


Fighting Discrimination. Stopping Abuse. Defending Rights.

COMMUNITY
REPORT 2016



Community
Legal Aid

Fairness and justice... for all



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Community Legal Aid, Inc.
provides free civil legal services
to low-income and elderly
residents of central and western
Massachusetts. We assure fairness
for all in the justice system,
protecting homes, livelihoods,
health, and families.

Welcome to our Community Report for 2016

This report is our way of sharing how your help has fueled the fight for justice in central and western Massachusetts in 2016.

Thanks to your support, equal access to justice isn't just a dream. It's a reality for thousands of people who are otherwise without legal help when they need it the most.

You may be a donor to Community Legal Aid (see pages 18-21). Perhaps you are a pro bono lawyer volunteering your time and skills (see page 15). You may be part of the community of institutions – government and private – that understand the urgent necessity of funding civil legal aid (see page 22). Or you are a partner for justice, working with one of the many agencies and organizations that refer our friends and neighbors when they need legal help and have no where else to turn.

However you show your support, we are grateful and honored by your commitment to the cause of justice... for all, not just for those who can afford it.

Thank you for all your contributions, and please remember:

Justice Minus You = Impossible

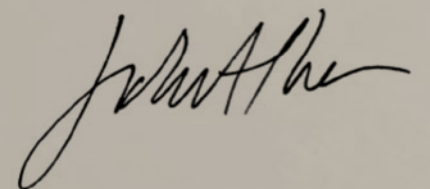
When you support
Community Legal
Aid, you mobilize
a dedicated team
of legal experts
to fight for what
you believe is just,
right and true.

We are your voice for justice

When people turn to Community Legal Aid for help, they are often in desperate situations. Their homes, livelihoods or safety are at stake, and so are the beliefs and values that bind us together. Ruth felt that her dignity was being taken away from her because of her disability (page 5). Jillian felt that justice was beyond her reach in her struggle to protect herself and her kids from abuse (page 7). And Billy travels the state of Massachusetts fighting for the rights of migrant and seasonal workers (page 9). If you, like we do, believe in fairness, equality, and justice, we hope you welcome the stories and information in this report that show how together **we can fight discrimination, stop abuse, and defend the rights** of some of our region's most vulnerable residents. Thank you.



Jonathan Mannina, Esq.
Executive Director



John Shea, Esq.
Board President

Artist rendering of actual clients



Fighting Discrimination

THIS IS WHY YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS...

"I felt like you heard me, felt my pain. You guys fought for me, and I feel like I got my dignity back."

MEET RUTH

Life was good for Ruth. She was recently married, and looking forward to welcoming her first child. Her life was turned upside down when she had a stroke during childbirth, leaving her paralyzed on the right side and in a wheelchair.

A fiercely independent woman, Ruth was forced to rely on others for assistance in all aspects of her life. One of Ruth's biggest barriers was getting into her apartment safely, and being able to use her apartment once inside. Ruth made numerous requests to her landlord to transfer her to a more accessible apartment, with a ramped entrance. Those requests were met with delays and denials.

Without being able to safely leave her apartment on a regular basis, Ruth saw her life drastically change. She missed medical appointments, religious services, and activities with her son.

"I felt like these people really tried to steal my dignity," Ruth said. "I was fighting for it, but they didn't hear me. And since they didn't hear me, I felt hopeless."

As the former leader of the tenants' association at her apartment complex, Ruth had often educated other tenants

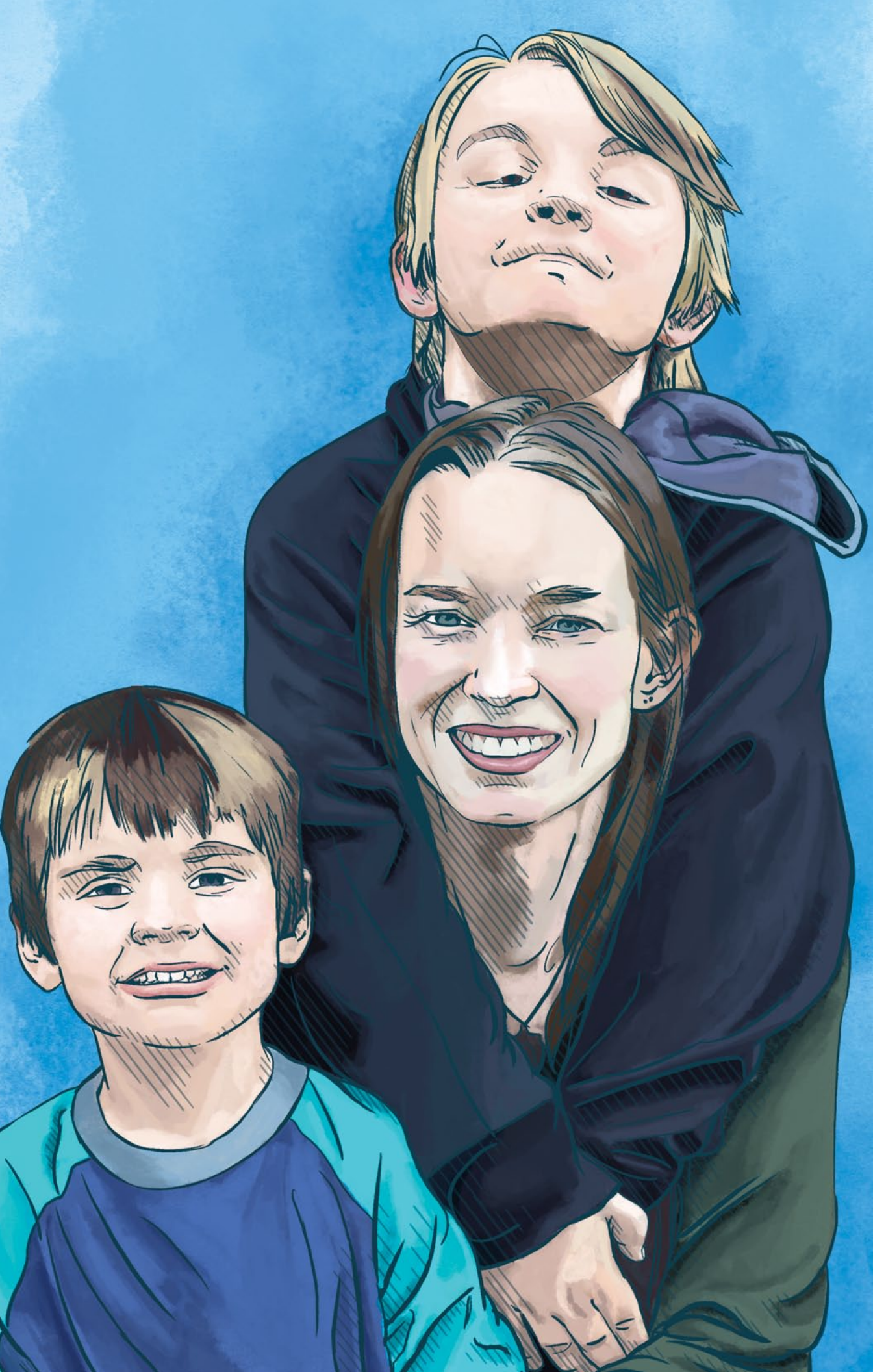
about their rights. She now needed to use that knowledge to fight for herself. With the assistance of Community Legal Aid, Ruth and her family filed a housing discrimination complaint with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

"I felt like you heard me, felt my pain. You guys fought for me, and I feel like I got my dignity back."

After those agencies found evidence of discrimination, the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office joined in enforcing Ruth's complaint. The parties resolved the case through a Consent Decree filed in the Superior Court. Under the terms of the judgment, the landlord paid damages, attorneys' fees and civil penalties; agreed to undertake an internal review of disability accessibility; and agreed to train its staff and tenants on fair housing rights, adopt and distribute a reasonable accommodation plan, and designate a specific staff person to process reasonable accommodation requests.

Ruth says she learned an important lesson: *"You have dignity, and no one has the right to steal that from you."*

Artist rendering of actual client



Stopping Abuse

YOU HELPED JILLIAN ESCAPE ABUSE AND BUILD A NEW LIFE FOR HER FAMILY

"I felt I was getting totally railroaded by the justice system. The prospect of preparing for the trial was terrifying."

MEET JILLIAN

"I worked really hard to leave a relationship that was dominated by domestic violence for a long time," Jillian says.

Jillian got out. But after she left, the father of Jillian's children, her abuser, won part-time custody rights. When her son came home with bruises, Jillian knew she had to act: she wanted a court to order that any contact between the children and their father be supervised. When she went to court, though, her ex contested.

"I felt I was getting totally railroaded by the justice system," Jillian said. *"The prospect of preparing for the trial was terrifying."*

Luckily Jillian went to Community Legal Aid's Lawyer for a Day program at the courthouse for advice. Realizing she desperately needed an attorney, we took her case and agreed to represent her.

While the father turned out to be a formidable opponent, Jillian said: *"My attorney was great; she took my concerns and made them heard in court."*

Jillian was thrilled when the court ruled in her favor. In addition, she said, her

legal aid attorney helped to ensure that the man who abused her and her children would not be allowed to be alone with them. *"She helped me to put these safeguards around me and the kids."*

Jillian has moved on. *"I'm doing the best that I can. I want to make the world a better place, and it starts at home."* Now a scholar at Smith College in Northampton, she is proud of her accomplishments – getting her life back on track and ensuring the safety of her kids – and she's thankful for all the help she got along the way. She is studying sociology because she wants to learn how to help the children of substance-abusing parents.

"I'm a lifelong learner," she says, happy that she has been able to put the abuse behind her. *"I'm really grateful for my Community Legal Aid attorney."*

Artist rendering of actual clients



Defending Rights

BRINGING JUSTICE TO THOSE WHO PUT FOOD ON OUR TABLES

"I am sometimes taken aback, after listening to a story of unthinkable violence, that I am the first human being to have heard it told."

"They live in a shack with cardboard on the floor," began a 1966 description in the Boston Globe of the living arrangements for 20 migrant farmworkers in a farm north of Boston. "A priest saw how the men live and work and described their conditions as 'slavery.'"

In Massachusetts today, an estimated 20,000 migrant and seasonal workers are employed in farms, nurseries, and packing sheds, with an additional 20,000 low-wage workers in other seasonal industries, such as carnivals, amusement parks, landscaping, and forestry. These workers earn an average of between \$15,000 and \$18,000 per year for work that is typically temporary, unpredictable, and associated with a high rate of workplace injury. As this largely immigrant population frequently lives and works in relative isolation, their legal challenges – such as wages, housing and abuse – are difficult to discover and address.

Attorney Billy Peard staffs a migrant worker project, which is housed within the Central West Justice Center, an affiliate organization of Community Legal Aid. In any given week, he can be found on the road—sometimes to Cape Cod, other times to the farthest reaches of western Mass.—so that he can make community legal education presentations to migrant workers and the agencies that serve them.

Along with helping workers with housing and employment issues, Billy has heard harrowing tales of domestic violence from his clients. In the 1960s, an overwhelming majority of seasonal workers in this region were men. Today, more and more New England farmworkers are women, fleeing violence and poverty in their home countries. Billy is sometimes the first and only person with whom these workers have shared some of the most intimate and disturbing memories of their past. He says: *"I am sometimes taken aback, after listening to a story of unthinkable violence that I am the first human being to have heard it told. No social workers. No therapists. 'We got into an argument and he had a knife in his hand,' one client related to me. 'He told me he was going to mark up my face with the knife.' Her face still bears the marks of the knife before she was able to escape the room."* As a survivor of domestic violence, this worker was eligible for humanitarian-based immigration relief, which Billy helped her apply for.

Billy concludes: *"The squalid conditions of the 1960s have taken on different meaning, perhaps different causes, but they still persist. And as long as they persist, I expect that we'll be here to do what we can."*

Artist rendering of actual migrant worker wearing protective clothing

According to the
U.S. Department of
Labor, 72 percent of
all farmworkers are
foreign-born.

64%

of farmworkers do not have
health insurance

Agricultural work consistently
ranks among the **MOST
DANGEROUS** in the country

Farmworker median
income is under

\$17,500

\$8
AN HOUR*

Massachusetts state agricultural
minimum wage

**\$3 less than the standard minimum wage*

\$2.8
BILLION

Market value of agricultural
products sold in New England (2012)

TYPICAL CROPS IN NEW ENGLAND HARVESTED BY MIGRANT WORKERS

MASSACHUSETTS



Apples Shade Tobacco Peaches Cabbage Onions Tomatoes Peppers

MAINE



Blueberries Potatoes

VERMONT



Milk



Artist rendering of actual migrant workers

CLA turns 65!

Community Legal Aid celebrated 65 years of civil legal aid in Worcester County at Tuckerman Hall in Worcester this past October.

Guest host Congressman Jim McGovern spoke about the vital need for civil legal aid. He noted that many more residents of the region would face terrible injustices without the services CLA provides.

During the event, a slideshow and exhibits showed some of the history of Community Legal Aid, the result of the merger of several forerunner organizations, including the Legal Aid Society of Worcester and Central Massachusetts Legal Services. John Shea, president of CLA's Board of Directors, presented awards to the United Way of Central Massachusetts, represented by Tim Garvin, as well as to private attorneys Robert Lian and Robert Seder. The awards celebrated the honorees' decades of service to Worcester residents through support for legal aid.

Over \$11,000 was raised that night through ticket sales, sponsorships, raffle and auction items.

The evening was capped by music by The Annulments, a local group of central Mass. attorneys and judges, featuring singer Arose Nielsen, a former legal aid lawyer in Worcester and now a board member of CLA.



Charles Vander Linden (left) and Mark Zarrow



Rev. Clyde Talley (left) and Linda Cavaoli (YWCA of Central Massachusetts)



John Shea (Mirick O'Connell, and CLA board president)



Geoffrey German, Arose Nielsen, Craig Smith (of The Annulments)



Vincent O'Rourke, Doug Brown, Congressman McGovern, Kathleen Polanowicz



From left: Anita Conte, Leighann Agyemang, Jena Gutierrez, Weayonnoh Nelson-Davies, Valerie Zolezzi-Wyndham (all CLA), and Kate Eshghi (UMass Memorial Health Care)



United Way of Central Massachusetts team



Jonathan Manning, Valerie Zolezzi-Wyndham, Mark Zarrow, Robert Seder, Tim Garvin and Congressman McGovern

Volunteer Lawyers Service

Community Legal Aid turns away two-thirds of eligible clients in need because we don't have enough resources to serve them. Volunteers play an essential role in narrowing the justice gap.

A big thank you to the attorneys listed opposite for donating your time this year. Pro bono feels good, can provide access to free trainings and mentorship, and expands your professional experience. If you are an attorney interested in joining, see our website, and click on "Get Involved" then "Volunteer Lawyers Service."

This year, we want to recognize our medical-legal partnership with UMass Memorial Health Care which addresses legal barriers to good health outcomes for Medicaid-eligible low-income families. To date, over 50 volunteer attorneys have enrolled to work with clinical care teams at three clinics in the Worcester area to help address such legal barriers to health as substandard housing, special education needs, and access to benefits.



562



New Cases Referred

209

Private Attorneys who Accepted a Referral

476



Pro Bono Cases Closed

2,673



Pro Bono Hours Donated

\$570,953

Value Of Donated Pro Bono Hours

On behalf of our client communities, Community Legal Aid thanks the following attorneys who accepted a pro bono referral from the Volunteer Lawyers Service in the past fiscal year.

Peter Adams
Karen Adamski
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Thanks also to Judith Rothbard Tate and Mark Gold for volunteering substantial time in 2016.

Conclusion

Almost 1 million people in Massachusetts live below 125% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$30,750 a year for a family of four), making them eligible for civil legal aid.

Due to lack of funding, legal aid organizations in Massachusetts are forced to turn away two thirds of eligible people who seek help.

The need for legal services far outstrips our ability to provide them. Community Legal Aid is forced to turn away two thirds of the people eligible for our services who ask us for help because we don't have enough staff. All of these people are facing a legal crisis when they call for help. But every time limited funds choke off our ability to accept a case, we have to make agonizing decisions:

- Which battered woman is in the MOST immediate danger without legal help?
- Which family will become homeless FIRST without representation in Housing Court?

Justice Minus You = Impossible

Your contributions – financial, volunteer, partnership – are essential to providing free legal assistance to those in dire need in the communities where we live and work. They transform lives by:

- Fighting discrimination
- Stopping Abuse
- Preventing homelessness
- Ensuring health and safety
- Protecting jobs and economic security
- Defending rights

On behalf of the entire Community Legal Aid family, THANK YOU for being one of our greatest friends and allies as we work together to provide fairness and justice to the most vulnerable residents of central and western Massachusetts.

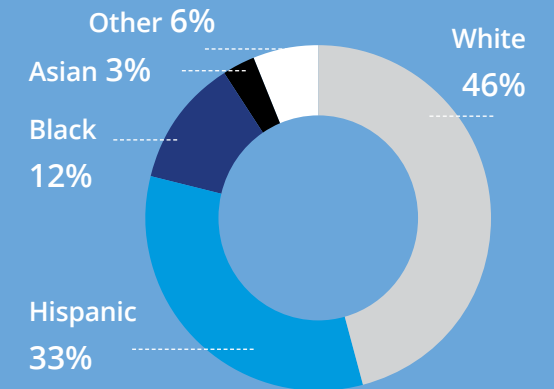
NUMBER OF CASES HANDLED

6,538

AREA OF LAW

3,057	Preventing homelessness
828	Maximizing incomes
777	Keeping families safe
765	Working towards citizenship
325	Defending workers
284	Protecting consumers
222	Access to affordable healthcare
171	Keeping kids in school
65	Other

CASES HANDLED BY RACE



CASES HANDLE BY AGE

4%	0 – 18
72%	19 – 59
20%	60+
4%	Unknown

HOUSEHOLD INCOME LEVEL

65%	At or below 100% of the federal poverty guidelines*
28%	Between 100% and 200% of the federal poverty guidelines*
7%	Other

16,345

Total number of household members helped

4,327 (65%)

Number of households with incomes less than \$17,000

*2016 Federal Poverty Levels:

100%: Pre-tax annual income of \$11,880 for an individual, or \$24,300 for a family of four.

200%: Pre-tax annual income of \$23,760 for an individual, or \$48,600 for a family of four.

2016 Justice Campaign Committee Members

The following volunteers helped Community Legal Aid raise over \$90,000 from lawyers and law firms in central and western Massachusetts this past year. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to justice.

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Donors for Fiscal Year 2016

(October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2016)

If you made your first donation in 2016, thank you and welcome to the family! If you've given before, thank you for being with us for the long haul. We welcome your support at any level. Every time you give, you help turn injustice into justice throughout central and western Massachusetts.

\$10,000+ PILLARS OF JUSTICE

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Legal Services Corporation	Worcester County Food Bank

Financials

Revenue

Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation	4,367,564
Legal Services Corporation	1,547,494
Government Grants	1,499,501
Foundation Grants	525,274
Private Fundraising	157,318
United Way Grants	119,270
Attorneys Fees	123,552
Other Income	148,495
Revenue Before Donated Services	8,488,468
Donated Services - Attorneys	561,732
Total Revenue After Donated Services	9,050,200

Expenses

Personnel	6,957,059
Occupancy	541,504
Operations	700,678
Library and Litigation	10,550
Sub-grants	35,142
Contract Services	135,922
Expenses Before Donated Services	8,380,855
Donated Services - Attorneys	561,732
Total Expenses After Donated Services	8,942,587
 Change In Net Assets	 107,613

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Northampton, MA 01060

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152 North Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201

Springfield
One Monarch Place
Springfield, MA 01144

Worcester
405 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01608

**SATELLITE OFFICE
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Fitchburg, MA 01420

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Greenfield, MA 01301

Holyoke
Holyoke Health Center
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