

The National College of DUI Defense's Member in the Spotlight is Steven Epstein of New York City. As he describes it, "I was born and raised on the sidewalks of New York City. I think the most influential people in my life, besides my parents, were the multitude of different people I was surrounded by growing up and being exposed to- people of varying social and economic backgrounds." Steven is a true city New Yorker through and through. He has lived his entire life in New York and now gives back as one of the leading educators of lawyers within the New York State Bar and a top DWI attorney. Steven was torn growing up, deciding between a life on stage or one in the courtroom. Now he does both. His most recent stage performance was with The Minstrel Players in Northport, New York last month in the stage production of Twelve Angry Jurors.

Steven graduated from the State University of New York College at Oneonta with a degree in Speech Communications. He earned his law degree at Pace University School of Law in White Plains, NY where he currently teaches as an Adjunct Professor (since 1997) and also coaches mock trial teams. He is passionate about education. He also serves on the Board of Trustees at Hartwick College in Oneonta, NY.

After graduating law school, he served as a public defender in New York for many years before opening his own private practice eight years ago. His commitment to public defense; however, is strong and ongoing. For the last 22 years he has run the DWI training program for the Legal Aid Society of the City of New York, training every one of their lawyers for the past 22 years. In addition, he also does the training programs for most of the New York City area public defender offices, as well as CLEs throughout New York State on the topic of DWI. In total, he has trained well over three thousand attorneys who have come through the ranks of the public defender's offices in New York City in the area of DWI defense.

Steven is also a member of the Board of Directors of the New York State Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers and serves as the chair for their CLE committee. In addition to serving on the faculty of the National College of DUI Defense, his other memberships include the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, and the Nassau County and New York Bar Associations. In 2019, the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers named him as one of their top 20 CLE lecturers. A further honor includes being chosen by the U.S. Dept. of Justice as a peer reviewer for National Institute of Justice grant applications. He has been named a New York metro area Super Lawyer every year since 2014.

Steven has led success in the courtrooms on his own, in addition to his tutoring and mentoring of many of his colleagues. With respect to large scale victories, he successfully challenged New York's discovery statute and obtained and enforced an order directing the State to turn over to every defendant in New York State the full records of gas chromatography that relate to the certification of the simulator solution used for every person charged with a DWI who submitted to a breath test. This ruling subsequently resulted in a change to New York's legislation. The resulting new discovery statute now entitles every defendant to the full records of gas chromatography that relate to the certification of the simulator solution. But the wins he is most proud of are the wins at suppression hearings, where he successfully challenges the overreaching actions of the police, and in doing so brings to life the Bill of Rights for society.

Steven has been married for 25 years to Melissa, who is a reading teacher. They have 2 daughters, ages 19 and 23. Their oldest daughter Alexis is now attending Pace Law School, with a goal to become a public defender like her father. Throughout their children's youth, Steven was their soccer coach and the Vice-President of the soccer league where he also ran their soccer tournaments, the major fundraisers used to help run its programs.

Steven's advice to new lawyers is that "There is no substitute for preparation - the things in life that are the most rewarding often take the greatest effort." When asked what the NCDD means to him, he referred to the Star Wars Jedi Master Yoda who emphasized that one must always pass on what one has learned. Steven said, "We as lawyers have an obligation, not only to each individual client, but to each other, by helping one another fulfill our responsibilities to each of our clients- we become stronger individually and collectively as a criminal defense community. By helping each other, we help to safeguard those fundamental rights for all of society. The NCDD gives me the opportunity to become better at what I do and continue to help others in their pursuit of using knowledge for justice."

We at the NCDD would like to thank Steven for his continued support and efforts in the field of DWI Defense. It was Ben Franklin who said "Be prepared or prepare to fail." Steven, you define this, and in the process, you have so generously dedicated yourself to helping so many others. Steven Epstein, you inspire all of us at NCDD. Thank you for everything you do.