Community Legal Services of Philadelphia 2012 Issue : Annual Report

THIS YEAR A Voice for the Underserved

Cheryl Springs A New Home

HUAN HO Life's Basic Needs

ROSE CANDELARIO Fighting Foreclosure

CAPREECE LACKEY Journey to Self-sufficiency

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Daryl Winston, Esq. *The Winston Law Firm* Philadelphia, PA Dear Friends of Community Legal Services,

he past year has been both exciting and challenging, as CLS continues to serve as a leader in public interest law at the local, state, national and even international levels. While the core of our work is the 14,500 clients we served in our Center City and North Philadelphia offices, we are also proud of the way we leverage our limited resources to serve thousands of other vulnerable people with similar problems.

As our organization and our clients have faced financial stresses, we have found it even more important to think carefully about how we can most efficiently make a difference for the hundreds of thousands of Philadelphians who live in poverty.



Catherine C. Carr

The culture at CLS encourages innovative and aggressive advocacy, attracts and keeps excellent staff, and connects our work to client needs and today's prevalent issues. This year the National Legal Aid and Defender Association (NLADA) sent a team to CLS to learn about how we do our work and maintain an organization that is a national

"... we leverage our limited resources to serve thousands of other vulnerable people with similar problems."

These people too often remain invisible in the daily lives of most area residents. At CLS we see many of them every day and work to both help them move their lives forward, and to make their plight more visible, and less burdensome, through our advocacy. Our goal is to use the information we gather from helping individuals in our offices as well as working with community organizations to also make a largescale difference for the many we do not meet. We do this by providing practical legal education and information, and advocating for changes in the systems that affect our clients' lives.

model in the legal aid community. Cathy is a national leader herself, serving at that level on many influential boards, task forces and committees. Organizations across the state and country rely on our attorneys for training and advice. We even have international impact; this year Cathy was part of an ABA Section of Litigation team that trained legal aid lawyers in Haiti, and also accompanied Penn law students who were assisting refugees in Jordan with applications for admission to the United States.

You will find details of our statewide and local work in the individual

units' section of this Annual Report. Please read about how we addressed the problem of 160,000 Pennsylvanians who lost Medicaid coverage (including 89,000 children), our work to assist low income workers facing barriers to employment, our struggle to keep more families from falling into the trap of predatory payday lending, our push to continue the valuable safety net for the disabled provided by General Assistance, and much more. These are just some of the tremendous stories of CLS' hallmark approach to obtain orderly resolutions that will allow our clients to move forward in their lives.

Our new building, the North Philadelphia Law Center, is on time, on budget, and expected to open this winter. The construction process has been an amazing journey with the Board, staff, funders and contractors; on page 10 you can see photos and features of our site. Having a building built just for us, in a neighborhood where the community desperately needs our help, is something CLS never dared dream before; it is joyful to have the dream come true. We look forward to welcoming you to step into our new Law Center this year, and into a new era in legal aid at Broad and Erie and far beyond.

Thank you for all of your invaluable support of our work.

Catherine C. Can

Catherine C. Carr, Esq. *Executive Director*

Barbara T. Sicalides, Esq. *President, Board of Trustees*

My daughter

CHER

or years Cheryl Springs had been paying her rent and had the receipts to prove it. She was shocked when she began to receive eviction notices alleging that she owed \$1,400 for rent and water bills. Ms. Springs knew she had to find a way to save her family from wrongful eviction.

"My daughter has cerebral palsy, and she can't walk or talk. Why would I not pay rent? We'd be in the street. And I have grandbabies. I can't do that to them. I have to take care of my family."

Although Ms. Springs showed all of her payment receipts to her

landlord, she continued to receive eviction notices and harassing phone calls. Ms. Springs' landlord also broke the terms of her lease by sending her water bills for the full amount, instead of the usage amount. Fearing eviction, Ms. Springs came to CLS for help.

so Ms. Springs could vacate her apartment without having to pay anything.

Community Legal Services "listened to me made me feel like I really had someone on my side. I thank them so much."

"If you know you're right, don't quit. Just hang in there. It hurt so much because my children saw me crying, and my grandbabies saw me crying, and I don't like that. But they're relying on me. I knew I had to hang in there."

Ms. Springs ultimately decided to move into another unit. Her attorney, Michael Donahue, helped negotiate a judgment by agreement Ms. Springs is about to move into her new home, and she is grateful for the help she received.



has cerebral palsy. She can't walk or talk.

Why would I not pay rent?

SERVICES : 03



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*\$300 per attorney *\$500 per attorney



2011-2012 AWARDS

CLS AWARDS

Louis S. Rulli

Champion of Justice Award Practice Professor of Law and Clinical Director University of Pennsylvania Law School June 2012

Deborah Holden

Equal Justice Award Technical Assistant Family Advocacy Unit Community Legal Services June 2012

Daniel N. Reisman

Equal Justice Award Eckert Seamans Cherin & Mellott, LLC June 2012



JULY 2011-JUNE 2012

Sharon Dietrich ACLU Pioneer Award Presented by the American Civil Liberties Union January 2012

The Employment Unit

Human Rights Award to a Nonprofit Organization Presented by the Philadelphia Commission of Human Relations October 2011

George D. Gould

David Bryson Award Presented by the National Housing Law Project October 2011

Maripat Pileggi

The Emily Liftig Saslow Public Interest Fund Award Presented by the University of Pennsylvania Law School Public Interest Committee Fall 2011

Jennifer Schultz

2012 Unsung Heroes Presented by the Legal Intelligencer February 2012

Thu B. Tran Philadelphia Bar

Foundation Award Presented by the Philadelphia Bar Foundation November 2011

Senior Attorney

Sabbatical Award Presented by the Independence Foundation June 2012

Rebecca Vallas

30 Under 30: Law and Policy Presented by Forbes December 2011

Pam Walz

2012 PLAN Excellence Award Presented by the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network March 2012

John Whitelaw

2012 Unsung Heroes Presented by the Legal Intelligencer February 2012

Suzanne Young

Top Women Lawyers in NE Presented by Amtrak Arrive Magazine August 2011

"I was staying at home and being treated PTSD and some flash backs that I had

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Vietnam veteran Huan Ho relied on Pennsylvania's General Assistance (GA) program to fulfill his and his wife's most basic needs—groceries, rent, and a few SEPTA tokens—because Mr. Ho was unable to work.

hen the GA program was cut, Mr. Ho was devastated. His budget was already tight and his son often had to help him make ends meet.

"I was staying at home and being treated for PTSD and some flash backs that I had during the war."

Although, Mr. Ho's disabilities should have qualified him for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, he was initially rejected for SSI and had to rely instead on GA for \$205 monthly as his only income. After Mr. Ho turned to CLS for help, his attorney, Rebecca Vallas, represented him at a hearing and won his case. Mr. Ho felt anxious about having to appear in front of a judge.

"Rebecca was very kind and gentle to me...I am very grateful for all her help. She was very professional and work[ed] very hard to help on my case..."

While researching the case, Ms. Vallas learned that Mr. Ho had not told the Social Security Administration about his PTSD. She helped him to get records documenting his PTSD and depression. The SSI benefits that Mr. Ho now receives allow him to better support his family and meet monthly expenses like rent, bills, and transportation.

"Now, we can pay for our needs and feel good about it."



Attorney Rebecca Vallas

for during the war."

Rose Candelario

ROSE CANDELARIO AND HER HUSBAND, RALEIGH BLYTHE, WERE SHOCKED TO FIND THEIR HOUSE ON A LIST OF FORECLOSURES— PARTICULARLY SINCE THEY HAD BEEN MAKING REGULAR MORTGAGE PAYMENTS. THEY FOUND OUT THAT THEY HAD BEEN TRICKED INTO TAKING OUT A PREDATORY LOAN, WHICH INCLUDED A \$15,000 BALLOON PAYMENT THAT THE BANK DID NOT

\$15,000





"We didn't know anything about predatory loans. I didn't even know what a balloon loan was and how it worked. I thought in 15 years, the loan was supposed to be paid in full. We didn't know there was going to be a balance." he threat of losing their home was made more stressful because Mrs. Candelario was recovering from a stroke and couldn't work. Having known people who were helped by CLS in the past, Mrs. Candelario turned to CLS for help. Monty Wilson, her attorney, immediately recognized that the bank violated the Federal Truth in Lending Act, which requires lenders to practice full disclosure.

Although the case took two years to settle, Mr. Wilson remained dedicated and diligent, and eventually won Mrs. Candelario and Mr. Blythe damages in the original amount of the loan. Throughout the process, Mr. Wilson reassured Mrs. Candelario that they had a good case, even though the bank fought hard to foreclose on them.

"Monty told us not to be afraid because he felt the loan we had wasn't right. We didn't know exactly what the outcome would be, but he was very reassuring."

Mr. Wilson also helped Mrs. Candelario to become more informed about the situation, answering all of her questions and helping her understand the process. In the end, the Mrs. Candelario and Mr. Blythe were able to keep their home.

"It was a huge relief. I thought, 'Gosh, we don't have to lose our home. It's OUR home now. Nobody can take it away from us.'"



"Access to justice

was paramount in the design of the new space. We were careful to create a space that ensures that clients can safely navigate the building, meet privately with CLS staff, and know that they will be well-represented, and their issues respected." –Catherine C. Carr



FAST FACTS

Location: 1410 Erie Avenue Size of building: 18,500 s.f. Cost: \$8.5 million

Funding sources:

- 52% from city and state grants
- 22% New Markets Tax Credit
- 26% from foundations, businesses, and individuals

Special features of the NPLC:

- Fully ADA-accessible
- Green roof vegetation reduces both stormwater runoff and heating/cooling costs
- All offices have windows
- Conference rooms have floor-to-ceiling windows
- Secure bike rack and showers for commuters
- Goal of LEED Gold Certification

BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS,

the North Philadelphia Law Center (NPLC) will have grown from an empty lot to a beautiful, modern office building. This winter, 38 staff members, including 16 attorneys, will occupy this serene, light-filled space, thoughtfully designed to be an ideal setting for our work. Over 5,300 clients came through our doors on North Broad Street last year, and we are excited about serving them in our new home. The NPLC is a concrete expression of CLS' investment in the neighborhood we serve.

Access to justice was paramount in the design of the new space. We were

careful to create a space that ensures that clients can safely navigate the building, meet privately with CLS staff, and know that they will be well-represented, and their issues respected. The NPLC is fully ADAaccessible, has many environmentally sensitive features including a green roof, and encompasses amenities that support our staff in the variety of work they do, from strong representation of clients and issues to community outreach and education.

To generate the necessary funds for the new building, CLS held its first capital campaign, "Stand Up for Justice," chaired by Board

members Edward F. Chacker and Joseph A. Tate. At this writing, public and private sources have given 90% of goal and gifts are still coming. It is inspiring to witness the generosity of donors who believe in the vision to maintain a neighborhood law office in North Philadelphia. Over 80% of CLS' staff and 100% of CLS' Board of Directors supported the project, demonstrating how strongly the spirit of the North Philadelphia Law Center resonates with people who are connected with CLS every day. Leadership gifts came from the legal and business communities, as well as significant support from the Commonwealth and City.

LEGAL UNITS





specializing in particular areas of

CIVIL POVERTY LAW.





Aging and Disabilities Unit

specializes in representing seniors and people with disabilities in a wide range of public benefits and consumer matters, including challenges to denials of

Medicaid, Medicare, or disability benefits, decisions by managed care organizations to deny care, and violations of residents' rights and quality-of-care requirements in nursing homes and personal care homes.



Homeownership/Consumer Unit

represents homeowners in disputes, residential mortgage foreclosures, fraudulent consumer practices, and issues with banking or check-cashing agencies. The unit

uses advocacy and litigation to address the predatory lending crisis, abusive mortgage practices, and other fringe banking issues.



Employment Unit

represents clients with employmentrelated problems, including claims on fair wages, family and medical leave, discrimination, and barriers to em-

ployment. The unit advocates at the national and state levels on low-income workers' rights issues such as maintaining the protections of the unemployment compensation system.



Energy Unit

works to keep the utilities on for families by protecting the rights of lowincome utility customers on service and payment issues, representing

group clients on utility rate change cases and serving as the Public Advocate in representing all Philadelphia Gas Works residential customers.



Family Advocacy Unit

advocates for parents to keep their children at home or have them returned from foster care to a safe home, and provides assistance and

training to other family advocates. The unit monitors and advocates for improvements in dependency court and foster care.



Housing Unit

represents private, public, and subsidized housing tenants in matters involving eviction, illegal lockouts, and substandard housing. The unit

also uses systems advocacy and litigation to address issues ranging from lead paint elimination, to federal housing policy changes, to tenant eviction laws.



Language Access Project

works to ensure that Community Legal Services is accessible to Philadelphia communities with limited or no English speaking ability,

and that legal issues specific to this population are addressed. Advocates enforce laws which require that interpretation and services be provided where necessary for these communities to access public services and the court system.



Public Benefits Unit

represents clients facing the denial or termination of health care benefits or public assistance. The unit provides education and outreach services, and

advocates on welfare, disability, and healthcare issues. The unit includes the Advocating on Behalf of Children Project, which helps disabled children access disability benefits and medical care. **IN 1966,** The Philadelphia Bar Association established CLS as an independent 501(c)(3) organization to provide free legal services, in civil matters, to low-income Philadelphians.



Since its founding in 1966, CLS has served more than one million clients who could not afford to pay for legal representation and who would have faced a variety of devastating ends without dedicated, knowledgeable attorneys on their side.

"I'm trying to begin a new chapter of my life.

I'm trying to stay on the right side of the law, do positive things, and work to take care of my family."

Capreece Lackey is striving

for a career where she can help people and provide for her family in a meaningful way. Clean and sober for 13 years, Ms. Lackey is pursuing her goal of becoming a Certified Nurse's Assistant.

Ms. Lackey needed help to expunge her criminal record so that she could work and become self-sufficient. Four minor offenses, all more than a decade old, were holding her back from obtaining reliable employment.

"[When applying for jobs] Some employers automatically turned me away. They looked at me like I committed the crime right then and there... It really hurt me and affected my family."

Other times, Ms. Lackey would gain employment, only to have her job terminated once employers found out about her past mistakes.

Willing and able to work, Ms. Lackey turned to CLS for help. CLS attorney Sharon Dietrich helped Ms. Lackey apply for an expungement of her record. Ms. Dietrich believed that Ms. Lackey had a strong case, and aided her without judgment. With CLS fighting for her, Ms. Lackey gained the strength to fight for herself.

A pardon for Ms. Lackey is expected in the next few months, and although she is currently working to pay her bills, a pardon will give her even better job opportunities and allow her to achieve her career goals in a more significant way. Working with CLS inspired Ms. Lackey to become an advocate for others in her situation, and to live her life with newfound optimism.

"I'm really looking forward to better times, a better situation, and better opportunities, while still remaining humble and thankful."

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Revenue

Grants & Contracts	\$7,045,654
Charitable Contributions	\$2,308,768
Change in Net Assets	\$707,478
Attorney Fees	\$233,607
Interest Income	\$37,879
Other Revenue	\$7,240
TOTAL REVENUE	\$10,340,626

Expenses

Salaries	\$6,415,725
Employee Benefits	\$2,034,100
Space Costs	\$715,387
Consultants & Contractors	\$399,637
Equipment-Related	\$82,299
Supplies	\$40,872
Travel	\$38,986
Other Costs	\$498,093
Total Expenses Before Depreciation	\$10,225,099
Depreciation & Amortization	\$67,086
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$10,292,185

NET REVENUE OVER EXPENSES:\$48,441

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