



PRESS RELEASE
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**LEGAL SERVICES OF THE HUDSON VALLEY CELEBRATES
GRAND OPENING OF MOUNT VERNON OFFICE**

Legal Services of the Hudson Valley (LSHV) held a Grand Opening Reception on March 7, 2007, to celebrate the opening of its new Mount Vernon, New York, office, which will provide free civil legal services to low-income people in Mount Vernon and surrounding communities. The new office, which will be shared by My Sisters' Place and the Westchester Hispanic Coalition, was made possible by funding from Westchester County. Over 120 people, including Westchester County Executive Andrew J. Spano, County Legislators Clinton Young and William Ryan, and Mount Vernon Mayor Ernest Davis, attended the event, which was highlighted by a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

At the reception, LSHV Executive Director Barbara Finkelstein welcomed guests and introduced Karen Cheeks-Lomax, Executive Director of My Sisters' Place, and Grace Heymann, Executive Director of the Westchester Hispanic Coalition. Barbara Finkelstein said, "I am thrilled to join with the directors of these two organizations to thank the Westchester County Legislature for providing the funding to serve the Mount Vernon community. The new office will be so welcoming and conveniently located for our clients."

LSHV will provide comprehensive, free legal assistance in all matters, including housing, family law, benefits, education and consumer issues. My Sisters' Place will provide specialized legal services to women who are victims of domestic violence and the Westchester Hispanic Coalition will deal with the many issues facing immigrants in Westchester.

Ms. Finkelstein then introduced Westchester County Board of Legislators Vice Chair, Clinton Young, and explained how Clinton Young had conceived of the idea of this office, and led the drive to obtain funding for the office. Mr. Young spoke of the critical need for free civil legal services in this economically disadvantaged area, and said he is proud to be affiliated with this worthwhile project.

Ms. Finkelstein also introduced Westchester County Board of Legislators Chair, William Ryan, who said he was a strong supporter of this effort, and believes the partnership of these organizations will provide a much-needed resource in lower Westchester. The county grant of \$500,000 includes startup costs, plus staff salaries and property expenses for a year.

Clinton Young then brought up County Executive Andrew J. Spano, who voiced his enthusiasm for the excellent work being done by the three organizations, and said that the new endeavor will make a meaningful difference in the community.

Speaking next was LSHV Board Member Richard G. Menaker, who had initiated the “Friends of the Mount Vernon Office” group, to build awareness of the new office and its mission. The group is composed of attorneys from Pelham and Mount Vernon, as well as Mount Vernon officials.

Mayor Ernest Davis, introduced by Mr. Menaker, presented a proclamation to LSHV, My Sisters’ Place, and the Westchester Hispanic Coalition, welcoming the agencies to Mount Vernon. He said the groups would have a significant impact on the community, by providing needy clients with comprehensive, free civil legal assistance on a wide range of issues.

After the remarks, the new office was officially inaugurated with a ribbon-cutting ceremony with County Executive Spano presiding, joined by Barbara Finkelstein, Karen Cheeks-Lomax, Grace Heymann, and County Legislators Young and Ryan.

Legal Services of the Hudson Valley provides free civil legal services to poor and low-income individuals and families. LSHV represents clients in the areas of housing, domestic violence, elder law, civil rights, children’s advocacy, disabilities, HIV/AIDS, public benefits, consumer law and education. Services are provided to the residents of Westchester, Putnam, Dutchess, Ulster, Orange, Rockland and Sullivan Counties.