

# Legal Aid Link

Volume 5, Issue 1

## In this issue...

[MLAC News](#)

[Program Buzz](#)

[Media Highlights](#)

[Tech Tips](#)

[People Pages](#)

[Important Dates](#)

## MLAC News

### Equal Justice Coalition

#### Update on Walk to the Hill 2011

Walk to the Hill will be held at the State House on Tuesday, February 2, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. We're excited to report that **Chief Justice Roderick Ireland** will be the featured speaker. He'll kick off the speaking program at 11:30 a.m.

Last year, more than 700 attorneys participated in the Walk, and this visibility played a critical role in securing level funding for the MLAC line item in FY11. We're expecting another strong turnout this year, due to the prolonged legal aid funding crisis.

As always, we need staff **volunteers** to help with registration and directing participants. If you are interested, please email Danielle Hines at [dhines@mlac.org](mailto:dhines@mlac.org).

#### State Budget Request

Once again we will be requesting level funding of \$9.5 million for MLAC's line item (0321-1600) in FY12.

#### Legislative Committee

The next meeting of the Legislative Committee will be held at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, February 8, at Davis, Malm & D'Agostine (One Boston Place).

#### Follow the Legislative Campaign Online

Find us on Facebook 

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### New Legislators' Reception

On the evening of January 11, MLAC, along with the Massachusetts Bar Association and Boston

Bar Association, held a reception for new legislators at the Adams Courthouse. Legislators and staff from 12 offices attended the event to learn more about the statewide civil legal aid system and the types of services legal aid programs offer communities. Check out the [photo album](#) on the MBA web site.

## Constituent Services Briefing

Save the Date: The 2011 Legal Aid Constituent Services Briefing will be held at the State House on Tuesday, March 1, from 10 a.m. to noon. More details coming shortly.

## Client News

### *The Unbeatable Advocate*

The Winter 2010 issue of the client board member newsletter, [The Unbeatable Advocate](#), is available on the [MLAC web site](#). The next issue is scheduled for Spring 2011. Send your stories to David Pearson at [dpearson@shawmuteducation.org](mailto:dpearson@shawmuteducation.org).

## Diversity Coalition

### Medical Legal Partnership Pro Bono Presentation

Joyce Allen-Beckford, director of the Diversity Coalition, will participate in a panel presentation on February 3 for new pro bono attorneys who will be working with MLP on immigration issues. Joyce will discuss the importance of cultural awareness and sensitivity when providing legal advice and representation to the immigrant community.

## Strategic Planning

Three Strategic Planning Task Forces have been formed: Planning-Delivery Systems, Leadership Transitions, Communications. Task force members include MLAC board members, MLAC staff, program directors and client representatives. Each task force will meet four to six times between now and the end of March and then deliver recommendations to the the Planning Committee established by the MLAC Board.

## Retention Task Force

The next meeting of the Retention Task Force will be held January 31. Five work groups have been established to study several issues more in depth. They include: Best Practices (local, statewide, national), Contracts, Culture of Inclusion, Data Collection, and Statement of Principles.

For more information on the Retention Task Force, please contact Joyce Allen-Beckford, director of the Diversity Coalition, at [jallen-beckford@mlac.org](mailto:jallen-beckford@mlac.org).

## Program Buzz

### Community Legal Services and Counseling Center

In December, CLSACC launched its redesigned web site: <http://www.clsacc.org/>

### Disability Law Center

DLC, GBLS, Children's Law Center of Massachusetts, [Federation for Children with Special Needs](#) and the [Asian American Civic Association](#) are hosting a Special Education Transition conference on Saturday, February 12, in Boston's Chinatown neighborhood. Please visit the DLC website for more information, <http://www.dlc-ma.org>

## **Greater Boston Legal Services**

**Nadine Cohen**, Consumer Rights Unit Managing Attorney, **Barbara Zimbel**, Housing Law Unit attorney, and **Eleanor Newhoff**, Immigration Law Unit volunteer attorney, and GBLS Board member **Regie Healy** were all honored December 3 as Top Women of the Law by *Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly*.

On December 8, **Nadine Cohen** and **Zoe Cronin**, Housing Law Unit attorney and Director of Annual Giving, each received a Chelsea Collaborative Unsung Hero award for their dedication, service and outstanding leadership to the City of Chelsea.

**Jason Corral**, Immigration Law Unit attorney, was honored November 12 by the Fundación Ritmo Guanaco, an organization devoted to assisting children from El Salvador, for his work with unaccompanied minors.

GBLS was honored on December 1 by the South Asian Bar Association - Greater Boston, primarily for the work of Family Law Unit attorney **Manisha Bhatt** and other GBLS attorneys who helped organize and made presentations for their Know Your Rights! Program.

Transitions: **Jason Corral**, Immigration Law Unit attorney, starting in late December 2010 has taken a leave of absence to work at Catholic Charities. **Ellen Wallace**, Employment Law Unit attorney, starting in January 2011 has taken a leave of absence to work at United Auto Workers.

### **Victory in Ibanez Foreclosure Case**

GBLS attorneys, along with attorney Paul Collier, represented Ibanez in the U.S. Bank v. Ibanez case, a Land Court case challenging the right of lenders to foreclose without having the proper assignment of the mortgage prior to foreclosure. On January 7, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) ruled against foreclosing lenders and those who purchased foreclosed properties in Massachusetts. The SJC upheld a lower court's decision that the two banks involved in the Ibanez case did not hold proper title to the property and therefore did not have standing to foreclose. The Court's ruling has broad implications nationally and holds that post-dated assignments and assignments in blank are not sufficient to convey the mortgage. GBLS' goal in representing Mr. Ibanez was to create more safeguards for homeowners in the foreclosure process and ensure compliance with Massachusetts foreclosure law.

### **New Partnership to Restore Home Ownership After Foreclosure**

GBLS has undertaken a unique partnership to restore home ownership to families who have lost title to their homes through foreclosure. GBLS' partners are the community group City Life/Vida Urbana (CLVU), and non-profit bank Boston Community Capital (BCC). CLVU organizes a weekly canvass of foreclosed homes, leads weekly meetings on basic legal rights for over 100 homeowners and tenants, and engages its members in public policy advocacy, media/public relations strategy, and coalition involvement. GBLS provides the critical legal representation to stop evictions after foreclosure and with its partners develops advocacy strategies to enable victims to repurchase their homes at an affordable price. Then one affiliate of BCC purchases the foreclosed buildings and another affiliate provides mortgage loans to the victims to repurchase their homes at the present value. In 2010, 87 residents repurchased their homes as a result of project.

### **New CORI Sealing Clinic**

GBLS started a monthly CORI sealing clinic in November 2010 to help indigent people at the Roxbury courthouse. It is held on the 3rd Thursday of the month, for people who have dismissed and other sealable cases in the Roxbury Court. The Union of Minority Neighborhoods and the Harvard Law School Criminal Justice Institute are GBLS' community collaborators in this effort. The

project is a combination of intake, referrals, advice and representation in the courtroom.

### **Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts**

LACCM submitted an amicus brief in an important family law case, *Smith v. McDonald*. The ultimate decision, which appears to have relied heavily on LACCM's amicus brief, clarified several issues of importance to our clients: when an unmarried mother may leave the Commonwealth with her child without obtaining the permission of the court or the child's putative father; when joint legal custody is appropriately ordered for unmarried parents; and when a putative father of a nonmarital child begins to have parental rights.

### **Massachusetts Justice Project**

**Guy Lescault**, who served as Interim Executive Director at MJP for the last 20 months, has now been appointed Interim Executive Director of WMLS. **Gordon Shaw** is the new Executive Director at MJP.

### **Merrimack Valley-North Shore Legal Services**

**Deepinder Singh Mayell** and his wife Kathleen welcomed a baby girl, Anupriya, on December 23.

### **National Consumer Law Center**

The Fair Debt Collection Practices Conference is in Seattle, March 3-4: Get up to speed on your first debt collection abuse cases. Learn about the laws protecting consumers from abusive debt collection practices and proceed to more in-depth sessions on developing fair debt collection cases and a fair debt collection law practice. Faculty includes the top Fair Debt Collections Lawyers from across the country. CLE credit. Register online at: <http://www.nclc.org/conferences-training/fair-debt-collection-practices-conference.html>

## **Media Highlights**

### **Boston Globe: Mass. Law Boosts Debt Collection Protections**

*1/8/2011* - "This new law will protect thousands of struggling Massachusetts residents, and allow them to house, feed, and support their families and continue to work as they struggle to pay debts and get back on their feet after an economic setback," said Robert J. Hobbs, deputy director of the National Consumer Law Center.

[read more](#)

### **WBUR: A Family Loses A Dream While Investors Cash In**

*12/20/2010* - They sought help from Nadine Cohen, an attorney with Greater Boston Legal Services, who found out earlier this month that the bank auctioned off the house to a private investor for \$115,000. That is a fraction of the original price. "The bank could have offered a modification of their loan for twice that amount," Cohen says.

[read more \(and listen\)](#)

### **MLAC Press Release: Executive Director Elected to The American Law Institute**

*12/6/2010* - Lonnie Powers was elected to The American Law Institute (ALI), an independent organization that produces scholarly work to clarify, modernize and improve the law.

[read more](#)

## **Tech Tips**

### **Calendar Tip**

Automatically add holidays to your Calendar: On the **Tools** menu, click **Options, Calendar Options**, and then click **Add Holidays**.

### **Contact Tip**

Add a new contact from an email message: Open the message. In the **From** field, right-click the

name you want to make into a contact, select **Add to Outlook Contacts**.

#### **Outlook 2010 Tip**

Reading Pane: You can use **Ctrl + Mouse Scroll button** in the Reading pane to zoom in and out of a message (making it larger\smaller).

You can also zoom via the zoom slider in the bottom right corner of your Outlook 2010 window.



### **"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).

This online version replaces the hard copy list previously printed and distributed by MLAC biannually. You can also look up staff individually by last name using the search function on MassLegalServices.org.

### **Important Dates**

**January 27** - MLAC Board Retreat

**February 9** - Mid-year program reports are due.

**February 24** - MLAC Board Meeting, 3-5 p.m., NCLC

**March 28** - MLAC's FY12 funding application is due. The application will be distributed in mid-February.

#### **Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation**

7 Winthrop Square, 2nd Floor

Boston, MA 02110-1245

Phone: 617-367-8544

<http://www.mlac.org>