

LAWYERS ALLIANCE FOR NEW YORK

INDIVIDUAL HONOREE

DEBRA SAPP, *Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP*

Real estate counsel negotiates on behalf of shelters serving vulnerable New Yorkers

Nonprofits play an essential role in providing shelter and other services for unhoused people in New York City. For the past five years, Debra Sapp has helped these nonprofits effectively negotiate and document relationships with the government agencies that fund this work and with the landlords renting space for it. Ms. Sapp worked with **Highland Park Community Development Corporation** to negotiate leases for two shelters for families with children and to obtain approval of those leases from the government funder. Also with Ms. Sapp's assistance, **Urban Pathways** successfully negotiated a lease for a transitional housing facility and another lease for a new drop-in center to provide services to chronically homeless single adults.

Q. How and why did you first become involved with Lawyers Alliance?

Stroock makes it really easy to get involved with pro bono work by connecting us with trusted partner agencies that are looking for assistance. Lawyers Alliance has connected me with some great clients and some really worthwhile projects, and they offered me great resources and support along the way.

Q. Share a tip for making time for pro bono.

Find a firm that encourages you to take on pro bono work. Stroock has been really supportive of me focusing a good amount of time on pro bono clients. If you treat pro bono assignments like "regular" work, you'll always make time for it and schedule it in. Providing a small organization with big law representation helps level the playing field and I feel strongly that lawyers can help by simply sharing our resources.

Q. Share a fun or unexpected moment from pro bono work through Lawyers Alliance.

I had the pleasure to work with a number of small businesses and organizations based in the Brooklyn community where I lived. Knowing that I'm involved and participating in my community makes the work feel very tangible. Small organizations have such a role to play in a city like New York.

Q. What's the most rewarding aspect of pro bono work?

The most rewarding aspect is knowing we can help small organizations avoid major legal and financial pitfalls. My pro bono clients are a spectacular group of small business owners as well as parties that provide services and run programs that benefit the City; they give so much back to their communities. I am grateful to be able to provide legal representation so they can focus on their own success.

"Debra is highly skilled, organized, efficient, and an excellent negotiator. She focuses in on the key issues and explains them effectively. Because of Debra's work we were able to expeditiously negotiate complex commercial leases that included buildouts for our new programs. These programs will allow hundreds of New Yorkers to come off the streets and out of the cold this winter, and in the years to come."

— Mark Hurwitz
Chief Operating Officer, Urban Pathways



Employment:

Stroock & Stroock
& Lavan LLP
Special Counsel, Real Estate

Graduate of:

Brooklyn Law School

Lawyers Alliance clients:

Highland Park Community
Development
Corporation
Nonprofit New York
Urban Pathways