

JUSTICE. MASSACHUSETTS LEGAL ASSISTANCE CORPORATION

Legal Aid Link

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Walk to the Hill for Legal Aid



The **9th Annual Walk to the Hill for Legal Aid** was a great success with nearly 600 attorneys attending, including firm "teams" from 43 Boston firms, with 18 managing partners personally attending.

This annual lobby day was held in the State House on February 28 and was sponsored by the **Equal Justice Coalition, the Massachusetts and Boston Bar Associations** and 25 county and specialty bar associations.

Speaking to a standing room only crowd in the Great Hall, Haverhill resident and former NLS client **Janice Gray** said that her attorney at NLS helped get to the bottom of more than 15 consumer protection violations committed by a mortgage broker who sold her family an adjustable rate mortgage with interest rates that soared to 14 percent. "Our case was resolved just two months ago, and our home was saved. [It] was the best Christmas present we could have hoped for," said Ms. Gray.

After hearing Ms. Gray's inspiring story, attorneys visited their senators and representatives to urge them to increase funding for legal aid - 55 representatives and 25 out of 40 senators received visits.

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Legal Aid Constituent Services Briefing



MLAC hosted the **7th Annual Legal Aid Constituent Services Briefing** on January 31. The briefing is designed to acquaint legislators and their staff with legal aid programs serving their communities. It also provides an opportunity for legislators and their aides to hear directly from local attorneys regarding key issues affecting low-income constituents. This year's topics included housing, domestic violence, health care, income

maintenance, and unemployment. Approximately 50 legislators and staffers attend. All legislators' offices received folders with information and answers to commonly

asked constituent questions.

Diversity Coalition News

Building on the foundation of the Let's Get REAL About Diversity training, the Diversity Coalition now invites legal aid staff to attend part one of the Keeping It REAL diversity series: **Let's Get REAL About Disability**.



Workshop participants will:

- Expand their definition of disability
- Deepen their understanding of disability issues
- Learn to use appropriate language in discussing disability issues with people with disabilities
- Understand supportive and non-intrusive ways to assist people with various disabilities
- Challenge long-held assumptions and stereotypes
- Identify ways to advocate on behalf of disability issues

TRAINING SESSIONS

Lowell, Tuesday, April 15th (10AM - 3PM)

Taunton, Thursday, April 17th (10AM - 3PM)

Boston, Thursday April 24th (10AM - 3PM)

Springfield, Tuesday, April 29th (10AM - 3PM)

Cambridge, Thursday, May 1st (10AM - 3PM)

Worcester, Tuesday, May 6th (10AM - 3PM)

Framingham, Thursday, May 8th (10AM - 3PM)

Boston, Tuesday, May 13th (10AM - 3PM)

For more information on the training or to request a registration form, please contact Andy Garcia at agarcia@mlac.org or 617-367-8544 x127

Client Council News

New Steering Committee Member

The Client Council Steering Committee welcomes its newest member, **Kwasi Sarpong**, who is a client board member at LACCM. Kwasi has been working with the African immigrant community in Worcester on a variety of issues, particularly health care.

Peggy Santos Receives Award

MLAC board member and Client Council Steering Committee member **Peggy Santos** received an award from the Client Council in February "for outstanding leadership and commitment to clients." Peggy has been a strong advocate for legal services, housing and education issues for more than 30 years, and has been on the MLAC board since 1998.

Central/West Luncheon

The Client Council held a luncheon with client board members in the central/west region to learn about the issues they are facing. In April the Client Council will be holding a training seminar on board roles and responsibilities for client board members

in the region.

Attorneys Honored at Luncheon

[Nancy King](#), known in the legal community as a tireless advocate for providing vulnerable individuals with equal access to the law, was honored posthumously by the Massachusetts Bar Association with the **Lifetime Achievement Award** at the **2008 Access to Justice Awards Luncheon**, held March 6 at the JFK Library and Museum. Nancy served as executive director of South Middlesex Legal Services for nearly 30 years. Sadly, she lost her long battle with breast cancer in December 2007.

The Access to Justice Awards were presented to four attorneys and two firms, who have made significant contributions to advancing the practice of law for the benefit of their communities. **Faye Rachlin**, managing attorney at LACCM, was presented with the **Legal Services Award** for her advocacy work over the past 22 years on issues such as helping mentally ill tenants gain access to critical social services.

The Buzz

Community Legal Services & Counseling Center

CLSSAC recently expanded its immigration law unit by adding **Deirdre Giblin** and **Lisa Weinberg** as part-time attorneys and **Herb Epstein** as a part-time volunteer attorney. They have extensive experience working with immigrants and refugees and will concentrate on political asylum work.

Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts (LACCM)

LACCM is pleased to welcome **Jamian Brent, Eloa Celedon-Rodrigues, Hinna Mushtaque** and **Ellen VanScoyoc**. Jamian, a Families and Children Unit staff attorney, most recently worked as a volunteer attorney in Greater Boston Legal Services' Family Law Unit. Eloa is a paralegal in the same unit and previously worked as a paralegal at Lutheran Immigrant & Refugee Services in Worcester. Hinna is a staff attorney in the Benefits Unit and recently served as an intern for Judge Lemire in Worcester Superior Court. Ellen is an immigration attorney and previously worked for GBLS as a temporary housing unit attorney and represented asylum seekers as a pro bono attorney with the Political Asylum/Immigration Representation Project in Boston.

LACCM welcomes back **Anna Phillips**, a staff attorney in the General Law Unit, who will work on housing cases and conduct regular outreach to communities in northern Worcester County.

LACCM congratulates managing attorney **Faye Rachlin**, who was presented with the **Legal Services Award** from the Massachusetts Bar Association at its Access to Justice Awards Luncheon on March 6. Faye was honored for her work over the past 22 years as an advocate for the indigent, including assisting tenants struggling with mental illness and addiction with gaining access to clinicians and other social services.

Merrimack Valley North Shore Legal Services (MVNS)

Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS)

The boards of directors of MVNS and NLS have each adopted a **Resolution in Support of Enhanced Private Attorney Involvement** at their respective December 2007 meetings, similar to the one adopted by the LSC Board of Directors in April 2007 as a national model.

National Consumer Law Center (NCLC)

NCLC will be providing mentoring and extensive technical assistance to GBLS, MLRI and LARC on foreclosure related cases. As part of a non-profit coalition, NCLC helped pass a new law that added protections to the foreclosure process. Working with the attorney general's office, NCLC trained over 100 legal services and pro bono attorneys on foreclosure defense last year.

After NCLC and other advocates met with the Governor in October, he submitted a request to the legislature for \$15 million in state supplemental funding for the federal **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**, which helps low-income households pay winter heating bills. The legislature approved the request and the Governor included a request for \$15 million in FY 2009 funding for LIHEAP. At the urging of NCLC advocates, the Department of Housing and Community Development convened a meeting at which all of the state's utility companies agreed to reduce the percentage of an overdue bill that a LIHEAP household must pay to restore terminated service by half.

Scholarships to NCLC's **16th Annual National Consumer Rights Litigation Conference**, in Washington, DC, were awarded by the Massachusetts Bar Foundation to **June Beack (MVNS)**, **Nadine Cohen (GBLS)**, **Clayton Meixel (LARC)** and **Andrea Park (LACCM)** and through the generosity of attorney **Yvonne Rosmarin** of Arlington, Massachusetts, to **Terri Lacava (LACCM)** and **Jennifer Rocha (SMLS)**.

NCLC has purchased a new home at 7 Winthrop Square in downtown Boston, and after extensive rehabilitation, will move into the new building in August.

New MLAC Staff

Brianne Miers

Brianne is MLAC's new communications director. She relocated to Boston from Washington, DC, where she most recently served as manager, communications & marketing, for the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

(George) Anthony Morse

Anthony joins MLAC as Program Assistant to the Client Council. He graduated from Northeastern University in 2007 with a degree in political science. He has previously worked in the office of Senator Ted Kennedy in Boston and Washington, DC.

Important Dates

The following are dates and locations for upcoming MLAC board meetings:

March 20th - [Massachusetts Bar Association](#)

April 17th - [Suffolk University Law School](#)

May 13th - [Marriott Copley Place](#) (25th Anniversary)

June 26th - [Massachusetts Bar Association](#)

25th Anniversary Celebration



MLAC invites all legal aid program staff to attend ***Civil Legal Aid - Our Common Wealth***, the celebration of MLAC's 25th anniversary.

The reception will take place at the [Boston Marriott Copley Place](#) on Tuesday, May 13 from 5:30PM to 8PM. The featured speaker for the evening will be **Chief Justice Margaret H. Marshall** of the Supreme Judicial Court.