

**PENNSYLVANIA LEGAL AID NETWORK ANNOUNCES  
2019 STATEWIDE EXCELLENCE AWARDS HONOREES AND  
GROUP HONOR FOR OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP IN LEGAL SERVICES**

The Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network Excellence Awards recognize legal aid attorneys, paralegals, support staff and friends of civil legal aid who support the clients served by the civil legal programs that comprise the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network. PLAN solicited nominations from across the Commonwealth and based its selection on a variety of criteria that demonstrated excellence and diligence in helping improve the availability and quality of civil legal services for low income people and victims of domestic violence in Pennsylvania.

The **2019 Excellence Award** recipients are:

- **Rachel Garland, Esq.**, Community Legal Services of Philadelphia
- **Natalia Gomez** and **Benita Mejia**, Community Justice Project
- **Betty Green**, Philadelphia Legal Assistance
- **George Gvozdich, Esq.**, and **E. Marie Queen**, Pennsylvania Bar Foundation Loan Repayment Assistance Program
- **G. Clayton Nestler, Esq.**, Southwestern Pennsylvania Legal Services
- **Nancy Paul** and **Nancy Walsh**, Montgomery Bar Association
- **Stella Smetanka, Esq.**, Pro Bono counsel at Neighborhood Legal Services
- **Michelle Terry, Esq.**, Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania

The eleven **2019 Excellence Award** winners will be honored with an awards presentation and short video tribute at the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network Excellence Award Banquet on Tuesday, March 26, 2019 at the Hilton Harrisburg. James J. Sandman, President of the Legal Services Corporation will be the featured speaker at the awards banquet.

In addition, PLAN will present the **Outstanding Leadership in Legal Services Award** to the group who championed the **Clean Slate Legislative Initiative**. The following individuals will be recognized as part of this single group award:

- **Gene Barr**
- **Representative Sheryl M. Delozier**
- **Sharon Dietrich,**
- **Jamie Gullen**
- **Holly Harris**
- **Representative Jordan Harris**
- **Mark Holden**
- **Michael Hollander**
- **Malcolm Jenkins**
- **Ronald Lewis**
- **Chris Long**

- **Seth Lyons**
- **Beth Anne Mumford**
- **Greg Rowe**
- **Torrey Smith**
- **Rebecca Vallas**
- **Senator Scott Wagner**
- **Senator Anthony Williams**

The Clean Slate Legislation provides for automatic sealing of arrests ending without convictions immediately, summary offense convictions after 10 years, and some misdemeanor convictions after 10 years. It also expands Pennsylvania's sealing law to include some first-degree misdemeanors. It is an extremely important bill for hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians with old and minor criminal convictions or who were arrested but not convicted. Sealing a criminal case is a life-changing remedy for those who qualify, opening doors to employment, housing and education.

For more information on the 2019 Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network Excellence Awards including banquet reservations, program advertising, and event sponsorship opportunities, please our website at [www.palegalaid.net](http://www.palegalaid.net) or contact Christine Kirby via email at [ckirby@palegalaid.net](mailto:ckirby@palegalaid.net).

### **About the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network**

**Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network, Inc.** is a client-centered organization that provides leadership, funding, and support to improve the availability and quality of civil legal aid and direct legal services for low income people and victims of domestic violence in Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network of fourteen civil legal aid programs helps those who have nowhere else to turn when facing a critical civil legal problem by providing a full range of civil legal services which can include information, legal advice and/or representation.