



**MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY ASSOCIATION  
AND  
NEW YORK CITY LAW DEPARTMENT /  
OFFICE OF THE CORPORATION COUNSEL**

*Robert Ross, Chief Executive Office & President, MDA  
Michael A. Cardozo, Corporation Counsel, NYC Law Dept.*

*Press Release  
For Immediate Release*

**NEW YORK CITY ATTORNEY RECEIVES  
MDA NATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

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New York, Sept. 7, 2004 – Michael J. Wasser, an attorney with the New York City Law Department and a resident of Brooklyn, N.Y., has been named the recipient of the Muscular Dystrophy Association's (MDA's) 2005 National Personal Achievement Award – one of the organization's highest honors. The award is part of the MDA's program recognizing the achievements and community involvement of people across the country who are affected by neuromuscular diseases. The MDA presented its award live to Wasser yesterday during the national broadcast of the Jerry Lewis MDA Telethon, which was televised during the Labor Day weekend. Wasser, 30, was chosen for the national honor from state award recipients across the country.

"We're especially gratified to honor Michael Wasser, who is a role model in every aspect of his life," MDA President & CEO Robert Ross said. "He shows each day that when a positive attitude is coupled with intelligence and determination, great results are produced."

"Michael's efforts as an attorney for our office and as a disabilities activist are outstanding," said Corporation Counsel Michael A. Cardozo of the New York City Law Department. "We congratulate him on this award from the MDA and appreciate the excellent example he's provided for those living with disabilities."

For five years, Wasser has worked as an Assistant Corporation Counsel in the Law Department's Tax & Bankruptcy Litigation Division. In that position, he's involved in real estate tax *certiorari* and title closings, and advises City agencies on real estate matters. Wasser also acts as liaison between his division and the Office of Corporation Counsel's Information Technology Division. Wasser is a Phi Beta Kappa and *magna cum laude* graduate of Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, and a 1999 graduate of Brooklyn Law School.

Wasser serves on the New York City Bar Association's Condemnation and Tax Certiorari Committee, and is a member of the New York State Bar Association's Real Property Law Section. Wasser co-authored a chapter on title objections in purchase options for a detailed treatise titled "Condemnation Law," which is to be published by the State Bar Association.

Wasser has Becker Muscular Dystrophy, a genetic disorder characterized by progressive weakness and muscle wasting in the limb and trunk muscles. Becker MD can also damage the heart and respiratory muscles. At age 3, he was given a diagnosis of Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, which progresses faster than Becker MD. His diagnosis was changed 10 years later. Wasser has used a wheelchair since elementary school and now uses a power wheelchair. He also uses noninvasive ventilation assistance at night.

Wasser began advocating for equal access for himself and others with disabilities in elementary school, when he fought to make his school's stage and gym wheelchair accessible. As the first student with a disability allowed to participate in many educational programs in the New York City schools, he encouraged other students with disabilities to get involved and pursue their rights. Wasser has remained active in disability rights advocacy. He has worked with schools to improve access for students and speaks out on issues of wheelchair access in public places. He's also involved in a lawsuit concerning rehabilitation services in the state. An active speaker for the MDA, Wasser participates in fundraisers for the Association and frequently appears on local segments of the MDA Telethon.

Wasser was one of four finalists for the national MDA Achievement award. The other finalists were:

- Scott Hatley of West Linn, Ore.
- Lee Anne Poteat of Morrisville, N.C.
- David Sheffield of Silsbee, Texas.

Wasser's award is for the year 2005. The MDA's 2004 national award recipient was Nicholas A. Johnson of Waltham, Mass., an associate and senior engineer with a Boston-based company called BR+A Consulting Engineers.

The Muscular Dystrophy Association is a voluntary health agency – a dedicated partnership between scientists and concerned citizens aimed at conquering neuromuscular diseases that affect more than a million Americans. The MDA combats neuromuscular diseases through programs of worldwide research, comprehensive medical and community services, and far-reaching professional and public health education. Its annual Muscular Dystrophy Telethon, held annually over the Labor Day weekend, raises millions of dollars for MDA research and assistance. First broadcast in 1966 by a lone TV station in New York City, the unique event starring popular comedian Jerry Lewis quickly caught the public's attention. Now, 39 years later, the show is broadcast by some 200 stations around the country. This year's Telethon netted \$59.4 million, just slightly below the MDA's record-breaking figures from last year (a dip attributable to Hurricane Frances, which impeded donations from Florida). The MDA's web site is [www.mdausa.org](http://www.mdausa.org).

The New York City Law Department is one of the oldest, largest and most dynamic law offices in the world, ranking among the top three largest law offices in New York City and the top three largest public law offices in the country. Tracing its roots back to the 1600's, the Department's 650-plus lawyers handle more than 90,000 cases and transactions each year in 17 separate legal divisions. The Corporation Counsel heads the Law Department and acts as legal counsel for the Mayor, elected officials, the City and all its agencies. The Department's attorneys represent the City on a vast array of civil litigation, legislative and legal issues and in the criminal prosecution of juveniles. Its web site can be accessed through the City government home page at [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov) or via direct link at [www.nyc.gov/html/law/home.html](http://www.nyc.gov/html/law/home.html).

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