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Legal Aid *of* Southeastern PA > Annual Report 2009-2010

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MISSION

Legal Aid of Southeastern PA provides *quality legal representation* to low-income and vulnerable people in Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery County, *to empower* them to solve problems without legal representation through legal education and increased access to the courts, and *to change community practices* and systems that cause or aggravate poverty.

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FINDING A WAY >

The 2009–2010 fiscal year was a period of reflection, adjustment to change and re-commitment to our mission. We started the year engaged in a comprehensive legal needs assessment; convening focus groups, distributing surveys, and conducting interviews to gather data about the communities we serve. This data was used to determine the most crucial legal needs in the region and to revise and refocus our program priorities.

At the same time, we responded quickly to assure continued services to the clients of a partner legal services program, Community Impact Legal Services (CILS), when it was forced to cease operations in late 2009. By forming relationships with former CILS funders, assuming its contracts and hiring some of its staff, CILS clients continued to have representation, and Legal Aid added to its capacity to help low income and vulnerable families. Notably, the Don't Borrow Trouble initiative, a national anti-predatory lending and foreclosure avoidance campaign that was brought to our area several years ago by CILS, was kept alive and revitalized just as the foreclosure crisis was peaking in our region.

In the end, by listening to our constituents, moving quickly to meet emerging needs, and through the dedication of board and staff, we succeeded at "finding a way" to help more individuals and families than at any time since the inception of LASP in 2001. We are particularly grateful to the volunteers, donors and funders who helped make expanded services possible despite difficult economic times.

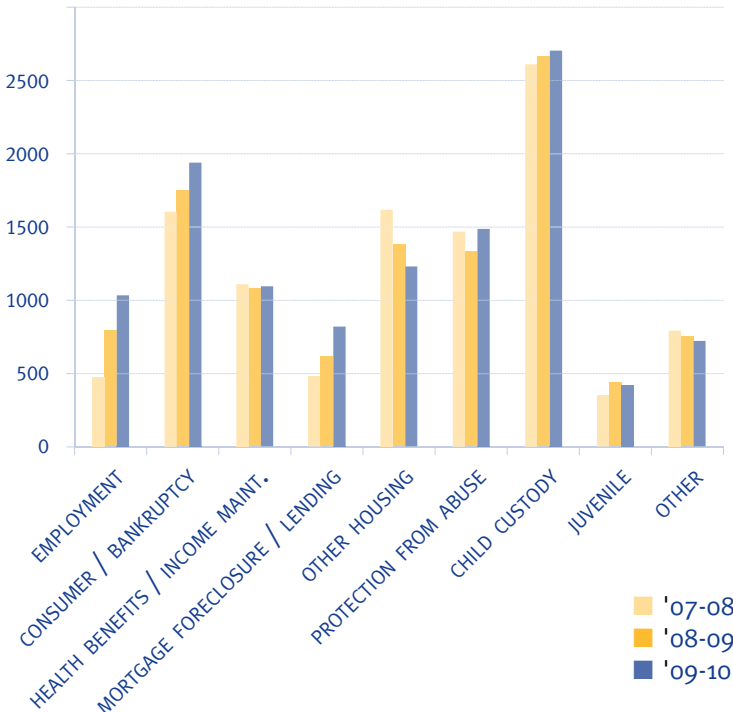
ELIZABETH WOOD FRITSCH, ESQ.
HARVEY F. STRAUSS, ESQ.

CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS
LEGAL AID OF SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

CLIENTS *and* CASES

- THIS YEAR...**
- 73** percent of our clients were women.
 - 37** percent of our clients were members of racial minority groups.
 - 16** percent of our clients were aged 60 and older.
 - 17,000** phone calls were handled by our helpline staff.
 - 11,583** legal cases were handled total.
 - 328** attorneys volunteered 3,400 hours of time in assisting our clients.

CASES HANDLED IN '07-08, '08-09, AND '09-10 BY CATEGORY



DON'T BORROW TROUBLE®

SUBURBAN PHILADELPHIA

NOW A PROGRAM OF LEGAL AID OF SOUTHEASTERN PA

Just as the mortgage foreclosure crisis was peaking in 2009, southeastern Pennsylvania was on the verge of losing an important resource for homeowners trying to hold onto their homes and struggling to understand government foreclosure rescue programs. The Don't Borrow Trouble Suburban Philadelphia Campaign came close to shutting down due to the decision of the Community Impact Legal Services (CILS) Board of Directors to end its agency operations in November 2009.

Legal Aid, which had operated the Don't Borrow Trouble (DBT) Telephone Helpline under a contract with CILS quickly agreed to take over the program and work to replace lost program funding. Thanks to a \$75,000 consumer grant from an anonymous donor, as well as \$30,000 from the Philadelphia Foundation Basic Human Needs Fund, combined with ongoing support provided by the Chester County Department of Community Development and the Offices of Housing and Community Development in Montgomery and Delaware County, LASP has been able to keep this timely community resource going.

To order DBT outreach materials, contact Amy Gendall (agendall@lasp.org). For homeowners who are behind on mortgage payments and fear losing their homes, the DBT Telephone Helpline (1-888-275-8843) can provide referrals to government programs, housing counselors, and when appropriate, legal case representation.

www.dontborrowtroublesepa.org

TRENDS *and* HIGHLIGHTS

STRENGTHENING THE SAFETY NET

Government sponsored medical, nutrition, and income maintenance benefits are life-saving supports for poor and vulnerable people that are all the more necessary in a challenging economic climate. Legal Aid provides legal representation to those who have been improperly turned down for government assistance, had their benefits halted or reduced, or are being pursued incorrectly for overpayments.

Last year, 287 clients and their family members obtained \$28,947 in recovered back benefits, were awarded monthly benefits totaling \$16,602 per month, and avoided improper overpayment collections of \$70,758.

EXTENDING STAYS/PRESERVING HOMES

In 2009-2010, Legal Aid's housing attorneys and Don't Borrow Trouble Helpline staff heard from growing numbers of homeowners who were having difficulty paying their monthly mortgages due to job losses or reductions in pay or hours. Legal Aid was able to extend the stay in housing for 248 individuals—long enough for them to find a stable next home, arrange a short sale, and keep their families from homelessness or other crisis situations. For 138 individuals, the advice and intervention of our legal staff helped them avoid foreclosure entirely.

ONE *client's* STORY

LASP HELPED THEM DEAL WITH A FRAUDULENT SALESMAN.



Mr. and Mrs. R*, a couple in their 70s, came to LASP because they believed they had been victims of fraud. An insurance salesman had come to their home uninvited and pitched them a new health insurance plan. When Mr. R said he was satisfied with their existing Medicare coverage, the salesman assured them the new plan would only add to what they already had; the couple then agreed to sign up for this "supplemental" coverage. In fact, the salesman cancelled their existing insurance and enrolled them in a new plan. They began to receive physicians' bills and were unable to fill their prescriptions because their doctors and pharmacy were not in the new plan's network. Their Legal Aid attorney filed a complaint regarding the salesman with Medicare and made sure the couple had their previous health plan reinstated, with all outstanding bills covered by their original insurer.

*NO ACTUAL CLIENT NAMES OR PHOTOGRAPHS ARE USED IN THIS REPORT.

ONE *client's* STORY

LASP HELPED HER OVERCOME A PAST MISTAKE.



Ms. M*, a 25-year-old student who was about to graduate from a local hospital's radiation technology program, asked Legal Aid for help expunging an earlier arrest record. When Ms. M was 19 she had been arrested for Driving Under the Influence of alcohol and had been placed in an Accelerated Rehabilitation Disposition (ARD) program as part of her sentencing. Although she completed the program and had no further legal problems, the arrest record remained and in order to graduate and obtain employment in her field, she had to expunge the arrest record. Her Legal Aid attorney was able to promptly file an expungement petition, enlist the support of the District Attorney in the effort, and successfully clear her record so that she could graduate and secure employment.

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TRENDS *and* HIGHLIGHTS

HELP FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

With unemployment rates in the southeastern PA metropolitan area running higher than 9% for most of the year, LASP's employment legal cases jumped by 34% (from 795 cases last year to 1062 cases in 2009-2010). These cases fall into two legal areas:

- Employment related legal cases: Legal Aid attorneys obtained \$391,897 in recovered Unemployment Compensation benefits, \$73,520 in monthly benefits, and avoided \$77,798 in incorrect repayment charges
- Expunging or correcting minor criminal records that pose a significant barrier to obtaining employment: 95 clients were successful in having minor criminal records expunged.

HELP FOR DIFFICULT FAMILY TRANSITIONS

Addressing family violence and helping to establish child custody and visitation when families break up are critical areas of Legal Aid's work. In 2009-2010, 546 Protection from Abuse orders were obtained, protecting 1,128 victims of abuse and their family members. Legal Aid custody clinics and legal representation helped 1,113 parents to establish or maintain custody of their children.

IN THEIR *own* WORDS

FROM A LASP HELPLINE CALLER

"You answered my questions in lay terms..."

"You answered my questions in lay terms, so that I could proceed with confidence and assurance at court; thanks to you, I WON!"

FROM A CLIENT SEEKING HELP WITH UNEMPLOYMENT

"I hope I won't need you again, but if so..."

"I would like to take this time to thank you for your support for me getting this case in my favor...I hope I won't need you again, but if so you'll be the one lawyer that I'll want to support me."

FROM A PARENT OF A DISABLED ADULT SON

"I nearly danced in your office...an exhausted dance, but a dance nonetheless."

"The one thing I remember best about meeting our Legal Aid attorney was that we felt like we had finally met someone who not only listened to us, but understood our desperate situation. Someone was on our side! I cannot explain the feeling of relief. Our attorney exuded a quiet confidence that gave us so much encouragement that I nearly danced in your office...an exhausted dance, but a dance nonetheless."

"The day the sheriff served us *was one of the worst days of our lives.*"

LASP WAS ABLE TO HELP THEM SAVE THEIR HOME.

"We received the best Christmas present ever when our mortgage was modified and the foreclosure lifted! When the foreclosure notice was served, we were terrified. Both of us are older, disabled and had only welfare and Supplemental Security Income to hold us together financially. The day the sheriff served us was one of the worst days of our lives.

We read the foreclosure papers and immediately called your office for help. We qualified for help, and a pro bono lawyer helped us prepare for the mediation sessions and explained the laws that affected us in a language we could understand.

You truly have given us a gift through this program. By giving us more time to process a modification we did not end up living on the streets. Today we feel very safe and grateful in our own home. Thank you for all of your efforts."



WITH *sincere* THANKS

2009-2010 BUSINESS, FOUNDATION & INSTITUTIONAL FUNDERS

Government Grants and Contracts

Bucks Co. Office of Aging
Bucks Co. Children & Youth Services
Bucks Co. Commissioners
Bucks Co. Dept. of Comm. & Bus.
Development
Chester Co. Department of Aging
Chester Co. Dept. of Comm. Development
Chester Co. Housing Trust
Delaware Co. Housing Trust
Delaware Co. Office of Housing and Comm.
Development
Delaware Co. Office of Svcs to the Aging
Legal Services Corporation
Montgomery Co. Aging and Adult Svcs
Montgomery Co. Commissioners
Montgomery Co. Dept. of Housing and Comm.
Development
Montgomery Co. Housing Trust
Pennsylvania Dept. of Comm. and Economic
Development
Pennsylvania Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts
Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network

Charitable Foundations & Trusts

1675 Foundation
Bucks County Foundation
Claneil Foundation
Cozen O'Connor Foundation
E. Wallace Chadwick Memorial Fund
Green Tree Community Health Foundation
Independence Foundation
Montgomery County Foundation
Nathan Speare Foundation
OMG Center - Pew Fund Capacity Grant
Pew Fund for Health & Human Services in
Philadelphia
Phoenixville Community Health Foundation
Taylor Community Foundation
The Philadelphia Foundation
The Philadelphia Foundation Basic Human
Needs Fund
Wallace & Alice Strine Foundation

Collaborative Grants

Bucks County STOP Grant
Pottstown Health & Wellness Foundation
(Partnership with VNA Community Services)

Business, Corporate, Service, Religious & Others

Aetna
Both is Better LLC
Chester Co. Paralegal Association
Coming of Age
Doris J. Freed Matrimonial Inn of Court
Eastern District of PA Bankruptcy Conference
Equal Justice America
Fidelitrade, Inc.
First National Bank of Chester Co.
Flexible Benefits Plan
Generocity Community Alliance
Good Search
Greater Philadelphia Equipment Co.
Heart of Europe Tours
Joyce Miller & Associates
Karasch & Associates
Kiwanis Club of Lansdale
Merck
MOVAD
National Penn Bank
Rotary Club of West Chester
State Farm Insurance Co.
United Way of Bucks Co.
United Way of Chester Co.
United Way of Southern Chester Co.
United Way of Southeastern PA
Univest
U-Printing.com

Bar Associations & Foundations

Bucks County Bar Association
The Charitable Foundation of the
Bucks Co. Bar Assn
Chester Co. Bar Association
Chester Co. Bar Foundation
Delaware Co. Bar Assn. - Family Law Division
Delaware Co. Bar Foundation
Montgomery Bar Association
Montgomery Bar Foundation

WWW.LASP.ORG / ANNUAL-REPORT

For a complete listing of donors and volunteers

You'll find more thanks online to the individual donors, volunteer attorneys and law firms who have assisted us in "finding a way" to help those who call or come through our doors.

WWW.LASP.ORG / HOW-YOU-CAN-HELP

Support Legal Aid and help neighbors in need

You too can join the hundreds of Legal Aid supporters who make a difference in their community. Go online to find out more about donating your time, or make a financial contribution.



JULY 2009 *to* JUNE 2010

Statement of Financial Position

REVENUE

State – IOLTA & PLAN	\$ 1,942,868
Federal – LSC	\$ 1,249,585
County	\$ 500,912
Foundations	\$ 187,752
County Agencies on Aging	\$ 177,404
Annual Legal Community Appeal	\$ 173,505
Corporations	\$ 89,861
Bar Associations & Foundations	\$ 86,000
Miscellaneous	\$ 76,948
Special Events	\$ 38,384
United Way & Donor Option	\$ 32,221
Use of Net Assets	\$ 7,197
Total Funding	\$ 4,562,237

EXPENSES

Personnel	\$ 3,605,055
Space Costs	\$ 295,470
Consultants & Contract Services	\$ 227,971
Furniture & Equipment	\$ 84,479
Telephone/Internet	\$ 69,070
Miscellaneous	\$ 47,400
Consumable Supplies	\$ 34,204
Library Upkeep & Subscriptions	\$ 30,491
Travel	\$ 30,155
Postage	\$ 20,319
Insurance	\$ 18,068
Litigation Expenses	\$ 2,995
Total Expenses	\$ 4,433,456

FOR *more* INFORMATION

go online

Visit www.lasp.org to learn more about our organization and to find helpful legal news and resources. Visit www.dontborrowtroublesepa.org for information about mortgage foreclosure and predatory lending.

call us

OUR TOLL-FREE HELPLINE

For legal help, call 1-877-429-5994. Helpline hours are 9am - 1pm, Monday through Friday.

DON'T BORROW TROUBLE

For help with predatory lending and mortgage foreclosure, call 1-888-275-8843. Helpline hours are 9am - 1pm, Monday through Thursday.

locations

BUCKS CO.

1290 Veterans Highway
Box 809
Bristol, PA 19007
215-781-1111

NEW

180 N. Main Street
Doylestown, PA 18901
215-340-1818

CHESTER CO.

222 N. Walnut Street
West Chester, PA 19380
610-436-4510

1003 E. Lincoln Highway
Coatesville, PA 19320
610-380-7111
(Outreach Office)

DELAWARE CO.

410 Welsh Street
Chester, PA 19013
610-874-8421

MONTGOMERY CO.

625 Swede Street
Norristown, PA 19401
610-275-5400

248 King Street
Pottstown, PA 19464
610-326-8280



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