



The **POWER** of a **WOMAN'S VOICE**

The story of the women's rights movement is a story of women supporting women, and a giving a voice to those who would no longer be silenced.

This Women's History Month, the National Association of Women Judges-NY Chapter is proud to celebrate the sound and power of a women's voice and recognize those who empowered other women to speak and be heard. In a lunch hour program, the NAWJ will feature 10 women, including several judges, who will share their experiences and express the need for women to speak up and support their sisters-in-arms.

Prior to the panel discussion, the **Hon. Karen Peters**, the first woman from the Third Judicial District to serve on the Appellate Division, Third Department, and the first female Presiding Justice of the prestigious court, will receive the **Hon. Leslie E. Stein Gender Equity Award**. The award, created by the Gender Fairness Committee of the Third JD, will be bestowed by the **Hon. Gerald Connolly**, Administrative Judge.

Thursday, March 31, 12:30 – 1:30 via TEAMS

Five teams of two will speak of their work and impact in a series of brief discussions.

Registration: <https://forms.gle/nEWgoVEYEqL5FxVV6>

Moderator: Hon. Lisa M. Fisher

Associate Justice, Appellate Division, Third Department

Teams:

Hon. Andra Ackerman, *Albany County Court, founder of the United Against Crime-Community Action Network (U-CAN)*

Amanda Ross-Carroll, *U-CAN Mentor*

Melissa L. Breger, *President William McKinley Distinguished Professor in Law and Public Policy & Professor of Law, Albany Law School, and expert in child and sex trafficking*

Lorraine R. Silverman, Esq., *Copps DiPaola Silverman PLLC*

Hon. Jill Kehn, *Rensselaer County Family Court*

Heather L. Dukes, Esq., *Attorney for Unity House*

Hon. Susan Kushner, *Albany County Family Court, JD Treatment Court*

Alyssa B. Heller, Esq., *Assistant County Attorney, Office of the Albany County Attorney*

Hon. Keri Savona, *Ulster County Family Court Treatment Court (UCFTC)*

Kathy Wiley, *UCFTC Coordinator*

Co-sponsors:

Albany County Bar Association

Capital District Women's Bar Association,

Gender Fairness Committee, Third Judicial District,

Rensselaer County Bar Association

Ulster County Bar Association



Hon. Andra Ackerman

Judge Ackerman was elected Albany County Judge in 2019, the first woman elected to the position in the 300-plus year history of the county. Previously, she served as Cohoes City Judge for four years, and in that capacity started the United Against Crime-Community Action Network (U-CAN), the first court-based mentoring program in the state.

Prior to becoming a judge, she spent 13 years prosecuting special victim cases and served as Deputy Division Chief of the Special Victims Trial Division at the Monroe County District Attorney's Office, where she supervised 13 attorneys

while handling her own caseload including child homicide and serial rape trials.

A former Director of the Office of Human Trafficking Prevention and Policy for the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, Judge Ackerman has taught at the National District Attorney's Association and the New York State Prosecutors Training Institute. She was a member of the New York State Children's Justice Task Force and a consultant to the New York State Child Advocacy Resource and Consultation Center. Judge Ackerman earned her J.D. degree from the University of Buffalo School of Law.



Melissa L. Breger

Professor Melissa L. Breger has been teaching at the law school level for 20+ years, first at The University of Michigan Law School and then at Albany Law School since 2002. Prior to teaching, Professor Breger dedicated her career to children, women and families, with her formative years practicing in New York City in a number of capacities.

She is the recipient of several teaching and service awards, both on a local level and on a national level, including the Howard A. Levine Award for Excellence in Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare; the Shanara C. Gilbert Award in recognition

of her excellence in teaching and contributions to the advancement of social justice from the American Association of Law Schools; the L. Hart Wright Excellence in Law Teaching Award from the University of Michigan Law School; and the 2016 Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching, 2018 Faculty Award for Excellence in Service, and 2019 Faculty Award for Excellence in Scholarship from Albany Law School.

Professor Breger also received the Albany County Family Court Children's Center Award "in recognition of her outstanding and tireless work assisting children and families in need and for her dedication to ensure that law students obtain the skills necessary to provide high quality and compassionate legal services to court litigants" in May 2008.

Professor Breger teaches a variety of courses at Albany Law School, including Evidence, Family Law, Criminal Procedure: Investigation, Gender & the Law, Children, Juveniles & the Law, Domestic Violence Seminar, and Children & the Law. She was the Director of the Family Violence Litigation Clinic from 2002 to 2010.

Professor Breger is the co-author of New York Law of Domestic Violence, a two-volume treatise published by Reuters-Thomson-West, as well as the author of numerous law review articles regarding issues of family law, gender, and justice. Her scholarly interests include the rights of children and families, gender and racial equality, procedural justice in the courtroom, juvenile justice, the increasing epidemic of child sexual trafficking, implicit bias, law and culture, family violence, and the intersections between psychology and the law. Her book, Exploring Norms and Family Laws Across the Globe, is forthcoming in Spring 2022.



Heather L. Dukes, Esq.

Ms. Dukes graduated magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa from Union College, Schenectady, New York with a bachelor's degree in Sociology. Ms. Dukes first became interested in family law and domestic violence when she interned at a police station in Sao Paulo, Brazil that specialized in crimes against women during her time at Union College.

Ms. Dukes received her juris doctorate from American University's Washington College of Law, Washington DC. Since 2006, Ms. Dukes has worked with Unity House representing domestic violence survivors in Rensselaer County courts.

Ms. Dukes has been a member of the Attorney for the Child panel since 2010 in Rensselaer County Family Court and also maintains a part-time law practice specializing in matrimonial and family law.

Attorney Dukes enjoys sharing her knowledge of the law with the next generation of legal professionals and was a faculty member at Mildred Elley College, Albany, New York for approximately 10 years. Ms. Dukes has also guest lectured at Russell Sage College, Hudson Valley Community College, and Albany Law School on various topics related to domestic violence and family law. In her spare time, Ms. Dukes enjoys spending time in the great outdoors and is an avid equestrian.



Hon. Lisa M. Fisher

Hon. Lisa M. Fisher is an Associate Justice of the Appellate Division, Third Department. Judge Fisher was elected to Supreme Court in 2014 and promoted to the Appellate Division in early 2022 by Governor Kathy Hochul.

Greene County's first woman Supreme Court Justice, Justice Fisher is an active member of the National Association of Women Judges, the Capital District Women's Bar Association and the Gender Fairness Committee of the Third Judicial District. She graduated from the University of South Florida and Shepard Broad College of Law at Nova Southeastern University and was

admitted to the Bar in 1994.

Justice Fisher maintained a private practice through 2013 while also serving as court attorney at the Office of Court Administration, part-time staff attorney for the Ulster County Department of Social Services and as an Ulster County assistant public defender. She challenged both party bosses and conventional wisdom and in 2014 won an underdog race for New York State Supreme Court.

In addition to her normal duties as a trial judge, Justice Fisher presided over the Alternative Dispute Resolution program in Greene County and spearheading a personal injury ADR program in Ulster County. She has also served as chairperson of the Greene County Jury Board and the Board of Trustees for the Emory A. Chase Memorial Law Library in Catskill and was a member of the Third Department Attorney for the Child Advisory Panel.

As a member of the Association of Justices of the Supreme Court State of New York, Justice Fisher is an editor and co-author for the organization's Bench Book for Trial Judges (2019 and 2020 editions).



Alyssa B. Heller

Alyssa B. Heller, Esq. is currently an Assistant County Attorney with the Albany County Attorney's Office. Prior to her time with the Albany County Attorney's Office, she spent over four years as an Assistant Public Defender with the Albany County Public Defender's Office, devoting her entire time there to representation of parents in Family Court proceedings. In both roles, she has been a member of the Family Treatment Court team for the Albany County Adult Family Treatment Court.



Hon. Jill A. Kehn

Hon. Jill A. Kehn is presently a Rensselaer County Family Court Judge. While Troy City Court Judge, Judge Kehn was tasked with implementing a special Domestic Violence Part and presided there for seven years, exclusively handling criminal cases of intimate partner domestic violence. She was instrumental in spearheading the creation of the Rensselaer County Domestic Violence Stakeholders, as well as introducing the Strength at Home Program to Rensselaer County in 2019. This program, developed by the Department of Veterans Affairs, is now used in Domestic Violence Court and Integrated Domestic Violence Court as an alternative to batterer's intervention programs. Judge Kehn is a graduate of Siena College and Albany Law School.



Hon. Susan Kushner

Judge Kushner was a practicing attorney for over 25 years prior to taking the Bench in January 2014. Her prior experience in the Family Court arena includes: Assistant Public Defender assigned exclusively to Family Court; Child Protective Attorney prosecuting Abuse, Neglect and Termination of Parental Rights cases; and Assistant County Attorney prosecuting Persons in Need of Supervision and Juvenile Delinquencies.

She practiced law in the private sector and at various levels of government including the State, City and County of Albany. She is a 1985 graduate of Albany Law School. Judge Kushner also serves as a full time Acting Supreme Court Judge and has been designated as Albany County's Lead Judge on the Statewide Court Improvement Program. She also presides over Family Court's Juvenile Treatment Court and Adult Treatment Court. Judge Kushner was previously elected and served as a Member and Officer of the Albany City School Board. She has been a longtime advocate for promoting school/community ties.

She is the first upstate Family Court Judge to have been appointed by the NYS Office of Children and Families to serve on its Independent Review Board, responsible for visiting and recommending improvements to youth placement facilities statewide. Judge Kushner has independently developed programs to integrate Family Court as a recognized and integral part of the communities it serves, such as her "Kids in the Courtroom" Program. She has also established a free Supervised Parenting Time Program for use in custody cases. Most recently, she established a pilot program in Albany County Family Court permitting the appointment of CASA volunteers in custody matters.

She is a Member of the Capital District Women's Bar Association, the Albany County Bar Association, the NYS Bar Association and is a Member of the Board of Directors of the NYS Family Court Judge's Association. Judge Kushner has been married for 39 years and has three adult children.



Amanda J. Ross-Carroll

Amanda Ross serves as the Director of Management and Operations at the NYS Court of Appeals. She holds a degree in psychology from the College of St. Rose and, in the fall, will begin master's studies in Counseling and Community Psychology. When the United Against Crime-Community Action Network (U-CAN) was established in 2017 by Judge Ackerman, Amanda was among the first to volunteer. She gave a troubled young woman a "voice" and the support she needed to successfully navigate a year of probation. With Amanda's support, the young woman graduated from the program and left court with no criminal record to hold her back. In a post-graduation interview, the young woman wrote: "When I was going through hard times or had a lot on my mind, I could always count on Amanda being there for me. I could actually trust somebody, which is something I lacked in my life. She showed me the true meaning of life!"



Hon. Keri Savona

Judge Keri E. Savona has served as Ulster Family Court Judge since January 2015 and Acting Supreme Court Justice since 2017. In addition, Judge Savona has served as the Ulster County Family Treatment Court Judge since March of 2020. Judge Savona was recently appointed as Coordinating Judge of the Specialty Courts in the Third Judicial District. Prior to taking the bench, her previous experience includes serving as Supervising Attorney with the Ulster County Department of Social Services.

Judge Savona is both personally and professionally committed to combating the opioid epidemic and substance abuse in general. In addition to presiding over the Ulster Family Treatment Court, Judge Savona and her family volunteer regularly with programs in the local recovery community in an effort to help community members struggling with addiction. Recently, the Ulster Family Treatment Court was awarded a grant to support additional resources for parents and children towards the goal of reunification in no small part due to Judge Savona's ability to identify gaps in services and seek solutions. Judge Savona works tirelessly in assisting the participants of her Family Treatment Court recognize their self-worth and regain pride in themselves as parents



Lorraine R. Silverman, Esq.

Lorraine R. Silverman is a Partner with Copps DiPaola Silverman, PLLC. She practices exclusively in the field of matrimonial and family law and represents individuals in the negotiation and litigation of all family law matters, including, but not limited to divorce, child custody, child support, spousal support, domestic violence matters, intimate partner companion animal ("pet") custody disputes, intimate partner real / personal property disputes, and prenuptial and postnuptial agreements. She has extensive experience representing clients in both Supreme and Family Court. As part of her practice, Ms. Silverman also serves as an Attorney for Children in Albany County. Ms. Silverman was selected as a Super Lawyer by Super Lawyers Magazine for 2016 – Present.

In addition to her private practice, Ms. Silverman serves on a number of Committees, Boards, and participates in other volunteer civic activities throughout the community. In 2021, Ms. Silverman was

appointed to the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission to examine Forensic Reports issued in Child Custody cases. Ms. Silverman currently serves as the New York State Bar Association's Committee on Children & the Law's Committee Chair. In 2021, she was appointed to the New York State Bar Association's Committee to Review Judicial Nominations.

She was also appointed to the Albany County Bar Association's Board of Directors where she currently serves as Secretary, Chair of its Pro Bono Committee, and a Member of its Racial Justice Committee. Ms. Silverman serves as a member of the New York State Bar Association's Family Law Section, a member of the New York State Bar Association's Family Law Section's Committee on Domestic Violence, and a member of the Cyber & Sexual Assault Task Force. Finally, Ms. Silverman provides free and reduced fee legal assistance to victims of domestic violence through The Legal Project's Pro Bono and Reduced Fee Attorney Panel, and she helps to coordinate and volunteers with the Albany County Bar Association's Family Court Help Center. Ms. Silverman has also lectured for the Appellate Division Third Judicial Department's Office of Attorneys for Children, the New York State Bar Association, the Albany County Bar Association, and the Empire Justice Center. Ms. Silverman has also provided educational trainings for the community on various topics related to matrimonial and family law.

Ms. Silverman graduated cum laude from Ithaca College. She then went on to receive her J.D. degree with a concentration in family and elder law from Albany Law School, where she received the Martin H. Belsky Graduation Prize for Commitment to Public Interest. Ms. Silverman resides in Altamont, New York with her husband (Adam), their son, and their two dogs.



Kathy Wiley

Kathy Wiley has been the Resource Coordinator for the Ulster County Family Drug Treatment Court since its inception in 2004. Prior to her current tenure at Family Court, Kathy was a caseworker for the Ulster County Department of Social Services during a time when ASFA began implementing time limits on foster care placements, and Kathy was disheartened by how often cases were ending in the termination of parental rights or in a judicial surrender. It was at this point in Kathy's career that she realized she wanted to be part of better outcomes for families. Kathy's life experiences have led her to a career in the field of human services.

to attending college in her 30's, Kathy waitressed and worked a variety of jobs to support her family as a single mother. During this time, Kathy often had to seek out community assistance and support to meet the needs of her family. This experience provided Kathy with insight and a desire to positively impact the outcomes of families in crisis. While working on obtaining her BSW from Marist and her MSW from Fordham, Kathy worked in the human services field, including working at Mental Health America in Dutchess County, and interning at the Astor Home for Children, the children's unit at Ulster County Mental Health, and at Battered Women's Services.

Kathy's experiences, both personal and professional, provide her with a unique perspective and ability to empathize and connect with her clients. Kathy has dedicated her career to providing her clients with the guidance they need to reach their personal potential, and to providing families with the support they need to become whole again.