

# Legal Aid Link

August/September 2008

Vol. 2, Issue 3

## Introducing DLC's New Exec. Director



On Monday, August 18, the Disability Law Center (DLC) welcomed **Kathryn (Kathy) Joyce** as its new Executive Director. Kathy brings significant experience in public policy law and disability advocacy to DLC. In the last 20 years, she has worked as both a trial attorney and a policy analyst in federal and state government. While working for the

Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Kathy held positions in the Office of the Governor and in the former Office of Handicapped Affairs (now Massachusetts Office on Disability). Her state service includes work on a number of issues affecting the rights of individuals with disabilities including employment, health care and architectural access. Please join MLAC in welcoming Kathy!

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## Budget Update from EJC

### **MLAC Receives \$1.4 Million Increase in State Budget for FY09**

Governor Patrick signed the FY09 budget into law on July 13. The budget included a \$1.4 million increase for civil legal aid in [line item 0321-1600](#).



Although the increase is below both the \$5 million increase initially proposed by the EJC last fall and the Governor's \$2.4 million recommended increase in January, it still represents a significant victory considering the dramatic economic downturn over the course of the legislative campaign. The increase in the state appropriation is especially crucial for the current fiscal year given the recent drop in IOLTA revenue.

A big thank-you to all of the legal aid staff and program board members who zealously advocated for the increase throughout the budget process. The EJC's funding campaign will continue to count on you, as well as the private bar and other legal aid stakeholders, as we gear up for FY10!

## Diversity Coalition News

### **Affirmative Action Officer Training**

On September 26, the Diversity Coalition will offer a one-day workshop in Natick on

harassment prevention and conducting investigations. It is intended for Project Directors, Affirmative Action Officers, and other staff members responsible for harassment prevention and conducting investigations. The workshop will be facilitated by Debora Bloom, who specializes in workplace diversity, harassment prevention, cultural competence, and leadership development. The day-long workshop will consist of a morning session focusing on harassment prevention and an afternoon session focusing on investigations. Please contact the [Diversity Coalition](#) for more information.

### Ageism Series

The Diversity Coalition is excited to announce the next in the "Let's Get REAL" series, Let's Get REAL About Generations in the Workplace. This new series, debuting in late fall 2008, will focus on age, ageism, and intergenerational dynamics in the workplace.

### April Racism Event

The Diversity Coalition is pleased to announce that renowned speaker [Tim Wise](#) will keynote a one-day symposium on racism. The event is scheduled for April 14, 2009, at the Crowne Plaza in Natick. Please be on the lookout for further information, including a save-the-date email. Tim Wise is among the most prominent anti-racist writers and activists in the U.S., and his fourth book, *Between Barack and a Hard Place: Race and Whiteness in the Age of Obama*, will be released in Spring 2009.

## Client Council News

### Rural Poverty Event

On Thursday, August 21, the Client Council, along with Western Massachusetts Legal Services (WMLS), will host an event on The Intersection Between Rural Poverty and Legal Aid. The purpose of the event is to raise awareness of the challenges unique to the rural poor and their impact on local legal aid organizations. A speaking program held at The Food Bank Farm in Hatfield will include the Farm's development directory, two WMLS attorneys, the WMLS board chair, Representative Denis Guyer of Dalton, and former WMLS client Toni Hochstadt. Jackie Farrow, client board member of WMLS and MLAC and a member of the Client Council Steering Committee, will moderate the program. Seventeen other client board members from WMLS, Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS), the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI), and South Middlesex Legal Services (SMLS) will be in attendance.

### NLADA Scholarships

The Client Council is sponsoring three scholarships to the [National Legal Aid & Defenders Association](#) (NLADA) conference in Washington, D.C. November 19-22. If you're a client board member interested in being nominated for a scholarship, please contact your program director.

## The Buzz

### Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS)



**Elba Aviles** (Employment Unit; *right*), **Linda Garcia** (Housing Unit; *not pictured*), and **Martha Ramos** (Health & Disability Unit; *left*) were promoted from Senior Paralegals to Lead Paralegals, a new position at GBLS, in July. They were promoted in recognition of outstanding advocacy accomplishments over an extended period of time.



**Maria Mendonca-Costanzo** (Health & Disability Unit/Medicare Advocacy Project; *not pictured*), **Anh Nguyen** (Asian Outreach Unit; *right*), and **Armando Ramos** (Immigration Unit; *left*) were promoted from Paralegals to Senior Paralegals.

**Manisha Bhatt** (Family Law Unit; *middle*), **Naomi Meyer** (Welfare Law Unit; *left*), and **Elizabeth Toulan** (Welfare Law Unit/Family Economic Initiative; *right*) have been promoted from Attorneys to Senior Attorneys.



GBLS also promoted four Attorneys to the position of Lead Attorney, a newly created position with program-wide responsibilities. **Monica Halas** (*right*) will lend her expertise to legislative advocacy, **James "Mac" McCreight** (*second from right*) will have responsibility for major affirmative litigation, **Pauline Quirion** (*second from left*) will head up appellate advocacy, and action on immigration issues will

be led by **John Wilshire Carrera** (*left*).

### **Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts (LACCM)**

LACCM hired **Patti Prunhuber** as its new Litigation Director, and she will start work on September 2. Patti has been an attorney at WMLS for more than 20 years, where she has specialized in benefits, employment, and housing law. LACCM also hired **Sameea Kazmi** as a Staff Attorney to coordinate the Honorable Harry Zarrow Homeless Advocacy Project, through which private attorneys conduct intake at homeless shelters and other agencies. Sameea has been volunteering in LACCM's elder unit for the past several months. **Ruth Rodriguez** was also recently welcomed on board as a Secretary. Ruth speaks fluent Spanish and has experience as a legal assistant, interpreter, and receptionist.

In July, the Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts' Activation Fund awarded LACCM a \$16,900 grant for a new project that will address the problems associated with compulsive hoarding.

### **South Middlesex Legal Services (SMLS)**

SMLS will be undergoing a name-change and move on August 30, 2008. SMLS will become **MetroWest Legal Services** (MWLS), and their new location will be:

*63 Fountain Street, Suite 304  
Framingham, MA 07102*

Their phone and fax numbers will remain the same.

There are several new faces around SMLS. Intake worker **Fabiola de Carvalho** gave birth to a son, Arthur de Carvalho, in June, and attorney **Jennifer Ollington** gave birth to son Ronan James Florendo on July 14. Congratulations to you both!

SMLS has also hired a new domestic violence attorney, **Melissa Conroy**, who began on August 11. Melissa previously worked as an ADA and Supervising ADA in the Middlesex DA's office in the sexual assault unit. She most recently worked for the Framingham firm of Bowditch & Dewey.

**Jack Merrill**, SMLS board president, dedicated his inaugural bike ride in the Pan-Mass Challenge in memory of SMLS Executive Director Nancy King. Jack has set a goal of raising \$10,000 to fight cancer and has raised over \$4,000 so far.

### Western Massachusetts Legal Services (WMLS)

WMLS said good-bye to two of their most respected and longest-serving advocates. **Janis Broderick** worked for more than 30 years as a WMLS Paralegal in the Pittsfield offices and was literally the "face of WMLS" in Berkshire County. The good news is that Janis remains committed to and involved in the Berkshire community in her new role as Executive Director of the Elizabeth Freeman Center in Pittsfield. **Patti Prunhuber**, Housing and Employment Attorney in the Northampton offices, is leaving after more than 23 years as a WMLS advocate. In addition to her dedication to providing legal assistance, Patti has consistently taken on leadership roles in her community. Fortunately, Patti will remain in the Central/West region legal services community as the new Litigation Director for LACCM. Everyone at WMLS is proud to have worked with these two incredible advocates and wishes them the best in their new ventures!

WMLS also said farewell to three outstanding AmeriCorps paralegals, all of whom stayed on for two years! **Beth Rennekamp** (Springfield), **Lisa McGahan** (Springfield), and **Toni Hochstadt** (Northampton) each brought an amazing spirit of activism and dedication to service for low-income people to WMLS and their communities. We are forever grateful and will miss them all!

WMLS is also pleased to welcome four new staff: **Margery Kennard**, Family Law Attorney (former MAP Advocate at WMLS!) in Springfield; **Jessica Woodman-Hardy**, Family Law Attorney in Northampton; **Kevin Heffernan**, Housing Attorney in Springfield; and **Donna Morelli**, Paralegal in Pittsfield.

## MLAC News

### Moving

MLAC staff will be returning to work after Labor Day weekend at a new location, and we'll be sharing offices with the National Consumer Law Center (NCLC) and the IOLTA Committee at the corner of Summer and Otis Streets in downtown Boston. As of September 2, MLAC's new address will be:

*7 Winthrop Square, 2nd floor  
Boston, MA 02110-1202*

The main number will remain 617-367-8544. We'll announce our new direct extensions and a new fax number at a later date.

### 2008 Legal Aid and Staff Directories

We will be distributing the 2008 editions of the Legal Aid Directory and the People Pages soon. The Legal Aid Directory, which contains program contact information, priorities, and service areas, will be printed and distributed to various contacts throughout the state. It will also be available for download as a PDF on our website, and we will email it to all Massachusetts Legal Services staff.

The People Pages will also be emailed to all Legal Services staff. It will arrive in two formats: PDF and Excel spreadsheet. The PDF version will list all legal aid staff and their phone numbers in the state alphabetically. The Excel version will allow users to sort contacts in alternative ways, such as by program.

### Welcoming Kevin Decker

Kevin is our new Communications Assistant. He will focus on creating MLAC publications and print material, as well as maintaining the website. A 2008 graduate of Dartmouth College, Kevin's previous nonprofit experience includes interning for Maine Reads! in Portland, Maine, and canvassing for the Maine People's Alliance.

## Communications and Fundraising News

### Successful Direct Mail: A Roundtable Discussion

Brianne Miers, MLAC Communications Director, will lead a roundtable discussion on direct mailing. It will start with a presentation of general "best practices" for implementing a successful direct mail campaign- including writing compelling text, designing interesting packages, and incorporating strategies to increase response rates. We'll then have a roundtable discussion of everyone's direct mail materials to generate new ideas for enhancing results. (Please bring letters, response cards, etc. to share with the group.)

The discussion will take place September 10 from 1:00pm to 3:30 pm in MLAC's new office at 7 Winthrop Square. Drinks and snacks will be served, but feel free to bring your own lunch. Please RSVP to attend by emailing [Brianne Miers](#).

### Call for Volunteers: Social Networking Committee

Are you a Facebook fanatic? If so, please join us in helping Massachusetts Legal Services launch a social networking presence! I'm looking to gather any interested staff (all programs / positions!) for a few conference calls to brainstorm ideas on how we could use Facebook and other applications for recruiting interns/staff, soliciting volunteers, cultivating donors, and more. Interested? Please contact [Brianne Miers](#).

## Legislative Victory: MassHealth Equality Bill

Governor Deval Patrick signed the MassHealth Equality bill into law on July 31, ensuring that same-sex married couples are eligible for spousal benefits under MassHealth, the state/federal Medicaid program.

**Betsy Crimmins**, Senior Attorney at Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS) in the Elderly Unit, and **Deborah Filler**, Senior Attorney at the GBLS Cambridge & Somerville office, worked for nearly four years to bring this bill to the State House. They joined efforts with other elder advocates as part of the LGBT Aging Project's Public Policy Committee. Also instrumental in getting this law passed was Deborah Thomson of the

PASS Group, whose lobbying efforts were funded by GBLS.

The MassHealth Equality law is the first piece of legislation that codifies the Supreme Judicial Court's 2003 *Goodridge v. Dept. of Public Health* decision, which extended marriage to same-sex couples in the Commonwealth.

The federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) does not recognize same-sex married couples; therefore, these married couples were previously prohibited from being treated as each other's spouses for purposes of federal benefits programs, including Medicaid. The MassHealth Equality law will significantly impact couples that are facing nursing home care, as they will be eligible for benefits and protections that allow the "community spouse" to retain the family home and enough assets to live independently, without jeopardizing the other spouse's eligibility for Medicaid coverage of nursing home care.

Crimmins and Filler are now working with MassHealth agency representatives on implementing this legislation.

## Important Dates

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

**September 25** - MLAC's new office, 7 Winthrop Square

**October 23** - Massachusetts Bar Association

**November 20** - Massachusetts Bar Association

### [Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation](#)

11 Beacon Street, Suite 820  
Boston, MA 02108  
617-367-8544

*Please note that as of September 1, 2008 our new contact information will be:*

7 Winthrop Square, 2nd Floor  
Boston, MA 02110

**JUSTICE.**  
MASSACHUSETTS LEGAL ASSISTANCE CORPORATION