

Legal Aid Link

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Walk to the Hill Success!

The 10th annual Walk to the Hill drew a record number of attorneys to the State House on January 22 to lobby their legislators for level legal aid funding. **More than 750 participants** packed the Great Hall and Grand Staircase, where client speaker Lisa Damon put a human face on the critical need for legal services during these dire times. You can read more about the event on the [EJC website](#) and see the photos [here](#).



Thank you to the small army of legal aid staff who volunteered to make the event run so smoothly!

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Get to Know MLAC Staff!

Meet Anthony, our Client Council program assistant. He was acknowledged at the NLADA Conference in November as the first known legal aid staff member to serve in this capacity in the country.

What are a few things you're currently working on?

Currently I am working on a statewide training for the Client Council in April. I am also working on a report on client board participation for both the Client Council and the programs, as well as developing mentoring models for program boards.

What do you like about working in legal aid?

I like the fact that we are protecting the people that society has forgotten, and we are trying to bring awareness to the community that people need legal representation no matter what.

What is something you like to do outside of legal aid?

I volunteered for a few politicians for the last election, I love watching Boston sports, I LOVE history and have been to Concord and Lexington way too many times.



Equal Justice Coalition

[FY10 Budget Campaign Update](#)

Governor Patrick's budget recommendations for FY10 propose to cut the MLAC line item by \$700,000 or 6.3%. While not surprised, we are nevertheless disappointed by the Governor's proposal. It is now the House's turn to make their budget recommendations, and we are pressing ahead with the same message: given the already devastating impact of the IOLTA decline on legal aid funding, the state appropriation must be maintained at the FY09 level.

There is some good news in the midst of the gloom - Charles Murphy (D-Burlington) has been named Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. Rep. Murphy has been an ardent and "out-in-front" supporter of the MLAC line item for many years, and it certainly helps us to have him in this key leadership position. We expect the House budget to be out sometime in mid-March, so stay tuned.

Client Council News

[Client Council Steering Committee Meeting](#)

The next Client Council Steering Committee meeting will be at MLAC on February 26 from 5:30-7:30 pm. Contact [Anthony Morse](#) with any questions.

Diversity Coalition News

[Diversity Coalition Resources Web Page](#)

Soon there will be a restricted section of the MLAC website dedicated to the Diversity Coalition. Legal services staff will be able to access the section, which will include articles, useful links, and materials from upcoming and past diversity trainings. We will e-mail everyone the login information and other details when the Diversity Coalition section is up and running!

Also stay tuned for information about upcoming spring events.

Upcoming Events

Here are three events in the coming weeks that may be of interest to the legal aid community:

[MLASSP Foreclosure Documentary Screening - February 27](#)

[Massachusetts Legal Assistance for Self-Sufficiency Program](#) will screen a documentary highlighting the often-unheard stories of victims of the foreclosure crisis. A question and answer session will follow with a panel of housing advocates specializing in the issues of tenants facing eviction as a result of foreclosure. The event is at the John Adams Courthouse, and space is limited, so please RSVP before February 25 to thuynh@sccls.org or 508-880-6704. [Click here](#) or contact Kathleen Marx at kmarx@sccls.org for more information.

[Advocating for Prisoner Health Care: Healthier Prisons for Healthier, Safer Communities - March 11](#)

Prisoners' Legal Services (formerly Massachusetts Correctional Legal Services) is co-sponsoring a panel discussion on the public health and safety impact of prisoner health care. The event will be at the John Adams Courthouse from 5-7 pm, with a reception to follow. Contact [Brad Brockmann](#) for more information, and be on the look-out for an invitation.

[ShamROCK for Justice - March 13](#)

Neighborhood Legal Services, Merrimack Valley-North Shore Legal Services, and Children's Law

Center are hosting an Irish-themed fundraiser from 7-11 pm on Friday, March 13, at the Lawrence British Club. The event will be an evening of live music, dancing and good food. Tickets are \$30 or 2 for \$50, and attendees can RSVP to Corine Reardon at creardon@nlsma.org or (781) 244-1420. [Click here](#) for the flier. Pass this along to family and friends!

The Buzz

[Center for Law and Education \(CLE\)](#)

[CLE](#) received a \$50,000 grant from the Boston Foundation to engage families and communities in improving schools in ways that focus on high quality education using methods known to boost the achievement of all students. Two students from the Harvard Graduate School of Education will assist CLE in this effort.

CLE co-director **Paul Weckstein** and staff attorney **Joanne Karger** participated in a program on the role of attorneys and the ABA in promoting public school reform for "at risk" youth convened by the ABA's Commission on At Risk Youth, which met in Boston on February 13. Paul is also a member of the Commission.

[Disability Law Center \(DLC\)](#)

[DLC](#) will host a Special Education Conference in Holyoke on Saturday, February 28, 2009, as part of its Massachusetts Bar Foundation Special Education Outreach Project Grant #2211. In the morning, DLC will provide a presentation on discipline. It will also offer a clinic in the afternoon, which will be an opportunity for parents of students with disabilities to meet with DLC and Children's Law Center attorneys for 30 minute sessions. DLC has partnered with the Massachusetts Justice Project, the Children's Law Center and Western Massachusetts Legal Services to organize the conference. Additional details can be found on the DLC website at www.dlc-ma.org.

[Greater Boston Legal Services \(GBLS\)](#)

Ann Jochnick, along with **Dick Bauer** and **James "Mac" McCreight**, won an important case in the Supreme Judicial Court, BHA v. Bridgewater. The case establishes important rights for tenants with disabilities and will likely have a national impact because it interprets federal regulations. Ann argued the case, and Dick and Mac were on the brief. The SJC unanimously ruled in the [GBLS](#) client's favor.

City Life/Vida Urbana honored GBLS in December at its 35th Anniversary Celebration for GBLS' work supporting tenant organizing during the foreclosure crisis.

Congratulations to attorney **Wynn Gerhard**, who was inducted into the National Elder Advocacy Rights Advocacy Hall of Fame. She was the only person to be inducted this year. The recognition is given to those who have advanced the rights of our nation's over-60 population.

Nadine Cohen, **Nancy Kelly**, **Pauline Quirion** and **John Willshire-Carrera** were all selected as New England Super Lawyers 2008 by *Law & Politics* and the publishers of *Boston Magazine*. **Manisha Bhatt** was selected as a New England Rising Star 2008 by the same publications.

[Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts \(LACCM\)](#)

[LACCM](#) recently filed a housing discrimination lawsuit on behalf of six clients against a large realty agency located in Worcester County. The lawsuit alleges that the realty company, which operates under the names Guardian Select Realty and WeRentCentralMass.com, engaged in unlawful housing practices by discriminating against renters on the basis of familial status. The

plaintiffs, who are all parents of minor children, claim that the company "steered" them away from apartments, or refused to show certain apartments to them, because those apartments may have contained lead.

Nina Sá, the MLAC Bart Gordon Fellow working at LACCM, was recently featured in [an article in the Milford Daily News](#). The article outlined the outreach and advocacy services that Nina has been providing to low-income residents of south Worcester County, including humanitarian immigration work.

Massachusetts Advocates for Children (MAC)

Susan Cole and **Michael Gregory** of the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI) have been named as [2009 Bellow Scholars](#) by the American Association of Law Schools (AALS). TLPI is a partnership between MAC and the WilmerHale Legal Services Center of Harvard Law School.

Cole and Gregory received the prestigious award in recognition of their work to ensure that children traumatized by exposure to violence succeed in school. They and their clinical students at TLPI are engaged in effectuating and studying systemic change in the education system on behalf of traumatized children. Specifically, their Bellow Scholar project, "Evaluating Advocacy in Trauma-Sensitive Schools," will assess the effectiveness of TLPI's various advocacy strategies in supporting the creation of trauma-sensitive schools in Massachusetts.

TLPI's report and policy agenda, [Helping Traumatized Children Learn](#), can be found at the MAC website, www.massadvocates.org.

Johanne Pino, project coordinator at MAC, will receive a Distinguished Citizen Award from [the ARC of Massachusetts](#) on April 6 at the State House for her outstanding dedication to expanding educational opportunities for children with disabilities.

Merrimack Valley - North Shore Legal Services (MVLS)

MVLS welcomes **Ulea Lago** as a staff attorney with its Family Law Unit. Ulea comes to MVLS from Vanderbilt University Law School; she also holds a Masters of Divinity from Vanderbilt. Ulea was the former Director of the Truth and Reconciliation Project of Nashville. She was also the Peggy Browning Fellow with Community Legal Services of Philadelphia, interned with Southern Migrant Legal Services of Nashville, and was a long-time organizer around issues of domestic violence.

Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS)

NLS was recently one of nine programs in the country selected to receive a grant from the Institute for Foreclosure Legal Assistance (ILFA). According to [the ILFA press release](#), the grants, which last for three years, were distributed to legal aid offices in communities "especially hard hit by the ongoing wave of foreclosures." NLS foreclosure defense attorney **Rob Perkins** contributed substantially to the writing of the grant proposal. Supervising attorney **Michael Raabe** will be working with Rob to expand the NLS Foreclosure Defense Project with the new funding.

MLAC News

Eighth Annual Constituent Services Briefing

MLAC held its 8th annual **Legal Aid Constituent Services Briefing** on February 12. The event is an opportunity for legislative staff to meet representatives from their local legal aid offices. **Lonnie Powers** kicked-off the speaking program with Lauren Sacco Plausky, constituent services director for the Office of Senator Jehlen. Five legal aid advocates then gave advice on legal areas: **Henriette Perkins**, Domestic Violence/Family Law (NLS); **Monica Halas**, Unemployment

(GBLS); **Leticia Medina-Richman**, Housing (LACCM); **Fran Bakstran**, Commonwealth Cares (MWLS); and **Ali Bers**, Income Maintenance (WMLS). Thank you to everyone who helped make this event possible!

FY08 MLAC Fact Book Now Available

The first-ever MLAC Fact Book is available ([download here](#)). The Fact Book summarizes much of the data compiled from FY08 MLAC-grantee annual reports.

Communications and Fundraising News

Get that Grant Workshop Date

Part Two of the "Get that Grant Workshop," which will cover grantwriting, is currently being rescheduled for March. Stay tuned for details.

Important Dates

February 26 - MLAC board meeting (NCLC/7 Winthrop Square, 4th Floor)

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March 27 - *MLAC FUNDING APPLICATION DEADLINE*

Staff Directory Reminder

Need to look up contact information for legal services staff and programs? Don't forget that you can use the online directory at www.masslegalservices.org, which contains the most up-to-date contact information for Massachusetts Legal Services staff. You first need to log-in to the site (located on the upper right of the page), and then the searchable Staff Directory will be located on the right. Alternatively, once you are logged-in, you can click on "[Directory](#)" at the top of the page to see a list of programs and their staff lists. Please note that staff contact information is only visible to Massachusetts Legal Services staff and cannot be accessed by the public.

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