

## Alum Profile: Barbara A. Schatz

**Barbara A. Schatz** served as Executive Director of the Council of New York Law Associates (Lawyers Alliance for New York's original name) from 1977 to 1984, a period of growth and change for the young organization. After Lawyers Alliance, she joined the faculty of Columbia University Law School, where she is currently a Clinical Professor of Law teaching the Community Enterprise Clinic and the Community Development Law Externship. In 2005 Lawyers Alliance honored Ms. Schatz and the Clinic at Columbia Law School with a Cornerstone Award for providing pro bono legal assistance to nonprofit organizations unable to pay market rates.

### *Q – What was Lawyers Alliance's focus when you were Executive Director?*

When I became Executive Director in 1977, the Council of New York Law Associates had an annual budget of about \$80,000 and a staff of three, including me. The focus was on pro bono services for a wide array of clients, some nonprofits seeking representation with corporate and tax matters, but also individuals and groups with civil rights, civil liberties, environmental, and other issues.

During my tenure, we raised the funds to hire our first staff lawyers and focused the organization's work on nonprofits, particularly those concerned with community development. We also collaborated with other organizations to form two wonderful organizations: Human Rights First (then called the Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights) and Court Appointed Special Advocates, advocating on behalf of children in foster care.

### *Q – How have you seen Lawyers Alliance grow over the years?*

Lawyers Alliance has grown tremendously in size, influence, and expertise, serving as a model for other jurisdictions in the U.S. and abroad that want to connect pro bono lawyers with nonprofits.

### *Q – How is your current work affected by your past Lawyers Alliance experience?*

When I left to teach in the clinical program at Columbia Law School, I took with me the enthusiasm for and knowledge about nonprofits that I developed at Lawyers Alliance. Although I have taught many different clinics, most have involved nonprofits in one way or another. I currently teach the Community Enterprise Clinic, through which I supervise students in representing nonprofits as well as small businesses. We continue to rely on Lawyers Alliance to identify many of the clients we represent and find the staff lawyers to be a consistently helpful source of information and expertise. Many of my students go on to do work in the nonprofit sector, either on a pro bono or full-time basis – a continuing legacy of my happy seven years as Lawyers Alliance's Executive Director.

### *Q – As a law professor, what skills and experiences do you suggest law students and lawyers pursue if they seek to assist nonprofits through pro bono legal work?*

Law students who want to do pro bono work for nonprofits can gain valuable skills and knowledge through law school clinics focused on nonprofits or community development. Lawyers will benefit from the programs and publications on nonprofits offered by Lawyers Alliance and others and especially from collaborating with colleagues who know and love the work.



**Barbara Schatz**

### **About Barbara**

#### **Employment includes:**

- › Clinical Professor of Law, Columbia Law School
- › Executive Director, Council of New York Law Associates

#### **Current activities include:**

- › Chair of the Board, PILnet: The Global Network for Public Interest Law
- › Board Member, Human Rights First and Trickle Up

#### **Graduate of:**

- › Harvard Law School
- › University of Pennsylvania

*This article is one of a series of profiles of the people who have helped to build Lawyers Alliance for New York since 1969.*

 **Lawyers Alliance  
for New York**

*Connecting lawyers, nonprofits, and communities*