

Legal Aid Link

Volume 5, Issue 3

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MLAC News

Census: Expect More Clients

Figures released by the Census Bureau in September reveal a sharp increase in the number of people eligible for legal services in Massachusetts. According to the Bureau's 2010 American Community Survey, the number of Massachusetts residents with incomes below 125% of the federal poverty line has increased by 11%, from 856,000 in 2009 to 950,000 in 2010, an increase of 94,000 in just one year. Contact [Donna Southwell](#), MLAC's director of policy analysis, with any questions.

Diversity Coalition Advisory Steering Committee Holds Fall Meeting

The Diversity Coalition Advisory Steering Committee met on September 27 to focus on:

- * Recruiting new members, having lost several members due to expired term limits, resignations and attrition. The goal is to increase program representation on the committee, and/or more importantly to increase regional representation; and
- * Updating members on the status of the Retention Task Force recommendations.

The committee decided to change its meetings times from four times a year (quarterly) schedule to five times a year (every two months) with the summers off. Contact Diversity Coalition Director [Joyce Allen-Beckford](#) for more details.

Retention Task Force Editing Recommendations

The Retention Task Force (RTF) draft recommendations are being edited by the subcommittee with the RTF Chair, [Jacqui Bowman](#). The goal is to circulate the draft to all stakeholders before the end of the year. For more information, please contact [Jacqui Bowman](#) or [Joyce Allen-Beckford](#).

Attorneys of Color Hold Annual Retreat

About 15 attorneys gathered for the Annual Attorneys of Color (AOC) Retreat on Friday, September 30, at the American Cancer Society. Judge Richard Chin, associate justice of the Massachusetts Superior Court, spoke to the group about his challenges as an Asian American attorney in Boston, and the many challenges he faced in his journey to becoming a Massachusetts Superior Court Judge. Many questions were centered on how does one overcome the daily challenges that one encounters as a person of color in the profession. Judge Chin had many pointers gained from his

personal experience. Also at the Retreat, Cindy Mark of GBLS and Lola Remy of LARC were nominated and accepted, becoming the new leadership of the AOC group.

Strategic Planning Committee Continues Its Work

MLAC's ongoing strategic planning process continues to move toward a draft plan. Committee Chair Martha Koster convened half a dozen meetings through the summer to discuss and draft aspects of the plan with Committee members Rahsaan Hall, Maria Matos, Lonnie Powers, and Pattye Comfort, as well as with Bob Foster as a special advisor to the Committee. In late September, Judith Martinez joined the Committee and Pat Swansey replaced Pattye. Consultant Bob Greene continues to facilitate the work of drafting the plan, and Janne Hellgren coordinates the planning process. The Committee expects to complete a first draft for the MLAC Board later in the fall.

Save the Dates for Upcoming MLAC Board Meetings

* November 17 from 3 to 5 p.m. at NCLC (4th floor)

* December 15 from 3 to 5 p.m. at NCLC (4th floor)

Equal Justice Coalition News

Goodbye Pattye and Hello Tom

MLAC bid a fond farewell to Equal Justice Coalition Director Pattye Comfort at a reception on September 22. After nine years at the helm of the EJC, Pattye left MLAC to join the Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts as its executive director. In addition to her successful campaign work, Pattye's co-workers at MLAC will miss her friendship, her wicked Boston accent and her enthusiastic support for equal access to justice in Massachusetts. The search for a new EJC director is currently underway, and MLAC hopes to fill the position soon.



Tom hard at work

Mixed in with the farewells for Pattye were greetings for Tom Brant, who joined MLAC in September as the new communications and government relations assistant. Tom spent last year as an AmeriCorps advocate at Western Massachusetts Legal Services in Springfield. Tom is eagerly immersing himself in the EJC's mission, and looks forward to being a part of the EJC's future successes under its next executive director.

EJC Advocating for Increase in FY13 State Budget

Because the need for legal services in Massachusetts continues to rise as IOLTA income continues to drop precipitously, a request will be made for funding for the MLAC line item (0321-1600) at \$14.5 million in FY13, an increase of \$5 million over the FY12 appropriation. The EJC Legislative Committee is already working hard to recruit general and in-house counsel and managing partners to support the budget request, and programs are scheduling events with the legislators in their communities.

Save the Date for Walk to the Hill 2012!

The 13th Annual Walk to the Hill for Civil Legal Aid will be held at the State House on Thursday, January 26, 2012. We hope that the weather cooperates this year! Stay tuned for more details, as well as a call for volunteers, which will go out in December. [View the Save the Date here.](#)

Client News

MLAC Awards NLADA Scholarships to Client Board Members

MLAC has awarded scholarships to four client board members to attend [The National Legal Aid & Defender Association Annual Conference](#) this December in Washington, DC. The scholarship recipients are: Elaine Marin of Greater Boston Legal Services, David Pearson of Volunteer Lawyers

Project, and Lenny Spinner and Barbara Burgo of South Coastal Counties Legal Services.

People

Community Legal Services and Counseling Center

Immigration Attorney **Lisa Weinberg** was honored as a "2011 Top Woman of Law" for her "outstanding accomplishment in social justice" by *Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly* at an event on September 23 at the Hynes Convention Center.

Immigration Supervisor **Valerie Fisk** was honored by Lutheran Social Services at an event on September 29 at the Supreme Judicial Court for her work as a "zealous legal advocate."

Recent Harvard Law School graduate **Dustin Saldarriaga** will spend the next two years working in the CLSACC Immigration Unit through the Skadden Fellowship program. Dustin will provide direct representation to immigrant LGBT youth who are victims of abuse or neglect, enforcing juveniles' right to education and freedom from harm. He also will create community education programs and conduct research on the courts' treatment of sexual orientation as a factor in granting protections to abused or neglected youth.

Greater Boston Legal Services

Manisha Bhatt, senior attorney in the Family Law Unit, was awarded the Boston Bar Association's (BBA) John G. Brooks Legal Services Award at the BBA's Annual Meeting on October 13. The Brooks Award recognizes career legal services attorneys for outstanding work on behalf of indigent clients in greater Boston.

Manisha also spearheaded the South Asian Bar Association of Greater Boston's (SABA GB) "Know Your Rights" program, for which SABA GB won the 2011 Outstanding Program Award in August 2011 at the North American South Asian Bar Association annual convention. The program served to educate members of the South Asian community about their basic legal rights and strengthen their professional and personal connections.

Diane Paulson, senior attorney in the Elder, Health and Disability Unit, was given the Advocate of the Year award at the statewide Massachusetts Councils on Aging and Senior Center Directors fall conference in October 2011. This award goes to the individual who "by way of message, achievement, legislation, coalition building, speaking up for seniors, helping seniors to speak up, courage, patience, and persistence has helped seniors find empowerment, enrichment and fulfillment."

Merrimack Valley North Shore Legal Services

Zona Sharfman, staff attorney and director of the Race for Justice, has qualified for and been accepted by the 2012 Boston Marathon. Good luck, Zona!

Event Recap

CLA Holding Events for Pro Bono Month

Community Legal Aid (CLA) is hosting two events during October ("pro bono month"), in order to recognize the contributions of the private bar. On Tuesday, October 25, there was a reception at the Worcester Law Library, which presented awards to members of the private bar. The event was sponsored by CLA, the Volunteer Lawyers Service of the Mass. Justice Project, and the Worcester County Bar Association. Tonight, October 27, there will be a reception at the federal courthouse in Springfield from 4 to 5:30 p.m. The event is sponsored by the Mass. Justice Project, CLA, the Bar Associations of Berkshire, Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden Counties, and Senior Partners for Justice West. Retired SJC Justice John M. Greaney will be the Master of Ceremonies.

NLS Holds 3rd Annual Golf Tournament

On September 12, Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS) hosted its 3rd Annual Golf Tournament at the beautiful Andover Country Club. It was a perfect morning that began with a continental breakfast, and a little practice on the driving range and putting green, and the day was filled with contest holes, raffles and prizes.

The Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation was the "Presenting Sponsor," with a generous \$10,000 donation that recognized the work done by NLS in the community. "Bronze Sponsors" (\$500) included Ron Eskin, Kelly Sullivan, The Law Offices of James Molleur, The Elder Service Plan of the North Shore, Harvard Pilgrim Health, as well as many other friends of NLS. NLS had a net profit of more than \$22,000!



Brian Quirk, long-time NLS volunteer attorney, entertains the golfers



A foursome at the golf tournament (from L): John Moberger, Kathy Hirbour, Rick Vitale and John Oteri

Advocacy Update

GBLS, MLRI Advocates Restore TAFDC Clothing Allowance to \$150

Elizabeth Toulan, senior attorney in the GBLS Welfare Law Unit, along with MLRI Staff Attorneys **Ruth Bourquin** and **Deborah Harris**, Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless Director of Legislative Advocacy Kelly Turly, and other advocates succeeded in getting a supplemental budget passed that restored the TAFDC Clothing Allowance from the grossly inadequate \$40 per child back to the long-standing \$150 per child. Their legislative and other advocacy in the State House and organizing the outcry from groups and individuals around the state led to this huge victory.

MAC's Advocacy Gives New Opportunities to Young Adults with Disabilities

Massachusetts Advocates for Children (MAC) has advocated for the creation and implementation over the past five years of the state's Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment pilot grant program (ICE). ICE enables young adults age 18 to 22 with severe disabilities, who failed MCAS and are still receiving special education services and supports, to take college courses and career development activities at public colleges. This program has created new opportunities for scores of young adults who face a very high risk of poverty as adults. The grant program is functioning in five different locations around the state involving community colleges and surrounding school districts. This year, for the first time a four-year state college, Bridgewater State University, will be participating along with 10 surrounding school districts. [View a video about this program here.](#)

MLRI Urges Congressional Super Committee to Protect Critical Safety Net Programs in Deficit Reduction Process

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI) submitted a [letter](#) and [briefing paper](#) to Sen. John Kerry, a member of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction ("Super Committee"), urging him and his fellow Committee members to protect safety net programs from reductions during the deficit reduction deliberations. MLRI's briefing paper, "The Need to Protect Vital Safety Net Programs," lays out key points and data that detail why it is critically important to protect programs that provide stabilization and support to low-income families, children, seniors and individuals with

disabilities.

Important Dates

MAC to Hold Annual Fundraiser on November 3

Massachusetts Advocates for Children (MAC) will hold its annual "**Eyes of the Child**" celebration and auction on Thursday, November 3, from 5:30 to 8 p.m. at Bingham McCutcheon on Federal St. in Boston. MAC will be honoring Senior Project Director John Mudd and State Rep. Tom Sannicandro, along with the individual and organizational winners of the Youth Advocate of the Year (YAY!) award. To purchase tickets or for further information, please contact Daryl Cox at 617-357-8431 x242 or dcox@massadvocates.org.

MWLS to Hold 35th Anniversary Celebration on November 8

MetroWest Legal Services (MWLS) will hold its 35th Anniversary Celebration, "**35 Stars for 35 Years!**", on Tuesday, November 8, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Wellesley College Club. The event will honor 35 supporters of MWLS, and Suffolk Law Professor Kathleen Engel, author of *The Sub-Prime Virus*, will share her insights on the housing crisis. [Visit the MWLS Web site for more details.](#)

NCLC to Hold 20th Annual Conference in Chicago, November 3-6

NCLC's **20th Annual Consumer Rights Litigation Conference** will take place at the Fairmont Chicago Millennium Park Hotel from November 3 to 6. Over the years, thousands of consumer attorneys have attended and gained insightful, useful information from experts in consumer law - nearly 1,000 attorneys attended last year's conference in Boston. In addition to a full lineup of breakout sessions, plenaries, and the Consumer Class Action Symposium, the conference will feature a number of intensive sessions that provide timely, in depth information on mortgage litigation and foreclosure defense, consumer bankruptcy, the FHA and RHS Loan Programs, student loan borrowers, and debt collection suits. For more information about speakers, agenda descriptions, hotel booking, scholarship information, and to register online, [visit the Consumer Rights Litigation Conference 2011 Web site.](#)

Media Highlights

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

[Boston Globe: Abuses Alleged in Retooled Loans](#)

10/17/2011 - Even after signing agreements with lenders, some property owners are still under threat of foreclosure. Nadine Cohen, managing attorney for the consumer rights unit at Greater Boston Legal Services, is quoted. She explains how these complicated cases have added to the workload of legal services attorneys.

[Herald News: AG Orders Owners of Raynham and Somerset Buffets to Pay \\$185,000 for Egregious Wage and Child Labor Violations'](#)

10/11/2011 - The owners of Chinese food restaurants in Raynham and Somerset have been fined more than \$180,000 in restitution and penalties for labor violations. Greater Boston Legal Services joined the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health and the non-profit Justice at Work in reporting the violations to the attorney general.

[Associated Press: Obama Seeks Debt Collector Proposal](#)

10/4/2011 - Consumer groups are uneasy about President Barack Obama's proposal to make it easier for private debt collectors to call the cellphones of consumers delinquent on student loans and other billions owed the federal government. Lauren Saunders, a managing attorney at the National Consumer Law Center, is quoted.

[The Sun Chronicle: A Place of Her Own](#)

9/24/2011 - Fifteen years after a devastating stroke left her mute and a paraplegic, Cathy

Hutchinson of Attleboro is one of 87 individuals who have been approved to move from a nursing facility into the community as the result of a 2008 class action lawsuit filed by the Center for Public Representation. Stephen J. Schwartz, the Center's litigation director, is quoted.

Towns Go After Lunch Money

9/14/2011 - As unpaid school lunch bills mount, schools are taking on an uncomfortable job: debt collector. These changes worry lawyers at MetroWest Legal Services like Laura Edwards, supervising attorney, who is quoted in this article.

Tech Tips

Tech Tip: HOLY SHIFT!

By Patricia Shaunessey, MLAC's Support and Training Specialist

Some PowerPoint Shortcut keystrokes (These should work in all versions of PowerPoint.)

Hold down the **SHIFT** key:

- when drawing a line to get a perfectly straight line.
- when drawing an oval to get a perfectly round circle.
- when drawing a rectangle to get a square.
- when clicking on the normal view icon to get the Master slide.
- when clicking on the slide sorter view to get the handouts master.
- when pressing Enter to get a blank line without a bullet.
- to select multiple objects on a slide at the same time.
- while resizing a graphic to retain the same proportions in the resized graphic.
- while pressing F3 to change the case of letters.

"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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