

# Letter from the President & Executive Director

Dear Friend of Legal Aid:

The Washington Post recently reported that Washington, D.C. is third in the Nation in terms of average wages, with an average wage of \$98,246, with nearby Arlington County coming in second. These statistics, particularly presented as averages, can obscure the realities of the rather dramatic dichotomy within our City. Consider the very different story East of the Anacostia River. More than one in three residents East of the River are living in poverty. And when we say poverty, we mean it: a single mother making \$15,000 a year is not considered poor by the federal government. Moreover, half of those living in poverty are actually in deep poverty, meaning they are surviving on up to half the poverty line. That means that a single mother is trying to support her family on less than \$625 a month.

By providing high-quality, zealous representation to persons living in poverty in the District, Legal Aid is sending the message that persons living in poverty are just as deserving of high-level legal representation as persons of means. We are also – in real, palpable, and often life-changing ways – making justice real for these families.

How do we make justice real for these clients? In this report, you will get to know five clients with whom we have worked this past year. By understanding their struggles, their partnership for justice with Legal Aid, and the life-changing impact of our representation, we hope you will better understand Legal Aid and the importance of our work.

These stories are just examples of the cases our lawyers take in family, public benefits, housing, and consumer law – helping to solve problems and provide justice with respect to some of the most fundamental issues in our clients' lives. As you will read, we also endeavor to change the systems affecting our client communities, knowing that sometimes an appellate ruling in just one case or a rule, regulatory, or legislative change can help hundreds, if not thousands, of our clients in real and meaningful ways.

We cannot do this without your support. Most of our budget comes from private donations. Your support of Legal Aid is indispensible to our ability to continue to meet the need.

Thank you.

Deborah B. Baum President, Board of Trustees Pillsbury Winthrop

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Eric S. Angel
Executive Director
Legal Aid Society of
the District of Columbia

# **Making Justice Real**

Making Justice Real is more than just a slogan and the name of our blog: "*MakingJusticeReal.org.*" It is what our lawyers do day in and day out for some of the most economically-disadvantaged residents of the District of Columbia.

When a Legal Aid lawyer saves a home from foreclosure or a family from eviction, we know that, with your support, we have made justice real for that family. When a grandmother in Anacostia receives eyesight-saving surgery due to our legal intervention, we know that justice has been made real for that client. When a survivor of domestic violence has the courage to partner with her Legal Aid lawyer in standing up to her abuser to obtain a protection order and critically-needed child support, justice has been made real for that woman.

Every year, Legal Aid lawyers provide legal representation and assistance to – and advocate on behalf of – thousands of individuals and families living in poverty in D.C. With your help, we make the justice system work for those that need it the most.



# Wilma Jones

"I knew I was right, but I also knew I needed to have someone on my side in order to be heard. My attorneys helped me advocate for myself. Every time I talked to them I felt more relaxed. I thank God I didn't give up – and that I called Legal Aid."

# Responding to Meet the Need

What has been a scary time for lawyers in Northwest has been a downright terrifying time to be a home health care worker or an unemployed construction worker in Southeast. As a result of the economic downturn, nearly 10% of D.C. residents are unemployed – and the figures are nearly twice that in Wards 7 and 8. People living in poverty encounter the legal system at every turn, and often where the stakes are very high.

Now more than ever, our clients are likely to need assistance with public benefits matters such as securing food stamps and accessing health care; to need representation on housing matters to avoid eviction and ensure the repair of housing code violations; or to need a lawyer to escape domestic violence and secure child custody and support. It is also no surprise that people already struggling to make ends meet are now having a harder time protecting their homes from foreclosure or their wages from abusive debt-collection practices. With the multitude of challenges facing low-income District residents, it remains as vital as it has ever been that legal services are available to address these needs.

# **New Projects**

Although Legal Aid is entering its 80<sup>th</sup> year, we have proven ourselves to be nimble in responding to the needs of our client community.

Foreclosure, unemployment, the needs of our veterans returning home – we have new projects in each of these areas, which have been among the most important for our client community this past year.

**Foreclosure Prevention**: Legal Aid's **Consumer Law Unit** worked with the D.C. Council to enact legislation giving homeowners the right to elect mediation prior to foreclosure. We mounted a bus ad campaign – with the slogan, "**MEDIATION: CHOOSE IT OR LOSE IT!**" – and have created a pro bono initiative for same-day representation of home owners in the mediation process.

**Unemployment**: With the generous support of **Arnold & Porter LLP** and **Equal Justice Works**, Legal Aid has established a project which will, both through advocacy with the D.C. government and full representation in administrative appeals, represent low-wage workers who are wrongfully denied unemployment insurance.

Helping Our Nation's Veterans: Legal Aid has taken a leadership role in the very first SAILS Project (Senior Attorney Initiative for Legal Services Project). Our Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps Legal Fellow is leading an effort, in partnership with Arent Fox LLP, to ensure that our returning veterans receive the safety net benefits they so desperately need.

# Going to Where the Clients Are

Legal Aid's 35 attorneys on staff are primarily housed at our Northwest office in Metro Center. However, we are deeply committed to reducing the barriers to our services. We work out of three offices East of the River: we help survivors of domestic violence at the **Domestic Violence Intake Center at United Medical Center**; we have a Medical-Legal Partnership with the Children's National Medical Center in the **Town Hall Education Arts Recreation Campus (THEARC)**; and have a general civil legal services office at the **Big Chair building** in Historic Anacostia.

# **Housing Law**

Legal Aid's Housing Law Unit is the largest practice unit at Legal Aid, and housing cases continue to make up about half of Legal Aid's cases. These cases can be life-changing. By keeping a family in its home, we ensure that children can continue to attend their local public school. By getting locks put on doors or by removing flea or bed bug infestation, we can ensure that families can sleep safely and securely in their homes.

This past year, Legal Aid established a significant presence at the **Court's Affirmative Conditions Docket** – a new calendar created after many years of sustained advocacy by Legal Aid and others. The docket provides a simpler way for tenants to bring problems with their housing to the attention of the Court. We have brought affirmative cases to address problems such as lack of heat, lack of hot water, insect and vermin infestation, mold, insecure windows and doors, and rotting floors.

In addition, with the generous support of the **D.C. Bar Foundation's Access to Justice Funding**, we continued our **court-based legal services program** at the **Landlord and Tenant Branch**, providing same-day representation to help tenants avoid eviction.

# **Facing Foreclosure**

The foreclosure crisis has hit the District hard. Some of our clients are homeowners facing foreclosure; many others are renters whose buildings have now been foreclosed upon by a bank. Oftentimes the banks do not comply with their obligations as owners of rental housing and fail to keep their apartments up to code, forcing our clients into untenable situations.



# **Ethethal Baker**

Ms. Baker was sued by a bank, even though her apartment had no hot water, air conditioning, heat, or trash collection. There was no working shower, oven, smoke detector, or mailbox. Legal Aid housing law attorney David Steib prepared for a jury trial, ready to present the appalling conditions that Ms. Baker had been forced to endure. The bank wisely chose to settle, agreeing to waive a significant amount of back rent and to bring Ms. Baker's home up to code. Ms. Baker is now once again happy in her home of more than 13 years – thanks to the help of Legal Aid.

# Family Law Unit Spotlight



Pictured from left to right are Staff Attorney (and former Yale Law School Liman Fellow) **Tianna Terry**, Senior Staff Attorney **Julia Lee**, and Supervising Attorneys **Stephanie Troyer** and **Trisha Monroe**.

Family law was one of Legal Aid's earliest practice areas, so Legal Aid lawyers have been helping low-income D.C. residents with family law issues for almost 80 years.

Trisha Monroe and Julia Lee lead Legal Aid's domestic violence effort, representing survivors of domestic violence out of the Domestic Violence Intake Center (DVIC) located at United Medical Center (formerly Greater Southeast Hospital). Half of the domestic violence cases in the city are filed by women living in Wards 7 and 8, the neighborhoods with the highest concentration of poverty. The DVIC provides true one-stop services for such clients: high quality legal representation combined with a wide array of social services and government support.

Stephanie Troyer and Tianna Terry lead Legal Aid's newest courthouse project – an innovative court-based legal services program at the Paternity and Support Branch. To facilitate the project, Chief Judge Lee Satterfield issued Administrative Order 11-07, allowing for temporary appearances in the child support court. The project, funded through the D.C. Bar Foundation's Access to Justice Funding, is modeled after a similar collaboration in the Landlord and Tenant Branch. The ultimate goal of the project is to improve the child support system and thereby improve the well-being of children within the District.



# **Taria Humphries**

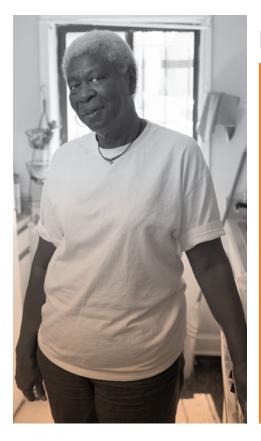
It can take extraordinary courage for survivors of domestic violence to stand up to their abusers. Taria Humphries had put up with more than a decade of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. But when her batterer laid hands on her son, she decided enough was enough.

Before Ms. Humphries came to Legal Aid for assistance, she had already been in and out of court numerous times by herself seeking protection from her abuser. Unfortunately, the abuser used the court to further his abuse against Ms. Humphries. He forced her to stay awake immediately prior to court dates, threatened to do further harm if she took court action, made false accusations against her, and repeatedly used physical and sexual abuse to humiliate her and assert his authority. All this led to the abuser getting custody of the children.

After Legal Aid stepped in, Ms. Humphries was able to present the true story to the Court. In the end, Ms. Humphries received the order of protection she needed and regained full custody of her children with no visitation for the abuser.

# **Access to Health Care and Critical Safety Net Benefits**

In this time of economic crisis, it is as important as it has ever been to help families maintain access to the safety net benefits to which they are entitled under law. Legal Aid's **Public Benefits Unit** places a special emphasis on access to health care benefits. Each December, Legal Aid organizes a clinic in which teams of lawyers and volunteers go into the community to help low-income beneficiaries navigate the Medicare Part D drug benefit program.



# Martha Tucker-Ashe

Ms. Tucker-Ashe, a 73-year-old resident of Anacostia, came to Legal Aid for a Part D check up. Her attorney concluded that, although her Part D plan was a good one for her, she was being doublebilled premiums that she should not have been charged in the first place. After Legal Aid's intervention, the charges came to a halt. And she was reimbursed more than \$600 which had been erroneously deducted from her social security, her sole source of income. This reimbursement represented more than 5% of her annual income for the year, money she now uses to buy food and other necessities. Legal Aid also enrolled her in a free program to provide transportation to her medical appointments – yet another way that Ms. Tucker-Ashe's life has been improved because she came to Legal Aid.

# Barbara McDowell Appellate Advocacy Project

Legal Aid has a nationally-recognized appellate advocacy program, named in memory of its founding director, esteemed appellate advocate Barbara McDowell.

This year, Legal Aid was delighted to welcome former D.C. Bar President and Hogan Lovells partner Jack Keeney as the Director of the Project. This innovative program is dedicated to pursuing an affirmative poverty law reform agenda before the D.C. Court of Appeals, with the goal of influencing the decisional law in a manner that will protect the rights of low-income individuals. This past year, in addition to our active practice at D.C.'s highest court, with the extraordinary assistance of Sidley Austin LLP, we filed an amicus brief before the Supreme Court of the United States in *Turner v. Rogers*, a pivotal case about the right to counsel in child support contempt cases.

# **Systemic Change**

The bulk of Legal Aid's work is individual representation – making justice real one case at a time for our client community. But we also work on a wide range of systemic efforts to bring about change.

When Legal Aid lawyers realized that the Food Stamps Expansion Act of 2009 was not being implemented in a timely fashion, we brought an administrative action seeking class-type relief. In conjunction with the law firm of **Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP**, as part of the firm's **Barbara McDowell Pro Bono Initiative**, the case ultimately resulted in a settlement that has benefitted the District's most vulnerable residents. To date, the District has already recalculated nearly 240,000 individual adjustments for thousands of food stamp recipients, issuing more than \$5.4 million in additional benefits. When a family sits down at supper – eating food purchased by the food stamps obtained through the settlement – we know that we have made justice real for that family.

Legal Aid has also taken a leadership role at the **Access to Justice Commission** and in efforts at court reform. This past year, after many years of advocacy, the Superior Court reformed its *in forma pauperis* (fee waiver) process and eliminated the notary requirement – reforms which may seem dry and technical, but which should improve access to justice for hundreds, if not thousands, of litigants a year.



# **Digna Rodriguez**

"When we found out that Legal Aid was going to represent us, I felt that somebody was helping us, supporting us. Without Legal Aid, I think maybe we would have lost. The Court was very strict.

Now we are living in a clean home – well painted and all repaired. I now know that I can go to court and that my problems have solutions. Now I am aware of the rights that I have."

# **Pro Bono Spotlight**

The District has one of the most robust pro bono cultures in the Nation. Legal Aid is strongly committed to integrating pro bono into our practice model. The partnership is invaluable to our client community.

This past year, area law firms took on more than 75 matters referred by Legal Aid, helping clients in all of our issue areas. In 2008, **Hogan Lovells partner Phil Larson** met a client while he was at Legal Aid conducting intake with members of our client community. Phil was so troubled by what he heard from the prospective client, he told Legal Aid he would like to take the case back to the firm if Legal Aid did not handle it directly. Hogan Lovells did take the case on with a team that ultimately also included associates **Magdalena Grossman**, **Eliza Andonova**, **Michael Brennan**, **Charles Dickinson**, and **Tracy Pearl**. Three years and numerous depositions, briefs, and court hearings later, the court ruled in the client's favor on all claims. The matter is on appeal.



# **Phil Larson**

"Working with Legal Aid and our client has been a rewarding experience for me and for the rest of the team here at the firm. We've taken tremendous satisfaction from helping ensure that justice is done and from the friendships we've developed with both our client and the committed Legal Aid lawyers with whom we've worked. This is a perfect example of the tremendous role Legal Aid can play as a coordinator of outside legal services in addition to its own direct involvement on behalf of clients."

# Financial Statement 1/1/2010 - 12/31/2010

#### Revenue

Grants and Contributions	\$2,331,419
Contributed Services	\$8,825,499
Special Events	\$745,850
Investment Income	\$56,273
Miscellaneous Income	\$180
Total Revenue	\$11,959,221
Contributions to Endowments	\$34,237
Total Revenue Less Endowment Gifts and Contributed Services	\$3,099,485

# **Expenses**

Program Services	\$11,249,732
Management and General	\$226,811
Fundraising	\$432,581
Total Expenses	\$11,954,124
Total Expenses Less Contributed Services	\$3,128,625

Copies of our audited financial statements are available upon request by contacting the Development Department at 202-661-5964.

# **Annual Servant Of Justice Awards Dinner**

Legal Aid held its 22<sup>nd</sup> annual awards dinner on April 28, 2011. **Brooksley Born**, of **Arnold & Porter LLP**, and **Thomas E. Perez**, the **Assistant Attorney General** for the **Civil Rights Division** of the **United States Department of Justice**, were this year's recipients of the **Servant of Justice Awards**. Both were recognized for their extraordinary contributions to the cause of equal justice.

The Partnership Award was presented to the D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute, D.C.'s premier policy shop on budgetary issues affecting the working poor and persons living in poverty.

Aryeh Portnoy, of Crowell & Moring LLP, received this year's Klepper Prize for Volunteer Excellence, given annually to a volunteer who has shown extraordinary commitment to Legal Aid's mission and has provided substantial support to Legal Aid or to our clients.

Legal Aid is grateful to the legal and corporate communities, as well as to the **Dinner Steering Committee**, Co-Chaired by **Philip Horton**, of **Arnold & Porter LLP**, **Dionne Lomax**, of **Vinson & Elkins LLP**, and **Kurt Richter**, of **Cassidy Turley**, for their leadership in helping Legal Aid to raise more than \$730,000.

# **Generous Associates Campaign**

Board President Deborah Baum describes the Generous Associates Campaign as "grassroots fundraising at its best." The 2011 Campaign was record-breaking for Legal Aid. More than 120 law firm associates at 64 firms act as law firm coordinators, leading the effort which raised \$795,000 on behalf of Legal Aid - substantially exceeding the goal of "711 in 2011" (\$711,000 in 2011).

Each year, firms compete to earn a top five placement in their size category. The results, in order of amount raised, are as follows:

# 251+ Attorneys

Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP Latham & Watkins LLP Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP Hogan Lovells US LLP Arnold & Porter LLP

## 201-250 Attornevs

Williams & Connolly LLP Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP Arent Fox LLP Jones Day

# 151-200 Attorneys

Maver Brown LLP McKenna Long & Aldridge LLP McDermott Will & Emery LLP K&L Gates LLP O'Melveny & Myers LLP

# 101-150 Attorneys

Baker Botts L.L.P. Dow Lohnes PLLC King & Spalding Goodwin Procter LLP Paul, Hastings, Janofsky & Walker LLP

## 51-100 Attornevs

Miller & Chevalier Chartered Reed Smith LLP Alston & Bird LLP Epstein Becker & Green, P.C. Kelley Drye & Warren LLP

#### 1-50 ATTORNEYS

Gilbert LLP Boies. Schiller & Flexner LLP Brown Rudnick LLP Wiltshire & Grannis LLP Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton

Legal Aid would like to thank former President of the District of Columbia Bar and the American Bar Association Carolyn Lamm, of White & Case LLP, the Campaign's Honorary Chair, for her leadership.

In addition, the Campaign depends on the extraordinary leadership and dedication of its Co-Chairs:

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# Thomas G. Allen

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# **Leadership Cabinet**

# **Annual Gift Recognition Program**

The Legal Aid Society created the Leadership Cabinet in order to recognize those donors who support the organization in significant ways. We are proud to recognize members for their generosity during the period of 9/1/2010 through 8/31/2011:

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#### \$75.000 & above

The District of Columbia Bar Foundation
Office of Victim Services of the
District of Columbia

#### **GOLD PATRON**

\$50,000 - \$74,999

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\$30,000 - \$49,999

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Gilbert LLP
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Sidley Austin LLP
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United Way
Williams & Connolly LLP

#### **PATRON**

\$10.000 - \$19.999

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Legal Aid extends its gratitude to the following supporters for their generosity (gifts from 9/1/2010 - 8/31/2011):

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We will have a variety of ways to celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and we hope you will join us for them. But, from our lawyers' perspective, the very best way to honor Legal Aid's extraordinary history is for them to continue to work hard, day in and day out, to make justice real for our most underserved neighbors in the District of Columbia.



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