

Legal Aid Link

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Statement from Lonnie Powers

Reorganizations in the Southeast and Central/Western Regions

Significant reorganizations in the Southeast and the Central/Western parts of Massachusetts have recently taken place. We anticipate these reorganizations will result in strengthened services for clients in each region.

In the Southeast, with the strong support of MLAC and the Access to Justice Commission, South Coastal Counties Legal Services (SCCLS) merged with the New Center for Legal Advocacy (NCLA) at the end of June. This is the first program funded by the federal Legal Services Corporation (LSC) that MLAC has agreed to fund since 2003, when restrictions were imposed on LSC-funded programs. SCCLS has been able to segregate some of the funds it receives from MLAC into a wholly owned subsidiary so that LSC restrictions do not apply to those funds. This arrangement, one of the first in the country, will allow for greater efficiency and coordination of services in the Southeast region while preserving, in so far as possible, the ability to provide a full range of services unhampered by LSC restrictions. SCCLS is expected to become a national model for how a program can accept LSC funding without compromising service delivery.

In the five counties formerly served by the Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts (LACCM) and Western Massachusetts Legal Services, LACCM applied for and received MLAC funding to serve the entire five county area (see "[Low-Income Legal Services Team Up](#)" in the *Worcester Business Journal*). The expanded program is now known as Community Legal Aid (CLA). The board of directors of the new organization includes representatives, both attorneys and clients, from throughout the region. CLA will undertake a strategic planning effort this fall in conjunction with the Massachusetts Justice Project (MJP) to explore, among other issues, whether they also should consolidate. MJP and CLA will look to the experience of SCCLS and NCLA for guidance. MLAC hopes that the successful results in the Southeast region and the strategic planning process will lead to a decision to merge CLA and MJP in the reasonably near future.

These are the most significant changes to affect the delivery of legal aid in the Commonwealth in

some time. We greatly appreciate the hard work and leadership of the management and staff, boards of directors and clients of the programs in making these reorganizations a reality.

MLAC News

Retention Task Force Finalizing Recommendations

In November 2010, MLAC, with the support of the project directors and union leadership, assembled a Retention Task Force (RTF) in response to a letter from a loose coalition of Attorneys of Color in Legal Services (AOC). The AOC was very concerned that the impact of the economic crisis on programs has led to a significant decrease in the diversity of attorneys in legal services across the state. The AOC urged programs to take a close look at the effect of seniority and other staff reduction policies and practices. The RTF, chaired by Jacqui Bowman, consists of 18 members who are reflective of the legal services community; project directors, union members, board members, MLAC staff and members of the AOC. The charge of the RTF is to identify best practices and policies that would aid legal services programs in taking action to preserve a diverse work force and ameliorate the disparate effects of layoffs on attorneys of color.

The RTF is in the process of finalizing draft recommendations, which will initially be shared with the MLAC Board, the AOC, project directors and unions for their feedback. After the report is finalized, MLAC and the Diversity Coalition will determine next steps, which will include a statewide summit on diversity. A clear outcome of the RTF recommendations is that in order to be effective, there must be accountability and monitoring. The RTF will recommend that MLAC be charged with this responsibility. The RTF believes that implementation of the recommendations and monitoring effectiveness will lead to a legal services climate/culture that is more inclusive and welcoming to all and that its work will result in a higher rate of retention for attorneys of color. For more information, please contact Jacqui Bowman at JBowman@gbls.org or Diversity Coalition Director Joyce Allen-Beckford at jallen-beckford@mlac.org.

Strategic Planning Committee to Draft Plan by Fall

On June 23, the MLAC Board Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) convened a meeting of the Access to Justice Commission (ATJC) members, legal services program directors, MLAC staff, and other legal services stakeholders to discuss the themes and questions that have arisen during MLAC's ongoing strategic planning process. The new SPC chair, Martha Koster, described the process, which began in late 2009, and joined fellow MLAC Board members Bob Foster and Rahsaan Hall in reporting on the Communications, Delivery System, and Leadership Transitions task forces, which met through the winter of 2011 to develop recommendations to the Board for issues to include in the MLAC Strategic Plan. Participants at the June 23 meeting commented on the process, and asked questions on such issues as the intersection of the MLAC process with the ATJC special planning process and the role of MLAC in the future. The SPC will continue its work through the summer, and plans to have the first draft of a plan by the fall of 2011.

Equal Justice Coalition News

FY12 Budget Campaign a Success!

To use a phrase coined by the Beatles, it was a long and winding road but in the end, we met our goal of maintaining level funding (\$9.5 million) for the MLAC line item. In the face of a continuing economic slump, this was no small victory. A heartfelt thanks to everyone who responded to our e-alerts, participated in Walk to the Hill or called their legislators when we asked you to. Here are some of the highlights of the FY12 legislative funding campaign:

- A tremendously successful Walk to the Hill despite having to reschedule due to snow - more than 500 participated.
- Delivered support letters from general counsel (93 signers), managing partners (35 signers) and law school deans (8 signers). Respectively, the letters were spearheaded by Lou Goodman of Skadden, Bob Kann of Sunstein Kann and Emily Spieler of Northeastern University School of Law.

- Defeated a proposed amendment in the House budget which would have earmarked money in the MLAC line item for the "Grandparents Raising Grandchildren" project.
- Prevailed in getting Senator Creem's amendments passed which put back money that the Senate Ways and Means Committee had cut and put back the "special projects" language of the line item.
- Garnered media coverage in the *Lowell Sun*, *Metro*, *WGBH* and more, along with an [opinion piece in the Patriot Ledger by Tom Gunning](#), senior vice president and general counsel of EMD Serono Inc., and a director of Greater Boston Legal Services.
- Generated hundreds of emails and phone calls through the four action e-alerts sent out during the campaign.

Thank you to all the program staff who helped secure this level funding victory for FY12 - we couldn't have done it without you!

Client News



Shams at NLADA

Read the Spring Issue of the Unbeatable Advocate

The Spring issue of the client board member newsletter, The Unbeatable Advocate, was distributed in June 2011 and can be read [here](#). The next issue will be distributed in Winter 2011. Please send your stories and ideas to David Pearson at dpearson@shawmuteducation.org.

Meet Shams Mizra, GBLS Client Board Member

As a lifelong advocate for justice, Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS) Client Board Member Shams Mirza has always been called to stand up for what's right. Growing up in India and Pakistan, Shams remembers witnessing the political and economic injustice all around him. "Ever since I was a child in India, I was always troubled by the disparity between the rich and poor - the masses were very poor," Shams says. [Read more about how Shams became a voice for legal aid clients in Massachusetts.](#)

People

Community Legal Aid

CLA is excited to welcome **Janice Curley** as its new Development Director. Jan brings over twenty years of non-profit fundraising experience in the Worcester area. Jan will focus on both grants management (including writing and reporting) and fundraising.

Community Legal Services and Counseling Center

CLSACC's Administrative Coordinator, **Laura Diss**, is leaving CLSACC in August to attend Boston College Law School. She will be replaced by **Debi Morrison**, who comes to CLSACC with 14 years of experience as the Office Manager at the Women's Law Project in Philadelphia.

Greater Boston Legal Services

Bob Sable is leaving GBLS this month after 20 years as Executive Director and 41 years in legal services. He is being succeeded by **Jacqui Bowman**, former Deputy Director. Bob served as the keynote speaker for the MLAC Annual Meeting in May 2010. Lonnie Powers, who has known and worked with Bob for 28 year, described Bob as "a Man of Substance. A man [he is] proud to call a colleague and friend."



Bob



Barbara

GBLS Housing Law Unit Senior Attorney **Barbara Zimbel** was honored on May 25 for her volunteer work with women prisoners at Massachusetts Correctional Institution - Framingham, the state's prison for women.

On July 9 GBLS Senior Attorney **Audrey Richardson** was honored for collaborating with Centro Presente on their Workers Rights Campaigns and providing legal advice to workers, and also for empowering workers to take a proactive role in their own campaigns. Centro Presente is a state-wide Latin American immigrant organization dedicated to the self-determination and self-sufficiency of Massachusetts' Latin American immigrant community.



Audrey

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

Francisca Fajana has been selected by *Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly* as one of the recipients of the 2011 "Top Women of Law" award in recognition of her accomplishments in the legal community. Fran, who joined MLRI as a Staff Attorney in 2001, directs the Race Equity Project. Her primary areas of concentration are education, employment and the civil consequences of criminal records. Since joining MLRI, she has influenced significant policy changes, including the development and implementation of legislative reforms to the state's Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) system.

On August 1, MLRI will welcome **Sharon Armour** to the staff. Sharon succeeds Millie Peters, MLRI's longtime Office Manager who retired on June 30. She comes to MLRI with significant personnel/HR and office management experience, extensive technology expertise, a knowledge of the legal services community of Massachusetts and a deep commitment to MLRI's anti-poverty mission.

Jeff Wolf was appointed to the Massachusetts Bar Association's Individual Rights and Responsibilities Section Council.

Event Recap

MLASSP Holds End of Year Celebration

The Massachusetts Legal Assistance for Self-Sufficiency AmeriCorps Program (MLASSP) celebrated the completion of its sixth year of service to legal services at the John Joseph Moakley U.S. Courthouse on July 15. Members received awards for service and volunteerism along with a personal "thank you" from U.S. Senator John Kerry, personally signed each Certificate of National Service. Statewide projects were presented by the members and supervisors, with recognition given to the lead supervisor of each group. During their term, members completed more than 45,000 hours of service and exceeded expectations of several required performance measures.



Ken MacIver and Dave Kennedy cross the finish line.

Hundreds Come Out to Race for Justice

On the beautiful Sunday morning of June 26, Merrimack Valley-North Shore Legal Services (MVLS) held its first annual Race for Justice along the banks of the Merrimack River. The sponsors included Enterprise Bank, the Cambridge law firm of Bowman Moos & Elder, Haverhill attorney and board member Kelly Sullivan, Elder Services of Merrimack Valley, Lowell attorney and board member Maxa Berid, RoadID, Target, Edward A. Olin, and the MVLS staff in honor of our late fiscal officer Barbara Olin. 225 people who registered for the race. Of those who made it, 89 ran or walked the 5K and 77 ran the 10K. The post-race celebration featured a DJ, food by Target, awards for each age division, a raffle for Red Sox tickets and many other prizes. MVLS staff attorney Zona Sharman was the chief race organizer and led a huge volunteer team captained by MVLS AmeriCorps Moriah Nelson and volunteer Alex Boncek.

Sculptures by CLSACC Clients at the UN

In June 2011, bubblewrap sculptures created by a women's group at Community Legal Services & Counseling Center (CLSACC) were featured in an art exhibition at the United Nations in Geneva in commemoration of the 30th Anniversary of the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture and the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. In the coming months, they will also go on display at the Palais Wilson, the Headquarters of the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights. The women's group is comprised of refugee and immigrant women who have been affected by violence and are currently experiencing social isolation, almost all of whom are represented by CLSACC attorneys.



Advocates Gather for LEP Conference

More than 55 attorneys and advocates attended a day-long conference on June 3, "Serving Limited English Proficient (LEP) Clients: An Educational Forum for Legal Services Advocates." It was organized by the Massachusetts Legal Assistance for Self-Sufficiency Program and several legal aid attorneys. Speakers included Weayonnoh Nelson-Daives; Arthur Bakis, US Census Bureau; and Michael Mulé, Federal Coordination and Compliance Section of the Civil Rights Division at the U.S. Department of Justice. They shared a wealth of information and

advocacy tools, along with many ideas and solutions for improving language access in state courts, state agencies and legal services organizations. This conference was a stepping-stone toward creating a statewide Language Access Coalition (LAC). Contact Veronica Serrato at vserrato@vlpnet.org if you are interested in joining LAC or being added to the e-mail listserv.

SCCLS Unveils New Mural in Fall River Office

A larger-than-life depiction of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. now welcomes clients and visitors to the South Coastal Counties Legal Services' (SCCLS) office in Fall River. The image is just a piece of the mural designed and painted by volunteers organized through the University of Massachusetts Office of Civic Engagement. The project was funded through a Martin Luther King Day grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service and culminated a week of service activities involving hundreds of volunteers on the South Coast. The mural was unveiled at an Open House in May.



Mural artist Lynne LaBerge (L) and Sarah Coyne, AmeriCorps Campus Compact at UMassDartmouth (R)

Advocacy Update

Massachusetts Advocates for Children

Transition Coordinator Bill

Youth with disabilities, parents, educators and advocates from around the state along with Rep. Tom Sannicandro gathered at the State House on June 21 to present a 100 ft.-long petition to Governor Patrick demonstrating their support of H. 159, "An Act to Promote the Successful Transition of Students with Disabilities to Post-Secondary Education, Employment, and Independent Living." This bill promotes employment opportunities, independent living, and post-secondary education for individuals with disabilities. Visit the [MAC web site](#) for more details.

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

Advocating for Nursing Home Residents

Attorneys **Deb Thomson** of MLRI and **Wynn Gerhard** of GBLS teamed up to oppose MassHealth's proposed elimination of the nursing home "bed hold." The bed hold reserves the bed of nursing home residents for up to 10 days when they are hospitalized or want to visit family overnight. Working with Mass Advocates for Nursing Home Reform they succeeded in getting the proposed

regulations postponed indefinitely.

Children's Clothing Allowance

During a very difficult budget year, MLRI persuaded the legislature to retain \$40 of the \$150 annual clothing allowance for very low-income children. Thanks to MLRI advocacy, the children's clothing allowance was highlighted in several news pieces on the budget, and the Senate Chair of Ways and Means expressly said that he hoped to restore the clothing allowance to \$150 in the coming months.

[Click here for more MLRI news.](#)

National Consumer Law Center

Bankruptcy Mortgage Project

This new, free "one-stop shop" web site (<http://www.bankruptcymortgageproject.org>) is a resource for those in the bankruptcy community interested in adopting new programs and local rules to assist consumers, their attorneys and mortgage creditors in addressing mortgage claims and seeking alternatives to foreclosure. It is organized by topic: Loss Mitigation and Mediation, Cure Plan Requirements, Stay Relief Requirements, Lien Stripping and Chapter 13 Plans, and is searchable by state, subject, court location (district and circuit) or document type.

NCLC encourages feedback, and individuals are welcome to review the documents in their district and inform us of any omissions. Please contact NCLC Attorney John Rao at jrao@nclc.org. The web site was funded in part by a grant from the Endowment for Education of the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges. (In funding the grant, the Endowment does not endorse nor express any opinion about the methodology utilized, or any conclusions, opinions, or results contained in any report, article, book or other writing based on the research funded by the Endowment).

Tornado Response Update

Legal Aid Programs Mobilize to Help Tornado Victims

In June, when a tornado struck Western Massachusetts, advocates at the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI), Massachusetts Justice Project (MJP) and Community Legal Aid (CLA) quickly formed a Legal Tornado Response effort to strategize about how to help tornado victims. Within days, information was posted to alert tenants in buildings that had been destroyed buildings about condemnation hearings in the housing court, as well as information about cash assistance, SNAP/food stamps and unemployment insurance benefits for victims. Each week, as new issues and legal needs are identified by frontline legal services workers, information is being posted on MassLegalHelp.org [Help for Tornado Victims](#).

MLRI also communicated with Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) officials to make sure they were fully maximizing options for replacement and disaster SNAP/food stamp benefits. MLRI got early versions of DTA policy instructions, analyzed them in light of federal disaster guidance, and persuaded DTA to modify them to improve clarity and expand eligibility. And on July 19, MJP, CLA and Senior Partners For Justice West hosted a legal training for attorneys on the FEMA application process led by attorneys and staff from FEMA.

Important Dates

MLAC Board of Directors

July Meeting

July 28

3-5 p.m. with reception to follow

Mintz Levin

Massachusetts Advocates for Children

Youth Advocate of the Year (YAY!) Award Application Deadline

August 15

For more details, visit <http://www.massadvocates.org>.

Whole Foods Market 5% Day

September 14

MAC will receive 5% of the sales from three Whole Foods locations: Dedham, Hingham and Swampscott

Annual Gala

November 3

Bingham McCutchen LLP

MAC is looking for silent auction items. For more details, contact Daryl Cox at

dcoc@massadvocates.org.

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

Basic Benefits Trainings Series

On September 15, MLRI and MCLE launch the 2011-2012 series of Basic Benefit Trainings with a training on Unemployment Insurance Advocacy, chaired by attorneys Margaret Monsell of MLRI and Monica Halas of GBLS. The 2011-2012 edition of MLRI's Unemployment Insurance Advocacy Guide, which contains the most up-to-date information on the Unemployment Insurance program, will also be released on that date. The Massachusetts Trial Court Law Libraries web site has a [link to the UI Advocacy Guide](#) and has named it a "Best Bet" for useful information.

Access to Courts for Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence

MLRI and other members of the Multicultural Immigrant Coalition Against Violence are organizing a conference to be held on September 27 about improving access to Probate and Family Courts for immigrant and minority survivors of sexual and domestic violence. For more details, contact Jeff Wolf at jwolf@mlri.org.

Neighborhood Legal Services

3rd Annual Golf Tournament

September 12

Andover Country Club

For more details, contact Cathy Willard at cwillard@nlsma.org.

Attorneys of Color

Annual Retreat

September 30

Keynote speaker will be Judge Denny Chin.

More details will be provided closer to the date.

Media Highlights

These are just some highlights for June and July. For a full list of media coverage, visit the [News](#) section of MLAC's Web site.

[WBUR: Legal Aid Leader Retiring After 20 Years Of Service](#)

7/18/2011 - WBUR's All Things Considered host Sacha Pfeiffer asks Bob Sable to reflect on his legal aid career as he prepares to step down as executive director of Greater Boston Legal Services.

[Springfield Republican: Massachusetts Legislators Seek New Regulations for Temporary Staffing Agencies](#)

07/11/11 - Monica Halas of Greater Boston Legal Services testified at a hearing on June 30 in front of the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development on a bill that would re-write the laws that govern employment agencies.

[Lowell Sun: State Honors Advocate for Disabled](#)

6/27/2011 - This article profiles the late Denise Lawrence, who worked as a housing advocate for 21 years at

Merrimack Valley North Shore Legal Services, and her 10-year battle to make the Lawrence Superior Court accessible to those with physical disabilities.

[Massnonprofit.org: Bowman Promoted to Exec. Dir. of Greater Boston Legal Services](#)

6/24/2011 - Jacqui Bowman has been promoted to executive director of Greater Boston Legal Services, where she has served as deputy director for more than a decade. Bowman replaces long-time executive director Bob Sable, who will retire in July after 20 years.

[Boston Globe: New Focus on Inmate Jobs, Health Care](#)

6/23/2011 - Leslie Walker, executive director of Prisoners' Legal Services, was quoted in this article on Middlesex Sheriff Peter Koutoujian. "He understands and respects the law and civil rights and the big picture, which is that he's got men for a relatively short period of time and he wants them to leave prison better than when they came in," Walker said.

[Law Enforcement Officials Meet to Discuss Human Trafficking](#)

6/22/2011 - Melissa Hartford, an attorney with MetroWest Legal Services, is cited in this story on promotion of the T visa program, which allows human trafficking victims to stay in the U.S. legally and work toward full citizenship.

[Worcester Telegram & Gazette: Uniting to Help the Neediest \(As I See It\)](#)

6/17/2011 - Valerie Zolezzi-Wyndham, director of training & professional development at the Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts (LACCM), co-authored this opinion piece highlighting the importance of Family Advocates of Central Massachusetts, LACCM's Medical Legal Partnership program, which provides legal help to Worcester's most vulnerable patients.

[Boston Globe: He Always Came to Their Aid](#)

6/10/2011 - The Boston Globe interviews Bob Sable, who is retiring at the end of June after 20 years as executive director of Greater Boston Legal Services.

[Worcester Telegram & Gazette: Rug Pulled out from Under the Homeless](#)

6/10/11 - Jonathan Manina, executive director of the Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts, offers advice to those facing eviction. "The important message is that people are not just required to leave when they get a notice like this," he says. "They have a right to go to court and raise any defense they may have from an eviction situation."

[Patriot Ledger: Most Vulnerable among Us Are Too Often Left Without Legal Help \(Commentary\)](#)

6/8/2011 - Thomas G. Gunning, senior vice president and general counsel of EMD Serono Inc., and a director of Greater Boston Legal Services, writes an opinion piece in support of level funding for civil legal aid. "The most vulnerable among us are too often left without legal help," he says.

Tech Tips

By Patricia Shaunessey, MLAC's Support and Training Specialist

Setting Blackberry Convenience Keys

The Convenience Keys are located on the left & right side of a Blackberry (depending on model - some have only 1 key). To set:

- 1.) Press the Blackberry Menu key - select the Options icon - scroll to **Screen/Keyboard** (press your track ball to select).
- 2.) Scroll down to **Right Side Convenience Key Opens**: press track ball to select the menu options available. (Example: for quick access to your Calendar from the list, press the Menu button (to left of track ball), select **Save**).
- 3.) Do same for **Left Side Convenience Key**.

Now you have quick easy access to your calendar, address book, BrickBreaker game or whatever you decide! Enjoy!

"People Pages"

[CLICK HERE](#) to print "People Pages," an alphabetical directory of Massachusetts Legal Services staff members and their contact information (NOTE: You must log in to MassLegalServices.org in order to access the list). You can also look up staff individually by last name using the search function on MassLegalServices.org.

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