

## 2022 NYSSCPA AWARD WINNERS



**Arthur J. Dixon**  
Public Service Award

## Public Service Award winner Lee M. Cohen has devoted many years to community service, as a volunteer and through his accounting firm

*This award recognizes CPAs who have a demonstrated history of public service and volunteerism for a charitable, community or civic organization. It celebrates the quality of, and dedication to, philanthropic service and the CPA's overall contribution to building and fostering community.*

By RUTH SINGLETON  
Trusted Professional Staff

Arthur J. Dixon Public Service Award winner **Lee M. Cohen** has dedicated many years to volunteer work at Sephardic Bikur Holim (SBH) Community Service Network, a social services organization, as well as with other charities, while also giving back to the community through his accounting firm.

Cohen received an accounting degree from New York University in 1993. "I was always good in math," he said. "In college, I took introduction to accounting classes and just pursued it." He started working as controller of a family-owned chain of retail stores, but wasn't happy doing that. Another accountant encouraged him to become a CPA, saying, "You're great at what you do." "He encouraged and mentored me."

Upon becoming a CPA, Cohen worked at Martin R. Klein & Co., gaining a lot of valuable experience. He also started to build up some clients of his own. He then joined Mayer & Co., where he opened and ran the New York office, at the same time continuing to build his own practice. From there, he joined DDK & Company, where he worked as a partner for four years. "In 2010, I decided that if I'm going to do it on my own, now was the time," Cohen said. And so he founded LM Cohen & Company, CPAs, where he is managing partner.

"Once I became certified, I joined the Society, and I lean on the resources of the Society," Cohen said, citing the ability to call and get questions answered, *The CPA Journal*, and the CPE courses offered by the Foundation for Accounting Education (FAE).

Twenty years ago, Cohen became involved in SBH Community Service Network through his brother-in-law, who was employed there as a social worker. "He told me I would be a great volunteer captain, so I was paired up with a social worker, started doing the work, and loved it. The more I volunteered, the more I became involved."

The organization provides a range of social services, including mental health, medical referral, career placement, financial aid and food pantries. Its goal is to help less fortunate people, living primarily in Brooklyn, in all of those areas. Cohen served for more than 10 years as a captain; working with the social worker, he met with clients on an individual basis to review their finances and family needs. Together, they would develop treatment plans to address those needs. Such plans often included finding or improving employment, apply-

assistance with rent, utilities, food and other basic needs." Cohen later joined the SBH finance committee, became treasurer and then served as president of the organization from 2013 to 2017. He remains a board member.

Cohen has also volunteered with the Jewish Communal Fund, a donor-advised charitable fund that is a division of the United Jewish Appeal (UJA). "Being a CPA, I am constantly advising my clients on charitable giving and the best ways to give it. This organization is near and dear to

tants & Bankers Reception. Upon receiving this honor, he said, "I am deeply grateful to be honored by Big Brothers Big Sisters of NYC, an organization I've had the pleasure to support over the years. Their mission and initiatives for the youth in NYC are critical to helping children achieve success, and to be named an honoree this year at their annual Accountants & Bankers reception is an incredible blessing."

Other beneficiaries of the firm's charitable work include City Harvest of New York City. At the end of 2021, firm employees donated 350 pounds of food to City Harvest as part of its annual *Daily News* Food Drive. The firm donated various items for Ukrainian relief efforts such as food, clothing, batteries and first aid kits. "Our firm has always been more than just a place to prepare tax returns or financial statements; it is our home away from home—a place where we build connections and foster the strong culture that makes me so proud to come to work every day," Cohen says.

Gold observed that "Lee has gone above and beyond in giving back to communities and volunteering for charitable causes. I have worked as a tax manager at LMC since Lee started the company in 2010, and it's amazing to see first-hand all the charitable initiatives the firm participates in and the communities Lee gives back to on a regular basis."

"I'm very grateful for where I've gotten in my life, and giving back is very important to me," Cohen said. "The importance of giving back has been instilled in me, and I instilled that in my children. I'm instilling it within my firm as well. It's important to help people who are less fortunate, especially when you have that ability. I really enjoy it and, even though I'm busy at times, the sense of fulfillment I get from doing this work helps get me through my busy times."

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ing for government benefits, counseling, budgeting and debt reduction.

In his statement nominating Cohen for the award, his colleague **Jeffrey S. Gold** said, "Lee's interest and motivation, and his work in helping his clients obtain a job or reach their highest level of independence, was the turning point in many of their lives. Lee was the consummate positive role model, showing by example such qualities as patience, understanding, humor, humility and a willingness to compromise."

Gold added, "Lee has served as an SBH board member since 2004. One of his board responsibilities was serving on the Case Management Committee. Lee and the committee, which consists of at least three board members, met regularly to determine each client's temporary or longer-term allocation of resources. Based on the treatment plan and the client's overall budget, the allocation may provide for as-

me, and I refer them a lot of clients. They asked me to be on the board five years ago, and I have served on the audit committee for the past two years. I was recently appointed to head the audit committee." Cohen has also done volunteer work for the Yeshiva of Flatbush and the Magen David Yeshiva.

In addition, Cohen has given back to the community through his firm. "Our firm is very charitable. We supported people in need throughout the pandemic and, more recently, refugees from Ukraine. Our firm has done food drives and other things to help."

Cohen was recently honored by Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City. His firm has begun to do volunteer work for that organization and is encouraging his staff members to volunteer as big brothers and big sisters. In May, he was celebrated at the organization's 24th Annual Accountants & Bankers Reception.