

AWARD PRESENTATION
Luis Garden Acosta,
Founder, President & CEO, El Puente

7:40 P.M.
DINNER

8:10 P.M.
REMARKS FROM THE SPECIAL SPEAKER
Michael Cardozo, Esq.,
Corporation Counsel, The City of New York

AWARD PRESENTATIONS
Bettina B. Plevan, Esq.,
Partner, Proskauer Rose

Vincent F. Palagiano,
Chairman & CEO, Dime Community Bancshares, Inc.

8:40 P.M.
CLOSING REMARKS,
BROOKLYN A BOARD CHAIR
Valarie A. Hing, Esq.
Martin S. Needelman, Esq.
Dear Friends,

40 years ago Brooklyn A was "born" at a time of a troubled national economy, a raging war overseas and an impending Presidential election. Choices were made in that year which influenced developments for many years to come.

This year's Event also comes at a time of a national economic crisis, an overseas war and - as we write - the impending Presidential and congressional elections. Choices to be made will have an enormous impact on the future of our country, our communities, as well as our program and legal services programs throughout the country.

We are now in the grips of perhaps the most rapid decline in the economy since the Great Depression of the 1930's. The $700 billion "bailout" recently approved by Congress, dramatically underscores the economic situation, and also gives a perspective on national priorities and resources available to address our country's needs and priorities. For us, in many ways the choices presented provide a liberating moment, in terms of what monies should and can be available to address what ought to be equally high priorities for our society.

We must all demand renewed attention to the needs of low income people and their communities. We cannot give out $700 billion to the financial sector, while continuing to neglect the life and death needs of working class and poor residents and their neighborhoods. Our citizens, and our economy, need significant new commitments to creating and renovating millions of new units of affordable housing, and providing dramatically higher levels of support for education, health, senior citizen, and child care facilities and services that will meet and restore the minimal levels of these public goods that a great and rich society like ours must provide. At the same time, these types of national investments will generate high numbers of jobs at all levels that will have a very strong stimulating impact on our economy at large. Our "national security" is best served by an appropriate investment in both our capital and human and social infrastructure. It is the pathway to a better and more secure future.

Hopefully we're on our way to changed perspectives and priorities that will finally recognize and accept our government's and society's obligations to the majority of its constituents, and not only the most rich and "influential"!

Tonight's Event once again celebrates Brooklyn A's remarkable Partnership for Community & Economic Development, the collaboration of our lawyers, with the vital, amazingly effective network of community organizations that are building, improving and sustaining the low income neighborhoods of North and East Brooklyn, which we have served since 1968, now 40 years! The other part of that Partnership is you, our supporters from the legal, corporate, banking, foundation, and government communities, with whom we have been and are increasingly collaborating and who provide the economic support without which all of our work and success would not be possible.

And this year again we have a really special group of Honorees, who reflect our mutual aspirations for and mission to achieve equal access to justice, and community empowerment. Former City Bar President Betsy Plevau of Proskauer Rose, Dime Savings CEO Vinny Palagiano, El Puente's Luis Garden Acosta, and our beloved late Denis Berger, each in their own way, both personally and with the organizations that they have been a big part of, reflect that commitment in vision and in deed.

As we say every year, but it's truer than ever, we bask in the reflected glory of those we honor. And we are honored to have all of you, our Partners in Community & Economic Development (and in bringing justice to Brooklyn) with us tonight! Thanks!

Marty Needelman & Paul Acinapura
Dear Marty Nadelman
and Celebrants at Brooklyn A's Annual Event,

Regrettably, once again I can be with you only by letter, as you all enjoy a wonderful annual event and honor truly distinguished and deserving contributors to our great City: Vincent Palazzolo, Luis Garden Acosta, Denis Berger (posthumously), and Betsy Plewan. Congratulations to them all!

I hope the others will forgive me if I single out my dear friend, Betsy Plewan, for a special round of applause—our friendship is only 30 or more years old! Betsy was positively outstanding from the moment she entered the New York City legal scene—a great lawyer for her legal skills, but also for the qualities that make a truly great lawyer: her sensitivity and dedication to equal justice for all. Her tireless efforts to make this a better world genuinely deserve your recognition and applause, and I am so pleased to join in it.

Sincerely,
Judith S. Kaye
Who We Are

About Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A

Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A's purpose and goal is to provide high-quality legal assistance to low-income individuals and community groups in North and East Brooklyn. We view legal assistance in terms of community development, education, and mobilization, as well as traditional representation. To that end we partner with and provide legal services to effective local grassroots organizations that have a demonstrated commitment to our common goal of social and economic justice.

In essence, our work prevents homelessness, helps people-in-need receive the benefits they are entitled to, assures that families remain whole, and assists the communities we serve marshal and control the assets of their communities and to create institutions and infrastructure which helps the communities to thrive and grow. This work, and our success with it, makes Brooklyn A unique and exceptional in its ability to improve the quality of life and promote empowerment within the many and diverse communities we serve. The following is a brief description of our various programs:

Anti-Predatory Lending/Foreclosure Defense

The Anti-Predatory Lending and Foreclosure Defense Unit defends homeowners facing foreclosure and files affirmative cases for homeowners and other consumers who have been the victim of predatory lending. The unit's years of litigation and transactional experience combine to provide comprehensive legal counseling and representation for local homeowners and consumers.

Preservation of Low-Income Housing

Through the Individual Housing and Group Housing Units, Brooklyn A defends the rights of tenants, works with groups building and operating tenant-run cooperatives, and helps ensure that senior citizens have access to safe, affordable housing. Brooklyn A represents individuals in housing court facing eviction and more than 100 local tenant-owned cooperatives, assisting the coops in sustaining themselves as affordable housing for low-income tenants. Brooklyn A's Group Housing Unit also partners with local community organizations and coalitions in struggles for justice and fair housing for low-income North Brooklyn residents.

Comprehensive Rights for People Affected by HIV/AIDS

The Comprehensive Rights Unit (CRU) represents clients at hearings addressing HIV/AIDS Services Administration and Supplemental Security Income benefits, challenges discrimination in housing and employment based on HIV/AIDS status, negotiates with landlords to secure the provision of basic housing needs and to stop harassment (and, if necessary, bring actions against landlords). The CRU helps protect clients against domestic violence, developing healthcare proxies and living wills, and creating guardianship and custody plans for clients' children.

Disability Advocacy Project

The Disability Advocacy Project assists disabled people living in our service area obtain the federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to which they are entitled, but are often denied, through negotiations with the Social Security Administration and representation at Social Security Administration administrative hearings.

Domestic Violence/Victims Support Program

The Victims Support Program provides legal assistance to survivors of domestic violence in ways that promote empowerment, self-sufficiency, and economic independence. It provides a variety of civil legal services to survivors of domestic violence so that they can: obtain orders of protection, spousal and/or child support; child custody, housing, and public assistance grants and funds from community groups to help pay rent; avoid foster care; negotiate payment plans with landlords; and obtain emergency government benefits to which they are eligible.
Los Sures' partnership with Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A has resulted in countless successes for the Southside community over the past 35 years. We have come to rely on their committed, knowledgeable attorneys who represent individual tenants to prevent evictions; tenant associations to restore and improve living conditions; and tenant cooperatives to preserve and maintain affordable housing. They have also acted as house counsel on development projects for new senior and low-income housing. Basically we couldn't accomplish our work without the expertise and support of Brooklyn A.

—BARBARA SCHLIEF, DIRECTOR OF HOUSING RESOURCES, SOUTHSIDE UNITED HDFC (LOS SURES)

Los Sures creates a growing and satisfying community with the involvement and participation of the residents of the Williamsburg community in the building of a more humane environment. They develop and implement programs that are directed at improving the quality of housing and community life, individually and in conjunction with other organizations and they preserve and rehabilitate existing housing with and for tenants and property owners in the Williamsburg community. In addition, Los Sures develops and organizes the available human and material resources to assure the comprehensive revitalization and self-reliance of the Williamsburg community. Brooklyn A and Los Sures have been partners in building their communities for over 35 years.

We at Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A use the law to change our client's lives. We may avert a catastrophe such as homelessness. We may give hope by helping to build a local school or clinic so that advancement can happen in the neighborhood instead of over a distant hill. We may scream truth to power and save the wealth of generations from predatory lenders and indifferent judges. In a world where life without the law is nasty, brutish and short, Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A brings the grace of the law to our community.

—DAVID J. BRYAN, ESQ., MANAGING ATTORNEY, BUSHWICK OFFICE, & DIRECTOR, COMPREHENSIVE RIGHTS UNIT

Working with clients who are experiencing the physical abuse and psychological manipulation of domestic violence or the trauma of an HIV diagnosis or the anxiety of having one's child snatched by an abusive partner, surpass any made-for-television rendition of family strife. But guiding those same clients through the legal process to regain control over their family lives is both humbling and exhilarating. At Brooklyn A it's not just about winning the case, it's about making a difference that endures.

—ROSE MORGAN, SENIOR STAFF ATTORNEY, COMPREHENSIVE RIGHTS UNIT, EAST BROOKLYN OFFICE

The Community and Economic Development Unit (CED Unit) at Brooklyn A provides non-profit community-based organizations (CBOs) with the legal work necessary to help CBOs in Brooklyn and beyond fulfill their missions by creating affordable housing and high-quality public schools, by providing free or low-cost health care and social services, and by organizing the community to take a stand on pressing issues like gentrification and immigrants' rights. But what makes the CED Unit so unique is not just that we are civil legal services lawyers who do this vital transactional legal work pro bono—rather it is that we are physically rooted in the community we serve, work only with non-profit CBOs and so have built a substantial expertise in working with this client base, and share our clients' dedication to community-led, community-controlled efforts to promote social and economic justice.

—MIKE HABER, STAFF ATTORNEY, COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UNIT, EAST BROOKLYN OFFICE
As a summer legal intern at Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A I got the opportunity to make real and long-lasting differences in the communities Brooklyn A serves. I worked closely with staff attorneys at Brooklyn A to help bring additional affordable housing options to East New York, and I finalized a commercial lease for a not-for-profit day care center, among other things. Working with the dedicated staff attorneys at Brooklyn A was an amazing experience.

— JAIME ALONSO, 2008 LEGAL INTERN, CED UNIT, EAST BROOKLYN OFFICE

It has been a pleasure and honor to sit on Brooklyn A’s Advisory Committee and to act as co-counsel with Brooklyn A’s attorneys as they work tirelessly to help Brooklyn residents who often have nowhere else to turn. Whether policy advocacy, litigating or effectuating transactions on critical matters, Brooklyn A provides top notch legal services to its clients. Of one fact there can be no doubt without Brooklyn A’s efforts, countless Brooklynites in some of the City’s most underserved neighborhoods would have no voice in public policy debates that will have a direct effect on their daily lives. Kudos to Brooklyn A and its mission.

—MICHAEL S. GUGIG, ESQ., PARTNER, SONNENSCHEN NATH & ROSENTHAL LLP, BROOKLYN A ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER AND PRO BONO PARTNER

BROWNSVILLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Our lawyers at Brooklyn A are more than just valued legal counsel - they are, and have been for more than thirty years, our partners as we give meaning to our mission of providing integrative and high quality medical and social services to enhance the well-being of every individual and family in our community.

—MAURICE REID, PRESIDENT AND CEO, BROWNSVILLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

In 1982 the Brownsville Community Development Corporation (BCDC) opened its first community health center in the Brownsville community of Brooklyn, known as the Brownsville Multi-Service Family Health Center (BMS), which was the first community health center in this medically underserved community in Brooklyn. In the intervening years, it has expanded its primary health care, nutrition and social services throughout the Brownsville and East New York communities in a number of additional locations.

BMS is a not-for-profit, Article 28 Diagnostic and Treatment Center. BMS offers a wide range of medical and non-medical services. Today, BMS is a comprehensive health and wellness facility. In 2007, BMS provided 58,756 patient visits to over 20,000 individuals. It operates out of eight separate service sites, which include its 27,000 sq. ft. main health center, an eleven-exam room satellite health center, a medical practice at a center for homeless women, the BMS Institute for Specialty and Integrative Services, a State-funded school-based adolescent health center, a 3-story non-medical wellness facility, a Mobile Access Cruiser, a 21-bed co-ed facility for recovering substance abusers, and the World Academy for Total Community Health (WATC.H.) - a health-themed high school.

BCDC has been a client of and has partnered with Brooklyn A on CED projects since 1976. Brooklyn A’s representation of BCDC/BMS has included: participation in finance development; representation in the finance closings which have included private loan and tax exempt bond financings, as well as a tax-exempt bond defeasance; title acquisitions; commercial lease negotiation and drafting; health regulatory matters; and general in-house counsel services.
Friends & Partners

CYPRUS HILLS
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

We recently had the title and construction loan closing and are in construction for Cypress Plaza Mews – the first affordable mixed-use, retail and residential, new construction project for the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation and the Cypress Hills neighborhood. Due to its complexity, the project has been over a decade in the making, and never would have been possible without the invaluable legal counsel of Brooklyn Legal Services Corp A.

For over two decades the lawyers of the CED Unit have been there for us as a constant source of counsel and support.

— BETSY MACLEAN, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, CYPRESS HILLS LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Since its founding in 1983 by local residents and merchants, the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation (CHLDC) has provided a comprehensive menu of programs and services to the residents of the greater Cypress Hills/City Line/East New York area. CHLDC's mission is to revitalize the Cypress Hills community through housing preservation, economic development, and the positive development of our youth and their families. From its beginnings, CHLDC's leadership adopted a comprehensive approach to neighborhood building: preserving the housing stock, supporting economic development, and investing in the people — young and old — by offering educational, creative, recreational, and leadership development opportunities throughout the area.

Today, CHLDC serves 8,000 residents per year through its five program divisions: Community Development, Community Organizing, Economic Development, Housing Counseling, and Youth and Family Services. It develops affordable housing units, many of which provide homeowner opportunities for residents, and helps owners and renters to fix-up and preserve their housing. It also offers first-time homebuyer seminars, provides pre- and post-purchase counseling services, organizes tenant and block associations, helps local small businesses, and sponsors an employment center. It offers recreational, educational, and vocational services for youth, adult education, family counseling, and college counseling and through its subsidiary, the Cypress Hills Child Care Corporation (CHCCC), runs a family day care network, an In-Home Head Start program, and a day care center, which all provide quality childcare, as well as jobs for local residents. Together, CHLDC's programs strengthen the area's physical and economic infrastructure.

Brooklyn A's CED Unit has helped CHLDC develop and operate a variety of programs, and has supported CHLDC's community campaigns for almost two decades. The CED Unit provides CHLDC with the full range of general counsel services including: corporate and organizational matters, taxes, contracts, real estate, employment law and other litigation matters. As a partner with CHLDC in its community development work, the CED Unit also provides informal legal counseling, including pre-development consultation, project coordination and troubleshooting, fundraising, negotiating with regulatory agencies and funders, and networking among other community groups.

Brooklyn A provides critical services to clients and communities that have been on the frontline of the financial crisis facing the U.S. These communities will continue to feel the brunt of the crisis. Especially in times like these, I am honored to be part of Brooklyn A's efforts on behalf of our clients and communities.

— VALARIE A. HING, ESQ., PARTNER, CURTIS, Mallett-PREVOST, COLT & MOSLE LLP, CHAIRPERSON, BROOKLYN A BOARD OF DIRECTORS

There is a deep gratification in keeping a family from becoming homeless. Everyday I'm proud to serve and see the impact that our work has in the community. At Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A when the sun is not shining, we work to add light to our client's day.

— MYRNA SANABRIA, SENIOR LEGAL ASSISTANT, EAST BROOKLYN OFFICE
Representing tenants, whose incomes are below the poverty level and whose tenure in their rental homes are abruptly jeopardized by callous and avaricious market trends, is a moral obligation; the forced mass exodus of long term residents from old neighborhoods is unacceptable. Brooklyn A does not sit idly by, but works with community partners and tenant organizers to protect long term residents from illegal, forced displacement.

—ROBERTO MARRERO, SENIOR STAFF ATTORNEY, GROUP HOUSING UNIT, WILLIAMSBURG OFFICE

It has been a great privilege to serve on the Board of Directors of Brooklyn A over the past six years. I hold in the highest regard the lawyers and staff members who have dedicated so much of their careers and their lives to the communities and residents served by Brooklyn A. I look forward to a long future of support for and collaboration with their good works.

—JAMES H. R. WINDELS, ESQ., PARTNER, DAVIS POLK & WARDWELL, VICE-CHAIRPERSON, BROOKLYN A BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MAKE THE ROAD NEW YORK

The work of Brooklyn A has enabled us to continue focusing on our core programs. Brooklyn A does such amazing and diligent corporate legal work for us — from handling the merger, to helping us secure our new Queens space. We are a bigger, better and more well-located organization as a result of Brooklyn A's incredibly generous legal work.

—ANDREW FRIEDMAN, CO-DIRECTOR, MAKE THE ROAD NEW YORK

In recent years, MTR forged a productive, close working relationship with another not-for-profit community group, Latin American Integration Center (LAIC). LAIC was founded in 1992 by a social justice lawyer from Colombia who created the organization to promote human rights and democratic participation in her community. LAIC mobilized Latino community members to overcome systemic barriers to basic services and equal rights and to expand the power of immigrants within New York's political and civic life. LAIC grew to become a multi-service agency with two centers in Queens and one in Staten Island, out of which the organization has fought to protect the rights of immigrants through community education, community organizing, and strategic policy advocacy.

In 2007, MTR and LAIC merged their organizations together into one, changing their name to Make the Road New York (MTRNY), in order to create a city-wide organization that combines democratic accountability to low-income people with an innovative mix of strategies to confront inequality and economic injustice; and to bring together the two groups’ deep and active community roots.

MTR has been a client of and has partnered with Brooklyn A on a variety of projects in the community over its decade of existence. Brooklyn A represented MTR in its joining together with LAIC. Brooklyn A has continued to provide transactional representation to MTRNY as it continues to grow and be a voice for justice throughout New York City and beyond.

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Honoring

Betsy Plevan

By Ken Plevan

I am extremely pleased that Brooklyn Legal Services has not only chosen to honor Betsy Plevan tonight, but that it is allowing me to author a testimonial on Betsy’s extraordinary professional and personal accomplishments.

One could fill many pages with Betsy’s achievements in the practice of law, so I will only list a few highlights: Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers (more than 50 jury and non-jury trials); Fellow of the American College of Appellate Attorneys (more than 70 appeals); Fellow of the American College of Labor and Employment Lawyers; Chair of the Second Circuit Judicial Conference. In the view of many, Betsy is the number one defense employment lawyer in New York City. She has for years represented, for employment law purposes, many of the prestige institutions in New York City, including, to name a few, Citigroup, Lazard Freres, Mt. Sinai Medical Center, and Rockefeller University.

Betsy has also been inferentially honored by her colleagues at the bar by the number of major law firms, from New York and elsewhere, that have retained her to handle their own difficult employment issues (no names will be mentioned). Much of this high-intensity work occurs behind the scenes — it would be hard to find a lawyer with as much successful mediation/settlement experience, formal and informal, as Betsy has had over the years.

It would be wrong to think that as an employment defense lawyer, Betsy has not contributed to fair and just employment practices. To the contrary, Betsy’s counseling and leadership, her behind-the-scenes work, and indeed when necessary and appropriate her aggressive defense of employers wrongfully accused, have all made important contributions to fairness in the workplace. So, too, has her work in the organized bar, discussed below.

Another of Betsy’s not-often-recognized contributions to the profession has been her mentoring of more-junior colleagues. As a young lawyer, Betsy had many mentors herself, and she has never forgotten how important that guidance was to her career. At the risk of not being comprehensive enough, I will venture to identify a few (in alphabetical order): Mike Cardozo, Marvin Frankel, George Gallantz, David Stern, and Ed Silver.

Several of Betsy’s mentees are her partners today, and others have moved on to other jobs or other cities, but virtually all remain among her closest friends. Granted, Betsy’s high-intensity approach to the practice of law was not everyone’s cup of tea, but for the many who were inspired by her dedication, working with Betsy provided an outstanding education. Betsy’s mentees were often women, but almost as often were men — in professional matters Betsy was always an equal-opportunity employer. As I write this, I am sure that more than a few of these mentee/friends will be in attendance at the Brooklyn Legal Services event.

For most mortals, the challenges and accomplishments in Betsy’s professional practice would have made for a full, complete, and satisfying life. Not enough for Betsy.

In 1975, Proskauer partner Mike Cardozo was taking over as chair of Committee on State Court of Superior Jurisdiction of what was then known as the “Association of the Bar of the City of New York.” Mike had the foresight to invite Betsy to serve as the Secretary of the Committee, and thus began Betsy’s second full-time career. Approximately 30 years later, as President of that distinguished bar group, Betsy was largely responsible for its name change to the more-consumer-friendly “New York City Bar.” Along the same lines, the Association of the Bar of the City of New York Fund, Inc., the entity responsible for its pro-bono activities, became the City Bar Justice Center, on whose behalf Betsy launched the highly successful annual City Bar Justice Center Gala.

When I review a comprehensive list of Betsy’s activities in the organized bar, even I (having lived the story first-hand) have difficulty imagining how she could have done so much. Highlights only: in the City Bar, Chair Bar committees and of its Women and the Committee, mem-

Executive Committed, President. In many years in the Delegates, and now of numerous City founding chair

Profession ber of its tee, and, as the ABA, House of on its Board
of Governors. In addition: President of the Federal Bar Council, a long tenure as chair of the Nominating Committee of the Legal Aid Society; Chair of two committees in the American College of Trial Lawyers; active in the American Law Institute and on the board of ALI-ABA.

Bar work led Betsy, naturally and enthusiastically, to support for legal services for the poor and disadvantaged. She has been active in this cause not only in her work at the City Bar, but also on behalf of, among many other organizations, the New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. This makes Betsy an especially appropriate honoree tonight.

One reason for Betsy’s enormous success in her bar endeavors is that her motivation for working to improve the profession and its role in society has always been an unselfish one. About one-month ago, Betsy casually commented to me that she felt that her highly visible leadership in the bar might have been a factor in her having been retained recently for several challenging assignments. This seemed to be a new revelation to Betsy — in more than 30 years of unselfish service to the profession, her rewards were always the satisfaction from a job well done and from helping to improve the role of lawyers in society — it had never occurred to her that there might be “fringe benefits” from this effort.

Turning to family, this is the place where, if Betsy were writing this, she would acknowledge her supportive husband and sons, and how they never complained about her inevitable and often lengthy absences from home. In fact, Bill, Jeff, and I never felt that we had been abandoned. Betsy ran the household and the family as efficiently and effectively as she did every other aspect of her life, and with the same passion and energy. (Indeed, one might even allow that Betsy’s absence was sometimes viewed by the “boys” as a brief respite.)

Now for a candid evaluation of Betsy’s strengths and weaknesses. Successful practitioners know that “very smart” is necessary, but not sufficient. In Betsy’s case, add to that great judgment, passion for what she does, self-confidence, and hard work/long hours. Betsy is one of those who is blessed with the ability to function well on 4-5 hours (or less) of sleep. Her many trips to the west coast invariably end with Betsy going straight to the office after a few hours sleep on the “red-eye.” And, she is extremely well organized and efficient. Coming home from dinner, for example, by the time I hang up the coats Betsy had already logged in and is off into email land.

Now for the weaknesses. First, no matter how busy she was, Betsy never learned to say “no,” to any worthwhile bar organization that solicited her involvement, or to any colleague or client who needed her help. Second — television reruns of murder mysteries, preferably from the British-generated Mystery Theater, airing between the hours of 11:00 PM – 3:00 AM. Even here, Betsy turned a weakness into a strength — staying up to the wee hours to watch reruns allowed her to complete a few dozen more emails and dictate a few more letters.

I met Betsy when we were both undergraduates. On our second date, Betsy got right down to business: “What are you going to do when you graduate?” Caught off-guard, I countered with a pat (and I thought safe) response “Go to medical school.” Betsy pressed on: “What kind of a doctor do you want to be?” Now in trouble, I responded weakly, “A radiologist?” Betsy sized me up for a few minutes, then responded: “People do become radiologists, but nobody wants to be one. You obviously don’t really want to be a doctor.” After another pause (during which Betsy no doubt considered whether this phony was worth the effort), she added: “I plan to go to law school — you should consider law school as well.” Well, that was it for me; my mind was made up — not only had I found an attractive, intelligent (and, of course, Jewish) girl who knew what she wanted in life, she even knew what I wanted, or at least would make the tough decisions for me. And, after a few more months of playing “hard to get,” Betsy came around to my point of view.

There you have it, this year’s distinguished and extremely well-deserving honoree. I could go on and on, but I have now exceeded Marty Needleman’s page limit.

Oh, did I mention that in June, 1967, Betsy married her college sweetheart, and that 41 ½ years later they are still happily married?
Honoring

Vincent F. Palagiano
By Kenneth J. Mahon

In a city renowned for its global financial institutions and investment bankers, it seems implausible to think that one could still find a traditional, community banker in its midst. And yet each day, in a second floor office, overlooking the Williamsburg Bridge Plaza, sits my friend and associate of 28 years, Vincent F. Palagiano. “Vinny”, as he is known to his co-workers at the Dime Savings Bank of Williamsburg, is the personification of what we have come to know as a hands-on community banker. Vinny wouldn’t have it any other way. While not prone to brag about personal and professional accomplishments, he never hesitates to brag that Dime is a bank where “customers can still reach the CEO at anytime”.

Vinny’s career at Dime has spanned 38 years, including his start as a loan appraiser in 1970 and his rise to become Chairman and Chief Executive Officer by 1986. For 23 years, Vinny has provided successful stewardship of Dime, during which time he has presided over the Bank’s conversion to public ownership, as well as two successful bank acquisitions. In 1970, the Bank had 5 branches and $400 million in assets. Today, Dime consists of 23 branches and over $3.7 billion in assets. As a leader, Vinny has directed Dime with a steady hand through both lean and prosperous times: exercising calm and resolve in the midst of challenging banking and credit conditions, and never boasting when times are good.

Having grown up in Brooklyn, Vinny clearly understands the housing needs of the diverse ethnic cultures throughout New York. During his years as the Bank’s Chief Lending Officer, he transformed the Bank into a truly local lender for multifamily rental housing, that is, “lending for the way New Yorkers live.” And while other banks have moved their corporate offices out of the local communities they originally served, Vinny remained steadfast in his view that Dime’s corporate headquarters should remain as the primary commercial anchor in the neighborhood where it was established in 1864. His commitment to Williamsburg is demonstrated through his long association with Brooklyn, for example, establishing a program to provide mortgage funds for low income families seeking to purchase homes in the nearby Brooklyn Villas housing complex on Kent Avenue.

Vinny’s affection for Brooklyn stems from his historical family ties. Raised in what is now Cobble Hill (then Red Hook), he also lived in Bensonhurst before settling down in Staten Island. Vinny is a lover of life who is devoted to his family. He and his wife Elizabeth have been happily married for forty years. Vinny and Elizabeth have two successful grown children, Anne Marie, a Podiatrist, and Mark, an FBI agent, and three young grandchildren. Vinny and Elizabeth have been honored by many local organizations, including the Staten Island Mental Health Society, Helen Keller Services for the Blind, and the Brooklyn Division of the Boy Scouts of America, where Vinny serves on the Board of Directors.

Vinny’s family values and commitment to integrity are clearly demonstrated through his leadership at Dime. Through the years, Vinny, distinguished by his trademark cigar, has been one of those individuals who lift the spirits of those around him. As a result, Dime is both well known and unique in the corporate world for its long-tenured staff. These are people who have grown up together with the Bank and share Vinny’s vision for Dime as a place where people want to work and bank. Vinny fosters honesty and open communication among his staff, as well as customers and shareholders alike. As a result, Dime has earned a reputation as a company on whose word people can rely.

Each of us at Dime has our favorite “Vinny” anecdote, one that never fails to bring a smile. Here’s mine. Just recently, a letter showed up at the bank addressed to Mr. Palagiano. It was written by a current Dime shareholder, who now lives upstate and has followed the progress of the Bank and of Vinny’s career. In 1983, as a young loan officer, Vinny had helped this man’s family purchase their first home in the Fort Greene section of Brooklyn. The man never forgot the assistance Vinny provided and recently wrote to tell Vinny that he should be proud of his personal accomplishments and of the success he has helped the Bank achieve. He further mentioned that the ‘young officers’ around him should be appreciative of the steady, prudent leadership Vinny provided throughout the years. At the time, Vinny gave me the letter to read. It was a very heartfelt letter, and, if any of us were Vinny, it would likely be mounted in a frame on the wall of our office.
for all to see. But typical of Vinny, when I went to his office to retrieve the letter, it was nowhere to be found.

It's in stories like Vinny's that our day-to-day heroes are found. It is not always the movers-and-shakers, or the famous and renowned, who help us in our daily lives. Many times it is the banker on the corner who makes the loan, who helps the community, who respects small borrower and large alike, who personifies the definition of "community". For all these reasons, my colleagues and I are proud and honored to stand beside Vinny as he receives this recognition from Brooklyn A.
Honoring

Luis Garden Acosta

By Frances Lucerna

The New York Times once wrote about a violent moment in Luis’ life when he was about 13. It was his cousin’s first day in New York (up from Puerto Rico) and Luis was showing his cousin around in the Latino section of Bedford Stuyvesant. Suddenly, about five black boys knocked into them on the street. Rather than excuse themselves, one of them accused Luis of purposefully bumping into him. When Luis objected, they descended on him, assaulting him with their fists and obscenities centered around Luis’ Latino heritage. The same week, a small gang of Latino youth jumped Luis in Fort Greene, this time, because they were convinced he was Chinese! Many, given such trauma, would harbor negative feelings toward the larger group that these boys, in each case, represented. What it did for Luis, however, was to instill a deep seated drive to overcome the misconceptions, culture and class differences that continuously attempt to tear us, all, apart.

Perhaps, no other symbol best describes Luis’ life than the bridge, in Spanish, El Puente, the name of the human rights driven, community movement he founded in Williamsburg’s Southside, in 1982. Back then, when many community organizations had all but transitioned out of “war against poverty” community action initiatives in favor of direct social services, Luis led the call to focus on development and not dysfunction, on the potential of our communities to rise up as well as and on the human need to hold sacred the dream of every individual, especially those ignored by the ruling establishment. He decried the “problem” approach to his neighbors – that social service mantra that could only connect with others on the basis of deficit or the pejorative status of being “at risk”. Instead, he shared his vision of human rights driven, community development- one that bridged the world of the arts, education, community health and the environment with our collective responsibility for democratic action, healing, peace and justice.

Luis’ agenda of hope enlisted a network of young Williamsburg leaders who believed with him that the community could put an end to what had become killing fields. The Southside of Williamsburg, the media blared, had become “the teenage gang capital of New York City”. Indeed, in a 12 month period (1979-1980) 48 Williamsburg young people lost their lives to gang violence, virtually one a week. It was to Luis’s Emergency Room that they were rushed, more often than not, dead on arrival. He was, then, the Director of Community Medicine and Health Promotion at Greenpoint Hospital. The Emergency Room was one of seven departments in his portfolio, and clearly, the one department that challenged him most.

Luis characteristically made the “big demand.” At the height of the “Reagan Cuts” and the tail end of New York City’s fiscal austerity measures, Luis called out to stop the violence and raise up young leaders who could act as bridges connecting family and community in the quest for peace and justice. That demand was echoed by Father Steve Lynch, who the New York Daily News described as “The Gang Priest”. It was taken up by Eugenio “Gino” Maldonado, who had led the takeover of Roberto Clemente Houses that prompted a court consent degree (facilitated by Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A) for fair access, along with the Hasiidic community, to the new development. And it was embraced by me, who, taking some time off from a career as a performing artist to heal a dance related injury, created and led the Williamsburg Arts and Culture Council for youth, the only arts program serving the Southside community at that time.

Throughout the 26 years of El Puente, Luis brought his bridge building, virtually, to every El Puente initiative. El Puente partnered with Greenpoint Hospital to launch the first adolescent health assessment and referral clinic in North Brooklyn; created community gardens and developed other parks with the leading help of the Parks Council (now, New Yorkers for Parks); and, with the assistance of Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A, the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, Aspira as well as the Office of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the Congress for Puerto Rican Rights, led the support for the Parents of PS 16 in a month long boycott of their elementary school till an unconstitutional “wall” of segregation was brought down. During the historic campaign against the potential development
of an incinerator at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, El Puente took partnership building to another level by marching in solidarity with the Daughters of the American Revolution!

Perhaps, no greater tribute to Luis’ innate bridge building is illustrated in his community’s response to Luis’ felony indictment. President Nixon’s demand to “clear the streets of radicals” before his upcoming re-election campaign drove US Attorney General Mitchell to press the US Justice Department into indicting, virtually, every Young Lords Party (YLP) leader in every city, including Luis, who founded and led the YLP in Massachusetts. Like Pablo Guzman, leading journalist for WCBS-TV, who was convicted and imprisoned, Luis was indicted and faced a five year jail sentence, allegedly, for failing to report to induction to the army in 1972 when he was a Harvard Medical student. On the first day of the trial, the first words spoken by the prosecutor was to petition the judge to send “the case back to the Department of Justice for clarification”. His lawyers grabbed Luis and, shouting for joy, declared “We won!” Unbeknown to Luis a group of Brooklynites that included childhood friends; an Assistant District Attorney who he met when, at the age of 19, he won a community election to one of the first anti-poverty boards; the Catholic Bishop of Brooklyn, who he had served as an altar boy; and, even a New York City Judge, the father of a close friend, had all written and otherwise flooded the Federal Prosecutor with testimonials to the character of Luis Garden Acosta.

It is no wonder, given that history, that Luis is relentless in his passionate pursuit of government that is not only “good” but rooted in the human rights of all the people. His ongoing campaign to break through the walls of a city segregated by class, color and community has driven him to connect with principled leadership everywhere. For example, he serves as vice chair of the Citizens Union and plays a major board role in government policy making bodies such as the New York State Environmental Board or the New York City Council Commission on the Campaign for Fiscal Equity. In short, Luis, fuelled by the power of love and caring for others, is indefatigable in his journey to create community. He is, truly, a bridge builder for conscientious leadership – a man who believes and acts for an America and world that is rooted in justice and always seeks peace.
Denis Berger died on February 20, 2008, following an unexpected and massive heart attack a few weeks prior. For over 15 years Denis served as our long term Director of Development and later Development consultant, but he was those things and so much more to all of us here at Brooklyn A and to our program. Even after 8 months, we still cannot get over his loss and miss him terribly. Our hearts go out to his wife of 40 years, his beloved Alice, and their wonderful daughters, Jennifer and Sabrina.

Special thanks go to Gertrude Houston for the truly wonderful but emotionally difficult work she did in preparing tonight’s video remembrance of Denis. Denis and Gertrude collaborated for a decade in producing Gertrude’s moving video tributes to all of our Attorney, Corporate/Banking, and Community Honorees over those years, and each and every one of them, and Denis and we, all fell in love with her in the process!

The following is the memorial to Denis that appeared in the Brooklyn A Newsletter shortly after his untimely passing. It’s worth repeating here. Bless you Denis, for what you did and what you were, a tireless and hard driving inspiration to us all.

Brooklyn A has lost one of our oldest, dearest friends. Our staff, Board and Advisory Committee mourn the passing of Denis Berger, Brooklyn A’s Fundraising Consultant and former Director of Development, who passed away on February 20, 2008.

Throughout his life, Denis devoted his extraordinary intelligence, commitment, and skills to the cause of justice and empowerment for low-income and working people. He was a devoted husband to Alice, his wife of 40 years, and father to their two wonderful daughters, Jennifer and Sabrina, who carry on their father’s spirit.

Denis was instrumental in creating Brooklyn A’s Advisory Committee, which includes prominent members of the legal, banking, corporate, and philanthropic communities. Under Denis’ leadership, the committee has generated broad support and funding for our Community and Economic Development (CED) team, which partners with hundreds of local grassroots organizations that serve low-income neighborhoods in North and East Brooklyn.

He initiated and launched Brooklyn A’s Annual Benefit and built it over the past 15 years into a legal community tradition that in 2007 drew 425 participants and raised substantial resources for our CED work. Denis also led a highly successful capital campaign that enabled Brooklyn A to purchase the building that houses our Williamsburg office.

“Denis was incredibly devoted to the struggles for justice throughout the world and in our own local neighborhoods,” said Marty Needelman, Brooklyn A’s Project Director. “He was a brilliant strategist in developing approaches to achieving ambitious goals, amazingly focused, energetic, and unshakably optimistic friend, who played a leading role in getting Brooklyn A where we needed to be.

“Our love and thoughts go out to Alice, Jennifer, and Sabrina.”
Prior to his 17 years with Brooklyn A, Denis was a founder of the Venceremos Brigade, a Cuba Solidarity organization; and worked as an organizer in Springfield, Mass. He was also Executive Director of the Nation Institute and co-founder of the United Electrical Workers Union, staff member of the New York City Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, an activist in the Puerto Rican independence movement, and a mainstay of the New York Labor Chorus.

"Through the clarity of his vision and insight, and the sincerity and strength of his passion for our mission, Denis brought together a diverse group of extraordinary, wonderful individuals to work collaboratively for our common goal of improving the lives of the low-income people and communities served by Brooklyn A," said General Counsel Paul Acinapura. "He will remain in our memories and serve as model for us all."

Denis' commitment to helping build a better world was reflected in his love for the songs of the international labor movement. One of his favorite songs, "Bread and Roses," grew out of the hard-fought 1912 textile strike in Lawrence, Mass. Its words do much to convey his lifelong values and spirited activism:

"As we come marching, marching, we're standing proud and tall
The rising of the women means the rising of us all.
No more the drudge and idler—ten that toil
where one reposes
But a sharing of life's glories: Bread and Roses!
Bread and Roses!"

Denis, you will be missed and remembered by us all.
Rosanna Scotto  
Co-Anchor, Good Day New York, Fox 5 News

Rosanna Scotto recently took on the co-anchor role on Fox 5's Good Day New York, having served as the co-anchor of Fox 5 News at 5pm and Fox 5 News at 10pm. She has been a member of WNYW-FOX 5 News since 1986, where she anchored the Sunday edition of FOX 5 News at 10pm and served as a field correspondent.

Scotto began her career in television at WTBS, Ted Turner's UHF television station in Atlanta, where she was a reporter for two local programs and an associate producer of the station's evening newscast. She returned to her native New York in the early 1980s as a reporter for WABC's "Good Morning New York," which eventually became "Live with Regis and Kathie Lee." After a year with "Good Morning New York" and "The Morning Show," Scotto joined WABC-TV's "Eyewitness News" as a reporter, where she remained until she joined FOX 5.

Having covered many major stories in the tri-state area, her assignments have also taken her to Israel, Rome and across the United States. As a reporter, she won an endless string of coveted assignments including the first exclusive interview with Diana Bianchi, the other woman in the Christina Brinkley divorce case, the Woody Allen/Mia Farrow child custody battle, the notorious "Preppie Murder Trial" and the trials of Joel Steinberg and the "Swiss Nanny." Scotto also led FOX 5 news to the forefront in getting Marty Tankleff a new trial and was granted an exclusive interview with him in jail.

Scotto has won three Emmys for anchoring FOX 5 News at 10 and Good Day New York. She is the winner of the 1995 New York State Associated Press First Place Award for her report "New York Survival Guide" and also the winner of three other Associated Press First Place Awards, including two special Associated Press Award nominations.

Scotto has received a host of honors and awards for her community service work. She is a graduate of Catholic University and holds a bachelor's degree in fine arts. Born and raised in Brooklyn, Scotto lives in the New York area with her husband and their two children.
Mr. Cardozo has long been active in the public sector. From 1996 to 1998, he was President of the 21,000-member Association of the Bar of the City of New York. He is a fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers and a member of the Board of Directors of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, The American Law Institute and the Executive Committee of the Lawyers Division of the Anti-Defamation League.

As New York City's 77th Corporation Counsel - and chief legal officer of New York City - Michael A. Cardozo serves as legal counsel to the Mayor, elected officials, the City and its agencies. Mr. Cardozo has served as Corporation Counsel since January 1, 2002, making him the longest-serving Corporation Counsel since the 1880s.

With offices in all five boroughs and in Kingston, N.Y., the Law Department, which Mr. Cardozo heads, has an active caseload of more than 90,000 lawsuits and legal matters being handled by approximately 650 attorneys in 17 divisions. The office is the third-largest law firm in New York State (behind Skadden Arps and Legal Aid) and the third-largest public law office in the United States (behind the Department of Justice and Legal Aid). Mr. Cardozo routinely tells reporters that he has "the greatest job in the world" due to the diversity of interesting matters with which he deals - and particularly at a time when New York City is driving the national agenda.

During Mr. Cardozo's tenure, the Law Department has litigated many significant matters, such as successfully defending the City's subway bag inspection program as a lawful counterterrorism measure; ensuring that the Transport Workers Union paid court-ordered fines to the City after engaging in an illegal transit strike; achieving a settlement with the Internal Revenue Service resulting in the City and certain affected employees receiving more than $280 million for wrongfully withheld Social Security taxes; serving as a plaintiff alongside a national coalition of states and cities in major climate change litigation against the Federal government; prevailing in the New York Court of Appeals in a landmark case that established that the Mayor did not have to enforce local laws if the Mayor believed they were invalid under State or Federal law; litigating the validity of City regulations requiring national food chains to disclose on their menus the number of calories in food items; and defending the City from lawsuits in response to the World Trade Center attacks.

Mr. Cardozo is a 1966 graduate of Columbia Law School, where he served as an editor of the Law Review. He received a B.A. in political science from Brown University in 1963. After serving as a law clerk for the late Judge Edward C. McLean in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, Mr. Cardozo joined Proskauer as an associate in 1967. He became a partner in 1974.
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We extend a special salute to our colleague and partner Betsy Plevan for her dedication and commitment to our community

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Tonight's honorees have nobly dedicated their lives and careers to public service and, in doing so, have helped improve the lives of countless New Yorkers. Fordham Law commends them for their selfless work and supports Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A as they celebrate forty years of providing high-quality legal service to those most in need.

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Best Wishes to the 2008 Honorees


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Our guardian angels,
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The Rose-Belkin-Garcia-Rosen family would like to congratulate Jessie Rose and the CED unit for building economic rights one block at a time and BKA for four decades of struggle towards equality and justice for all.
CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE HONOREES!
&
Thanks to all the hard-working staff of
Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A,
Especially our friends at the East Brooklyn Office
Keep fighting the good fight:
Paul, Jessie, Mike, Ralph and Rick

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Salutes
Brooklyn Legal Services
On It’s Annual Awards Benefit

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Brooklyn A Gala Honorees 1993-2007

2007
Paul J. Curran, Kaye Scholer LLP
Brendan J. Dugan, Sovereign Bank
Maria Conteras-Collier, Cypress Hills Child Care Corporation

2006
Robert C. Sheehan, Skadden, Arps, Meagher & Flom LLP
Terri Thomson, Citigroup Inc.
Barbara Schliff, Southside United Housing Development Fund Corporation

2005
John Callagy, Kelley Drye & Warren LLP
Thomas Early, Health Plus
Dr. Claude Offord, Brownsville Multi-Service Family Health Center

2004
Evan Davis, Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton
Maureen Bateman, Bank of America
Michael Rochford, St. Nicholas Preservation Development Corp.

2003
James F. Gill, Bryan Cave
Frederick W. Hill, J.P. Morgan Chase & Co.
Jeffrey E. Dunston, Northeast Brooklyn Housing Development Corp.

2002
Zachary W. Carter, Dorsey & Whitney LLP
MacDara Lynch, Pfizer Global Manufacturing
Sister Peggy Walsh, Southside Community Mission

2001
Barbara Paul Robinson, Debevoise & Plimpton
Marilyn G. Gelber, Independence Community Foundation
Maurice A. Reid, Brownsville Multi-Service Family Health Center

2000
Frederick A.O. Schwarz, Jr., Cravath, Swaine & Moore
David D. Pagan, Southside United HDFC (Los Sures)

1999
Patricia M. Hynes, Milberg Weiss Bershad Hynes & Lerach, LLP
Frances A. Resheske, Con Edison
Adbur Rahman Farakhlan, Oceanhill-Brownsville Tenants Association

1998
Barry H. Garfinkel, Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP
Magda N. Yrizarry, Bell Atlantic
John F. Mulhern, Nuestros Ninos Child Development School

1997
Conrad Harper, Simpson Thacher & Bartlett
Michelle Neugebauer, Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation

1996
Henry L. King, Davis Polk & Wardwell
Angela M. Battaglia, Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council, Inc.

1995
Judge Harold R. Tyler, Jr., Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler
Joseph K. Francois, Brownsville Multi-Service Center

1993
Sargent Shriver, Special Olympics International
Sally Hernandez-Piñero, New York City Housing Authority
Vito Lopez, New York State Assemblyman
Philip A. Wheeler, United Auto Workers, Region 9A

* An awards event was not held in 1994.
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