

# BarReporter

ONONDAGA COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION  
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*We have to choose, and for my part I think it a less evil that some criminals should escape than the Government should play an ignoble part.*

– Oliver Wendell Holmes

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## Priceless Hours:

### Legal Professionals Working to Improve Communities

By Jim Williams

*Many of our colleagues in the legal profession do meaningful volunteer work that contributes immeasurable benefits to Central New York. In this feature of the Bar Reporter, we highlight this work.*

*We look at what legal professionals are doing in their communities and find out why they do it. We focus on the work of everyone in the legal profession, not just lawyers. We highlight an unlimited range of volunteer work, from building homes to working with youth, seniors and immigrants, and more. In this installment, Jim Thoman tells about his work with 40 Below and Adapt CNY.*



Jim Williams

*If you or someone you know is volunteering, contact me, Jim Williams, at [jwilliams@wnylc.com](mailto:jwilliams@wnylc.com). Simply tell me your/their name and contact info, and in a few words, tell me what you/they are doing. (e.g., Roberta reads to homebound seniors; Victor visits prisoners; Terry teaches immigrants English). I will follow-up. Thanks for your help.*

#### Jim Thoman is helping to revitalize Downtown Syracuse

Jim Thoman is an associate at Menter, Rudin and Trivelpiece and in his spare time is the president of the board of directors of Adapt CNY, Inc., a not-for-profit corporation, which is an outgrowth of the 2004 40 Below Summit. The purpose of Adapt CNY is to encourage and create a vibrant downtown through the redevelopment of vacant and under-utilized property in Syracuse's blighted urban core.

40 Below is a group of artists, lawyers, doctors, workers, entrepreneurs, professionals, entertainers and activists under and over 40 who call Central New York home. According to its Web site, 40 Below is committed to making Central New York a more vibrant place to live, work, learn and play; restoring pride and hope to our communities; sparking a cultural renaissance that will put us on the "creative" map; and harnessing the collective strength of our communities to make positive change.

Adapt's main project is the revitalization of the Wilson Building in the 300 block of South Salina Street. The project is intended to be a catalytic project on the block that would result in more than 50 new downtown residents, new downtown businesses and new jobs.

I asked Thoman what inspired him to get involved with 40 Below and or Adapt CNY:

*"For my first few years of living in Syracuse, our offices were located on Salina Street, and on a daily basis I saw first hand the blight affecting Syracuse's "main street." I became aware of a 40 Below task force that was meeting to discuss solutions to the many abandoned or underutilized buildings in the city center and attended those sessions regularly. The thing I enjoy most about working with Adapt is the idea that a group of individuals on an all volunteer basis can actually make an impact on the future of our city. If we can turn the lights back on above Salina Street, I will be very pleased to have played a minor role in that process."*

Menter, Rudin and Trivelpiece highly encouraged Thoman's involvement in 40 Below's efforts and agreed to donate his time to research the possibility of forming a non-profit corporation to facilitate the group's goal of revitalizing architecturally and/or historically significant properties downtown. It was determined this was a viable purpose for a non-profit. Menter then agreed to donate the legal services to have Adapt CNY incorporated and apply for 501(c)(3) status. Frank Patyi of Bond Shoeneck & King, PLLC, worked with Thoman on the application for tax exempt status, and he also provided his expertise on a pro bono basis.

Since its inception, Adapt has conducted various greenspace projects throughout the inner city; organized an all volunteer effort to clean over 400 cubic yards of debris from inside the Wilson Building and brought New Year's Eve back to the Hotel Syracuse. For more information see [www.40belowsummit.com](http://www.40belowsummit.com).