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When non-profit organizations helping low-income New Yorkers are themselves in need of assistance, they often turn to [Lawyers Alliance for New York](#). As Pro Bono Coordinator at Lawyers Alliance, Jolynda Burton is the one making sure their legal needs are met.

Lawyers Alliance provides business and transactional legal services to non-profit organizations that are improving the quality of life in New York City neighborhoods. The organization, which will celebrate its 40th anniversary next year, works with more than 540 nonprofits and a network of more than 900 volunteer attorneys. Services include assistance with corporate governance, tax, real estate, intellectual property, employment and other legal issues that are critical to their operations. By connecting lawyers, nonprofits and communities, Lawyers Alliance helps nonprofits to develop affordable housing, stimulate economic development, and operate vital programs for children and young people, the elderly, recent immigrants and other low-income New Yorkers.

Jolynda, who joined Lawyers Alliance in 2005, is responsible for recruiting, placing matters with, and coordinating volunteer attorneys from more than 100 major law firms and corporate legal departments, in addition to developing innovative ways to involve and retain these volunteer attorneys.



Jolynda's background is in law firm recruiting. At Lawyers Alliance, she has the opportunity to apply her experience to serving the community. "I use many of the same skills and at the end of the day feel great about what I do," she said.

To ensure that both the attorneys and the clients have the best possible experience, Lawyers Alliance uses a four-part pro bono model: client outreach and screening, and volunteer support and recognition. "Our matters are often very sophisticated and interesting," Jolynda said. "Volunteers are able to find legal work they don't find very easily anywhere else."

As part of its volunteer support, Lawyers Alliance hosts the [Community Development/Nonprofit area](#) on [Pro Bono Net's New York site](#). The site's library contains a lot of the information that Lawyers Alliance volunteers end up needing, Jolynda said. "I often talk about that to potential volunteers," she said. "It's so nice to be able to say, 'Are you a member of probono.net?'"

Pro Bono Net has also become "an integral part of the way we place cases," she said, along with an email newsletter she sends every month

to law firm and corporate pro bono coordinators, and personal outreach that she conducts.

A recent trend Jolynda has noted is the increased interest from corporations in getting involved. "There seems to be a movement toward philanthropy and pro bono," she said.

For example, Pfizer came to Lawyers Alliance for assistance creating a program to involve their attorneys in pro bono. In response, Lawyers Alliance designed the New York City Charter Schools Assessment Day. Representatives from 16 schools gathered on March 26, 2008, at Pfizer's offices, along with attorneys from Kaye Scholer LLP and Lawyers Alliance. School representatives attended sessions on relevant legal issues and had one-on-one consultations with Pfizer and Kaye Scholer attorneys where they could bring up any legal questions they had. Lawyers Alliance and the volunteer attorneys in attendance are continuing to work with the schools on their legal needs.

Another unique program that Jolynda helped to develop is the Nonprofit Employment Law Helpline, which provides immediate employment law advice to Lawyers Alliance clients. A panel of 20 volunteer employment attorneys has agreed to take on at least one of these discrete matters per year.

Jolynda herself has long been a volunteer for community organizations -- as a Girls on the Run coach, a Literacy Volunteers of America tutor, and a Big Brothers, Big Sisters mentor. She currently serves on the board of Outpost in the Burbs, a non-profit in Montclair, NJ that uses music, community service and social activities to foster community.

Her work with Lawyers Alliance has given her a new perspective on the importance of non-profits and what they contribute. "I have such an appreciation for the role community organizations play," she said.

To learn more about Lawyers Alliance, you can reach Jolynda at jbarton@lawyersalliance.org