

NCPL Fellows Gain Experience and Help Nonprofits

The **National Center on Philanthropy and the Law** (NCPL), founded in 1988 at New York University School of Law, is dedicated to improving nonprofit law and offers fellowships for recent law school graduates to work in a public interest setting. Lawyers Alliance hosts the yearlong NCPL Fellowship in Nonprofit Law, created in 2018 as an opportunity for emerging lawyers to gain experience representing nonprofits on complex legal projects.

Fellows counsel clients on business law, contract negotiations and transactional matters, and they present educational trainings to nonprofits and pro bono counsel, under supervision of Lawyers Alliance's experienced staff attorneys. "Having a fully vetted, high-caliber developing staff attorney who has demonstrated their commitment to learning about nonprofit law and pursuing a public interest career is invaluable," says **Hedwig O'Hara**, Lawyers Alliance's Legal Director.

"Working with over 100 Lawyers Alliance client organizations has exposed me to a far greater number of discrete and vivid legal questions and issues than law school can offer," says **Peter F. Martin**, reflecting on his time as a NCPL Fellow. Since joining Lawyers Alliance in December 2020, Martin has opened several new legal matters for community-based organizations and advocacy groups. He also has participated in client screenings, client consultations, and webinar presentations, and prepared Legal Alerts related to COVID-19 challenges specific to the nonprofit sector.

"Fellows contribute to the vitality of our staff and bring fresh ideas to our work and services by bringing their own talents and interests," adds Executive Director **Elizabeth Guggenheimer**. Both Fellows and permanent staff build one-on-one relationships with client contacts, and the Fellowship allows Lawyers Alliance to provide nonprofits greater depth and breadth of services. Two months into her NPCL Fellowship, **Elizabeth Wytock** observes, "Hearing clients express their deep, sincere gratitude drives home to me how few other comparable services exist, and how valuable Lawyers Alliance is to not just the organizations we serve, but also, in turn, to their clients and the communities they serve."

To date, Lawyers Alliance has hosted four Fellows with backgrounds in nonprofit programming, journalism, advocacy, education, and clerking.

- > **Grace Heusner**, 2018-2019 Fellow, an Associate at Laura Solomon & Associates, handles transactional work for nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations.
- > Staff Attorney **Rafi Stern**, 2019-2020 Fellow, spearheads the Economic Opportunity program area.
- > **Peter F. Martin**, 2020-2021 Fellow, is working on a virtual clinic that offers governance consultations to immigrant-serving nonprofits.
- > **Elizabeth Wytock** joined Lawyers Alliance in September 2021 and brings her perspective as a tax attorney.

Rafi Stern's Fellowship confirmed his desire to stay in the nonprofit world. "You see a huge range of problems that organizations deal with. The Fellowship was a big learning experience and it made me want to stay at Lawyers Alliance even more." A significant part of Stern's caseload is aimed at nonprofits serving New York City's business improvement districts in low-income neighborhoods. For example, with pro bono counsel, he recently helped a community development organization to draft a request for proposals that the organization is using to find new sanitation services.

The NCPL Fellowship is a key example of how Lawyers Alliance supports the growth of the nonprofit legal field. By mentoring people at an early stage of their careers, Lawyers Alliance ensures that exceptional, compassionate lawyers are prepared to successfully serve all types of nonprofits.



NCPL Fellows Elizabeth Wytock and Peter Martin