

Campaign for Justice continues to succeed despite pandemic

By: [Special to The Daily Record](#)

MICHAEL BURGER June 15, 2022



The Campaign for Justice announced this week that it closed another successful fundraising campaign this year, continuing to raise over \$225,000 annually despite not being able to host in-person events during the pandemic. Law firms Harter Secrest & Emery LLP, Nixon Peabody LLP, Bond Schoeneck & King PLLC, Ward Greenberg Heller & Reidy LLP, and Woods Oviatt Gilman LLP, as well as Constellation Brands Inc. provided major gifts of \$10,000 or more.

The Campaign supports essential civil legal services provided by agencies co-located at the Telesca Center for Justice including JustCause (formerly Volunteer Legal Services Project of Monroe County, Inc.), The Legal Aid Society of Rochester, Legal Assistance of Western New York, and the Hanna Cohn fellowship at Empire Justice Center.

CFJ Co-Chair Bobby Colón, General Counsel to RIT, has helped keep the campaign going strong throughout the pandemic by persuasively evangelizing CFJ's message to general counsel and law firms alike. "Thanks to the generosity of our legal community and despite the challenges of COVID-19, we've been able to continue to raise dollars to help our most vulnerable community members," Mr. Colón said.

The Campaign funds programs that provide free legal representation to tens of thousands of our neighbors living in the Greater Rochester area every year. Services provided include, for example, drafting wills for individuals living with serious illnesses, seeking benefits for military veterans, orders of protection for survivors of domestic violence, adoption and family court matters, financial fraud and illegal collections, and foreclosure or eviction prevention. The clients served would otherwise not be able to afford these essential legal services that vindicate the quintessentially American promise of equal justice under law.

CFJ Co-Chair Sharon Stiller, Esq., has made significant investments in the campaign. Her personal generosity became Rochester's worst-kept secret when Ms. Stiller announced her donor challenge matching up to \$5,000 for first-time donors. The "Stiller Challenge" has become an annual staple, raising more than \$30,000 for the campaign throughout the pandemic.

"Though my final term as Co-Chair is now over," Stiller said, "I hope this will inspire another local lawyer to step up and continue this tradition next year. As lawyers, we know how important it is for everyone to have access to counsel."

A long-time fundraising legend, Michael Schnittman, has set and broken every CFJ record by every metric imaginable. This year alone Mr. Schnittman (now retired from Lacy Katzen LLP), has personally raised over \$50,000 and made over 100 telephone calls to CFJ donors!

An emerging leader of this year's campaign was Co-Chair Jessica Clemente, an associate at Harter Secrest & Emery LLP. In addition to the firm's pledge, Jessica's leadership of the Campaign's in-house funding drive resulted in individual attorneys at the firm contributing over \$15,000 to the Campaign.

Also noteworthy is Ward Greenberg Heller & Reidy's \$5,000 contribution in honor of Harold Kurland's retirement. Already having made their annual firm CFJ contribution, they wanted to mark the occasion to commemorate Harold's exemplary contributions in establishing the civil legal services collaboration at the Telesca Center for Justice. Under Harold's leadership, the Campaign for Justice set the bar for community-wide collaboration in fundraising.

JustCause Executive Director Tina Monshipour Foster said the Campaign is currently conducting a search for a Development Officer. "We're looking for a dedicated professional to help us build upon the successes of the past fundraising collaboration and create a vision for the future," Foster said. The next Campaign will officially launch on Nov. 1 and will run through the end of 2023. Foster said to expect to see more changes announced later this year.

Michael Burger is an attorney at Santiago Burger LLP. He is a member of the Campaign for Justice cabinet.