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# NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION State Bar News

## Profiles in Pro Bono

By Brandon J. Vogel



**Marty Shenkman**

Attorney Martin M. Shenkman of Paramus, New Jersey (Martin M. Shenkman, PC), a veteran estate planner, knows that estate planning can be complicated under the best of circumstances. However, when his wife was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2006, he discovered that for the more than 90 million Americans living with chronic illnesses, estate planning is an even more daunting process.

Shenkman was surprised to discover a dearth of information on estate planning for the chronically ill. After completing a revised estate plan that accounted for his wife's future health needs,

neys being singled out by the State Bar is Shenkman.

"Increasingly, more and more New Yorkers and worthy non-profit organizations are finding it harder to keep their heads above water as they try to navigate our legal system. Whether in planning for incapacity, foreclosure cases, or child custody cases, every New Yorker should have equal access to justice," said President Michael E. Getnick (Getnick Livingston Atkinson & Priore, LLP of Utica and of counsel to Getnick & Getnick of New York City). "The State bar is proud to salute attorneys like Marty Shenkman, who truly live the

unique expertise to move us closer to a world free of multiple sclerosis (MS). His legal insights have encouraged people impacted by MS to think outside the box, helping them to move forward with their lives while likewise helping us to end MS," said Joyce Nelson, president and CEO of the National MS Society.

One of Shenkman's goals is to disseminate information to the public, particularly charitable donors, about chronic illnesses. He has written 34 legal books, with a recent emphasis on planning and charitable giving. All royalties of his most recent book, "Estate Planning for People with a Chronic

## Marty Shenkman helps chronically ill with estate planning by donating legal services

**See how your colleagues are serving the public by visiting The Good We Do Blog at [www.thegoodwedony.org](http://www.thegoodwedony.org)**

Shenkman decided to do more to help the chronically ill and their families understand the need for planning.

"This has been a tremendously rewarding experience. Part of why we become lawyers is to help and make a contribution to society, and there are endless opportunities to help. It feels good to do good," said Shenkman.

### Doing the public good

To commemorate the first annual Pro Bono Week held from October 25 to 31, the State Bar launched a new campaign, called "The Good We Do," to recognize the significant contributions made by the scores of attorneys across the state who donate their time, services and expertise to meet the evergrowing legal needs of low-income people and others who have been hard hit by the economic downturn. Among the attor-

words: "...and justice for all."

### Dedication to service

For three years, Shenkman has donated hundreds of pro bono hours, providing legal advice on wills, health care proxies, and power of attorney forms. He lectures frequently, offering much needed--and much appreciated--guidance on estate planning.

One lecture attendee wrote to Shenkman, "I found your talk last night very helpful. I have a brother-in-law who, imminently, will lose his battle with a chronic illness. Coupled with your discussion, it's made me think a lot about planning in the event something like this happens to me or my wife."

"The National MS Society is a volunteer-driven organization and we depend heavily on individuals such as Marty Shenkman who can volunteer a

Condition or Disability," are going to charity.

The National MS Society gives copies of his book, "Funding the Cure," to potential donors. His next project is a book on estate planning and charitable giving for families of those with Parkinson's disease, to be distributed by the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research.

A graduate of Fordham Law School and the Wharton School of Business, Shenkman received an MBA from the University of Michigan. A 23-year member of the State Bar, he is a member of the Business Law, Trusts and Estates, and Tax sections. ♦

*Vogel is NYSBA's Media Writer.*