

Legal Aid Link

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FY10 Budget Campaign Update

The only good budget news seems to be that we have, so far, avoided cuts to the FY09 appropriation. The later it gets into the current fiscal year, the more likely it is that the MLAC line item for FY09 will remain intact.

Looking ahead to FY10: in October, we reported here that the Equal Justice Coalition had decided to request a \$1 million increase in the MLAC appropriation for FY10. As the state revenue forecasts worsened, we revised our campaign strategy and are seeking level funding for FY10. The assumption on Beacon Hill is that most accounts should expect an 8% cut. We will argue, as persuasively as possible, that civil legal aid has been devastated by the unprecedented 54% decline in IOLTA and that any cut to the appropriation simply isn't tenable.

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Get to Know MLAC Staff!

This is the second installment of a new section that introduces MLAC staff members to the wider legal services community. Featured below are the two members of our Fiscal Team, Fiscal Director Mary Doyon and Bookkeeper Freddy Matute.

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

Mary: Right now I am working on transferring to a new payroll provider. I am hoping that we will have a smooth transition and employees won't even know when they get their January pay check.

Freddy: Loan forgiveness control and payments for programs, quarterly general support grant checks, payroll and benefits payments for staff, and, when I have a chance, working on inventory updates after the move to our new location.

What time of year is typically your busiest?

Mary: I guess my busiest times are opposite everyone else. I am busiest in December and July when the calendar and fiscal years end. Both times require a lot of reconciliation, reporting and, of course, the Audit.

Freddy: Every 3 months is the busiest time for me, but also, at the end of every month, every fiscal year end (the Audit), and the end of every calendar year too! So,



basically...every month!

What's something you work on outside of legal services?

Freddy: I work as an accountant for Centro Presente, a grassroots Latin-American community organization that supports immigrants in Massachusetts.

Mary: Outside of legal services I am currently working with a small group on a Beverly Farms History project. We are collecting pictures and stories on this small town that I grew up in. It's really interesting and a lot of fun.

Client Council News

Client Board Members Attend NLADA Conference

This year 10 client board members attended the [National Legal Aid and Defenders Association](#) (NLADA) conference in November. The conference featured many informative sessions focused on client involvement. One of the highlights was the talk given at the Client Caucus by [Darryl Hunt](#), who spent nearly 20 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. MLAC Board Member **Jackie Farrow** said of Hunt's speech, "It was a very uplifting experience to listen to someone who...rather than focusing on the negativity of the experience, has chosen to re-channel his energy into something positive by assisting prisoners re-entering society."

The Client Council awarded three client board members scholarships to participate in the conference. The three scholarship winners, all of whom were first-time attendees, were **Robbie Adjei** (GBLS), **Liz Anderson** (CLSACC), and **Timothy Lee** (VLP). "As a client board member and community representative, it was a great opportunity to meet with other client board members and attorneys across the country...We are very empowered here," said Robbie. Liz "was really happy to receive the scholarship," and also "found the conference very educational."

Diversity Coalition News

Project Directors Diversity Training

On October 30, Project Directors met in Framingham for a two-part, day-long diversity training sponsored by the Diversity Coalition. The morning session, titled "Dominant Culture & Micro-Inequities," was jointly facilitated by Diversity Coalition Director **Joyce Allen-Beckford** and Associate Director **Andy García**. This session explored the relationship between organizational culture and staff retention, focusing on cutting-edge topics in the diversity field, such as micro-inequities (subtle messages that can convey disrespect and inequality in the workplace).

The afternoon session was facilitated by Trisha Griffin-Carty, an expert on effective job search techniques. This session focused on strategies for hiring diverse candidates. Topics included how to review resumes with an eye on diversity, as well as effective interviewing techniques. Project Directors reported that the blend of concepts and practical skills they received during the day-long training was beneficial.

Attorneys of Color/Fellowship Luncheon

On November 17, the Attorneys of Color Group met in Framingham for a day-long retreat, coordinated in part by the Diversity Coalition. Attendees heard a powerful keynote speech by [Arkansas Judge Wendell Griffen](#), whose talk was based on *Justice for the Have Nots*, followed by a question and answer session and group discussion.

They were also treated to breakfast and a networking lunch, which proved effective in allowing attorneys of color to meet and interact with each other. In addition, the three Bart Gordon and Racial Justice Fellows presented their respective projects. Lastly, the Attorneys of Color Group engaged in a priority-setting session, moderated by Judge Griffen.

Equal Justice Coalition

[Countdown to the Walk to the Hill](#)

On December 3, EJC held the annual [Walk to the Hill Captains lunch](#). Captains from 25 law firms attended and participated in a robust discussion that included organizing strategies and logistics for the Walk. Award presentations were made for last year's attendance toppers: WilmerHale with 61 attorneys, Choate with 38 and Goodwin with 29. Sally & Fitch was the winner of the Nancy King Award for being the firm with the highest percentage of attendees (15 out of 20). Captains are fired up for this year's Walk and promised to work hard to turn out a record number of their colleagues again this year.

With an eye toward involving the next generation of lawyers in Walk to the Hill, Heather Catherwood organized the first annual "Law Students for Justice: Kick-off Recruitment Event" which was held on November 6 at the Boston Bar Association. Students from Boston University School of Law, Northeastern University School of Law, Suffolk University School of Law and New England School of Law attended. Julia Huston, chair of the Equal Justice Coalition, and Stephanie Balandis, a housing attorney from Greater Boston Legal Services, educated students on the need for funding civil legal aid and urged students to attend the upcoming Walk. Four of the law students who attended the event will serve as "captains" at their respective law schools.

[New Equal Justice Coalition Web site](#)

We recently revamped the EJC Web site to be a more effective tool in reaching out to the legal community. Check out <http://www.equaljusticecoalition.org>.



[Join Us on Facebook](#)

If you're on Facebook, join the [Equal Justice Coalition group](#), which we created to help engage law students and young attorneys.

The Buzz

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

[CLE](#) staff attorney **Joanne Karger** received an award from [Vida Urbana](#) in recognition of her support for the families of the Jamaica Plain Parent Organizing Project (JPPOP).

CLE has partnered up with the [Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice](#) at Harvard Law School (CHHIRJ) and [Choate Hall & Stewart LLP](#) to create a pro bono education law project aimed at serving at-risk youth in Massachusetts. CLE staff attorney **Jenny Chou** will direct the project. In addition to screening requests for assistance from legal service field offices and other public interest agencies, she will also, with the assistance of other CLE attorneys and CHHIRJ staff, provide training and mentoring to Choate attorneys working on the project. Through the project, Choate

lawyers will represent low-income students in administrative hearings at the school, district and state levels, as well as in court.

Disability Law Center (DLC)

[DLC](#) has again received a grant from the [Massachusetts Bar Foundation](#) to conduct six special education conferences throughout the state. Please help us spread the word about future conferences! For more information please visit the DLC website at www.dlc-ma.org.

Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS)

[GBLS](#) has been awarded a \$50,000, one-year grant from the [Avon Foundation](#). The grant is for establishing a collaborative program with [Children's Charter](#) serving Latina immigrant women and their children who have been exposed to domestic violence. The grant is a part of an ongoing awards program under the auspices of the Avon Foundation [Speak Out Against Domestic Violence](#) initiative, and it will allow GBLS and Children's Charter to create an innovative model of service provision that combines legal support and counseling to address the wide range of needs among Latina immigrants who are survivors of domestic violence.

Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts (LACCM)

[LACCM](#) was awarded a one-year grant under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Fair Housing Initiatives Program. This grant will enable LACCM, in partnership with the City of Worcester, to continue to conduct investigations and carry out enforcement activities to prevent and eliminate discriminatory housing practices in Worcester County. In addition, the [Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts](#) awarded LACCM a grant to establish a hoarding task force. The task force provides training to service providers who work with individuals with hoarding issues, and will serve as a clearinghouse for agencies routinely dealing with the problem.

In staff news...

Rachel Brown, a staff attorney in the Elder Unit, was recently appointed to the position of Vice-Chair of the City of Worcester's Disability Commission.

Melissa Pomfred, employment staff attorney, was appointed to serve on the Salvation Army's Worcester Citadel Leadership Board.

Sarah Loy, executive assistant, was just elected President of the Worcester County chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts.

Valerie Zolezzi-Wyndham, director of training and professional development, was appointed to the Board of Directors of Great Brook Valley Health Center.

Tina Paradiso, senior supervising attorney in the Families and Children Unit, recently concluded her service on the Massachusetts Child Support Guidelines Task Force; she was appointed to the 12 member task force in 2006 by Chief Justice for Administration & Management Robert A. Mulligan.

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI)

MLRI Housing Attorney **Judith Liben** was presented with the prestigious David Bryson Memorial Award at the Housing Justice Network's biennial meeting in Washington, D.C. Recipients of the Bryson Award typically hail from the legal services community and

have demonstrated an exemplary commitment to solving the housing problems of extremely low-income people. The award recognizes Judith's lifetime of work in the housing field, including her efforts to preserve public housing, end discriminatory residency preferences, stop unfair application procedures, and make visible the devastating effect of foreclosures on tenants.

Merrimack Valley - North Shore Legal Services (MVNS)

MVNS welcomes new staff attorney **Ulea Lago!** Ulea will be handling primarily family law cases.

MetroWest Legal Services (MWLS)

MWLS recently hired **Vera Ochea** as a new elderlaw attorney in the office. Vera, a Suffolk Law School graduate, worked at MWLS from 2001-2004 as a housing attorney. She returned to MWLS after working for a real estate firm to fill the elderlaw vacancy created when Betsy Soule was appointed executive director.

MLAC News

Farewell to Andy Garcia

MLAC said good-bye to Diversity Coalition Associate Director Andy Garcia on December 12. For the past 18 months, Andy has shown an impressive amount of skill and expertise as well as a strong dedication to promoting diversity in the legal services community. No doubt, what impressed us so much will serve Andy well as he moves to New York City, where he is joining a consulting firm that helps organizations across the country strengthen their commitment to diversity. He will be greatly missed here at MLAC.

Communications and Fundraising News

Get that Grant Workshop

There are still a few spots left for the two-part grant workshop that will take place on January 7 and 14. Please contact Brianne Miers at bmiers@mlac.org with questions or to RSVP.

Media Coverage on Funding Cuts

On October 31, MLAC sent out a press release announcing the drastic cuts to legal aid funding in Massachusetts. Nearly 40 print, broadcast and online outlets in Massachusetts and nationwide have since covered the news, including the Associated Press on November 15. To view some of the coverage, visit the News section of MLAC's web site: <http://www.mlac.org/news.html>.

Important Dates

December 18 - MLAC board meeting (NCLC/7 Winthrop Square, 4th Floor)
January 12 - Community Mapping Project Briefings (State House and MLAC office)
January 14 - MLAC board retreat
January 22 - Walk to the Hill (State House)
February 12 - Constituent Services Briefing (State House)

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.

[Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation](#)

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