

Heather T. Clarke, Jenessa N. Santos, and Hon. Carol E. Heckman, Ret., Named Among Rochester Business Journal's 2026 Excellence in Law Honorees



April 17, 2026 | **PRESS RELEASES**

Lippes Mathias LLP [announced today](#) that three firm members have been selected to receive Excellence in Law Awards from the Rochester Business Journal in its 2026 edition. Heather T. Clarke, paralegal on the firm's [appellate and business & commercial litigation](#) practice teams, was honored in the paralegal category. [Hon. Carol E. Heckman, Ret.](#), partner and leader of the firm's [alternative dispute resolution practice team](#), was honored in the alternative dispute resolution category. [Jenessa N. Santos](#), operations manager, was honored in the law firm administrator category.

The Rochester Business Journal's Excellence in Law Awards recognize Western New York legal professionals who make outstanding contributions to their organizations and strengthen the Rochester community. The honorees will be celebrated at an awards ceremony on June 4, 2026.

About Heather T. Clarke

Heather T. Clarke is a paralegal on Lippes Mathias' appellate and business & commercial litigation practice teams in

Rochester. Clarke supports attorneys at all stages of the litigation process, from initial filings through trial or settlement, with responsibilities including deposition preparation, document production, trial support, and exhibit management. Known for her reliability and attention to detail, she consistently ensures that client-facing work moves forward on schedule and that attorneys have what they need to operate at full capacity. Clarke also proposed and implemented a monthly coordination structure for the Rochester litigation team that brings together attorneys, associates, and support staff to review active matters and align on upcoming work — a practice that has since become a core part of how the office operates.

About Hon. Carol E. Heckman (Ret.)

Hon. Carol E. Heckman (Ret.) has more than 40 years of experience as a trial lawyer and judge. Heckman maintains an active practice as an arbitrator for the American Arbitration Association, conducting arbitrations in most major metropolitan areas with a particular concentration in New York City. She has been selected as a fellow of the College of Commercial Arbitrators, where she serves as co-chair of the education committee and as a member of its board of directors, and is a contributing author to the organization's new edition of *Best Practices in Commercial Arbitration*, published in June 2025.

Heckman served as a magistrate judge in the Western District of New York for eight years, during which she was selected to sit on the Federal Judicial Conference's education committee for magistrate judges and served as an officer in the Federal Magistrate Judges Association. She has also served as a trial attorney with the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., as an assistant U.S. attorney in Buffalo, N.Y., and as a law clerk for Hon. John T. Curtin, former chief judge of the Western District of New York.

About Jenessa N. Santos

Jenessa N. Santos serves as operations manager at Lippes Mathias, overseeing the firm's operations across all offices and leading a team of operations assistants and specialists. Prior to transitioning into her operations role, Santos served as a business development specialist at the firm, where she shaped and executed growth strategies, collaborated with partners and associates on business development initiatives, and provided strategic guidance to firm leadership.

About Lippes Mathias LLP

Lippes Mathias is a full-service law firm with 230 attorneys serving clients regionally, nationally, and internationally. With offices in Buffalo, Clarence, Albany, Long Island, New York, Rochester, Syracuse, and Saratoga Springs, N.Y.; Greater Toronto Area; Chicago, Ill.; Jacksonville, Tampa Bay, and West Palm Beach, Fla.; Cleveland, Ohio; San Antonio, Texas; Oklahoma City, Okla.; and Washington, D.C., the firm represents publicly and privately owned companies, private equity and venture capital firms, independent sponsors, family offices, real estate developers, financial institutions, municipalities, governmental entities, and individuals.

Ranked No. 204 on The National Law Journal's NLJ 500 list of the largest law firms in the United States by attorney headcount, Lippes Mathias is proud to be recognized year after year by The Best Lawyers in America®, U.S. News – Best Lawyers®, Super Lawyers, and Chambers USA. For more information, visit www.lippes.com.

Related Team



**Hon. Carol E.
Heckman (Ret.)**
Partner | Team
Leader - Alternative
Dispute Resolution



Jenessa N. Santos
Operations Manager