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Community Legal Aid
Fairness and justice... for all.

Community Report Fiscal Year 2013

Meet JOEL

This year, **you** helped Joel and over 5,000 others in central and western Mass. fight for fairness, justice, and dignity. More inside...

Dear Friends,

In this community report, you will see the photos and read the stories of four people **you have helped**. You will see how **Joel** fought to get his urgent medical needs met. How **Jackline** secured her lawful benefits, and also learned to advocate for herself. How **Laurie** overturned an illegal foreclosure to stay in her home. And how **Mindy** successfully stood up to an abusive partner to protect herself and her children, permanently.

Powerful and moving as these stories are, they are just a small sample of the thousands of people **your support** touched in 2013.

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

- **Defending** victims of abuse
- **Preventing** homelessness
- **Ensuring** health and safety
- **Protecting** jobs and economic security
- **Fighting** discrimination

On behalf of all of the 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 all the residents of central and western Massachusetts.

Go ahead and see for yourself. Thanks to **you**, we had a great year.



Jonathan L. Mannina
Executive Director



Gayle Flanders Weiss
President

“Without my CLA attorney, it wouldn’t have worked.
He treated me like a full, real person.”
—Laurie

“Now I feel like there’s hope and a way forward.”
—Queenie

“If Community Legal Aid
didn’t fight for me, I wouldn’t have a life at all.”
—Sharon

“No doubt. CLA did one heck of a job.”
—Randy

*“CLA evened the playing field, but it was bigger
than that. We had a champion.”*
—TracyLee


Joel's

life changed forever when the deck he was standing on collapsed in 1999 during a college graduation party. Joel was pinned between the second and third floors, and as a result of his injuries, became quadriplegic. He now relies on a team of Personal Care Attendants (PCAs) to live independently, and he has to work a little harder than most of us on his daily routine. For example, it takes him several hours to get ready for each day. And he needs assistance with eating and drinking.

Joel came to Community Legal Aid with a health insurance problem that was seriously affecting his quality of life. Joel had been hospitalized in 2012, and as a result of a tracheotomy, spent months afterwards retraining his mouth and throat muscles to chew and swallow food. Eating was a long, laborious effort, and he needed a PCA to feed him at a pace his body could handle without choking. But his insurer, MassHealth, refused to pay for the extra time he needed a PCA to help him eat. Joel obtained multiple medical opinions, substantiating the potential lethal risks of aspirating his food, but was unable to convince MassHealth to change its decision. In the meantime, he was struggling to pay for the extra PCA time out of his own pocket.

Feeling desperate and taken advantage of, Joel turned to Community Legal Aid. Medha, Joel's attorney, quickly crafted a sound and innovative argument for Joel's case, which won at appeal. Joel says, "With Medha's expertise, she made a quick and dramatic difference. [She] did an amazing job." He adds, "Donor support for CLA is essential to continue providing services like they did for me."





"[Before,] I felt taken advantage of, but with Medha's expertise, she made a quick and dramatic difference."

With **YOUR** help, Joel fought to get his urgent medical needs met and retain his dignity.

“Laura made a difference in my life because I can stand on my own now.”



YOU helped Jackline secure her lawful benefits and learn how to advocate for herself and her family.



Jackline

, a pregnant refugee fleeing strife in Uganda, settled in Worcester with her daughter. Although she received some initial guidance from the resettlement agency, Jackline was confused and overwhelmed by the myriad regulations involved in accessing lawful government benefits. Jackline initially contacted Community Legal Aid when the Department of Transitional Assistance threatened to cut her cash assistance for failure to provide information about her daughter's father to the Department of Revenue. In fact, Jackline had promptly responded to the DOR, but had not used the proper form. CLA attorney Laura contacted both agencies and was able to resolve the problem and protect Jackline's benefits.

A few months later, after giving birth, Jackline received a notice that her family's MassHealth benefits would be terminated. The notice was particularly concerning to Jackline because her newborn had suffered an injury to her arm during childbirth. The nerves in her baby's arm were damaged, and doctors advised Jackline that her baby would only be able to make a recovery if she had regular physical therapy. Without MassHealth, Jackline could not afford the therapy her daughter so critically needed. It turned out that multiple, conflicting cases were open in the MassHealth system under Jackline's name. Laura identified the problem and successfully advocated for the family's MassHealth benefits to be restored. Now, Jackline's daughter receives weekly physical therapy and even began crawling recently, something her doctors thought might not happen.

With Laura's help, Jackline has learned to advocate for herself. She recently signed her children up for subsidized day care so she can enroll in classes at Quinsigamond Community College. The experience of being a refugee in a new land is fraught with uncertainty, but Jackline feels sure that when future hurdles come her way, she will know how to tackle them. Jackline says, "Laura made a difference in my life because I can stand on my own now. I was stuck, and she helped me."

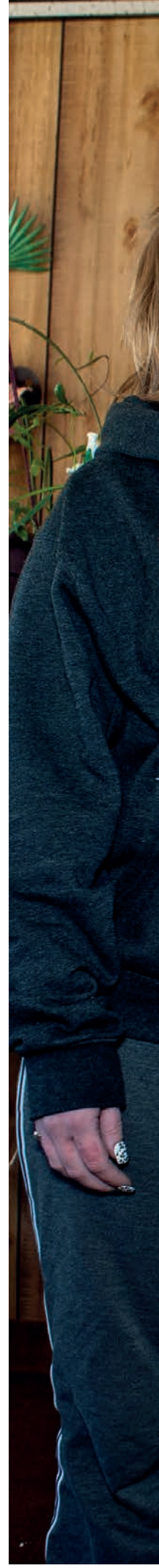
Laurie

knows how to nurture things. A skilled botanist, she spent more than 15 years cultivating hundreds of plants in and around her home. But life did not always return the favor. Her husband physically abused her for years, and it was not until 2007 that she divorced. Laurie ended up with a heavily mortgaged home and two children to raise by herself. She worked two full-time jobs to scrape together as much money as she could to send to the bank. She stopped gardening. She couldn't pay for heat. Over and over, the bank threatened foreclosure, and Laurie would send more money. Finally, in May of 2012, the home was sold at auction.

When Laurie received a 48-hour eviction notice, she turned to Community Legal Aid. Allen, Laurie's attorney, found that the eviction notices were served improperly, and was able to have the eviction dismissed in court. Before the bank could bring a second eviction, Allen uncovered legal problems with the foreclosure sale itself, and began to file complaints in court. Meanwhile, he helped Laurie work with Boston Community Capital (BCC), a non-profit that helps families that have a steady income – but can't make their monthly mortgage payments due to hardship – repurchase their homes from banks at an affordable rate.

With assistance from BCC, Allen's legal help, and a gift from her son, Laurie was able to buy back her home in 2013. Laurie says, "The most important thing that [Allen] gave me was hope, strength and complete moral support. I felt like I was the only person in the world to him." Laurie continues, "If I didn't have Allen – it wouldn't have worked. He treated me like a full, real person."


Now, for the first time in years, Laurie is excited about her plans for the future. "I'm gonna get out there with all my vigor in the spring," she says. "My life has been on hold, literally, for eight years. Now, at 53, I can start my life over again. It's all behind me, and Laurie, unmarried woman, is a homeowner!"



"I can start my life over again. It's all behind me, and now [I'm] a homeowner!"




YOU helped Laurie and her family overturn an illegal foreclosure and stay in their home.



*“If it wasn’t for
CLA, I don’t know
what I would
have done.”*

With **YOUR** help, Mindy successfully fought to protect herself and her daughter, permanently.



Mindy

was trapped in a violent relationship with Tom*. He abused her physically and emotionally. He also subjected their young daughter to regular threats of violence, calling her a “whore” and threatening to kidnap her and take her to a place where “no one would be able to find the body.” He also told Mindy that he would shoot their daughter in the head and find another woman who could give him a new child. Mindy was finally brave enough to press charges, and Tom went to jail for two years. Mindy, along with her mother and daughter, moved to a new home and tried to start her life over. Unfortunately, within a week of Tom’s release from jail in 2013, he found Mindy’s new home and left a threatening note in her mailbox.

Mindy was horrified at the prospect of Tom re-entering their lives, and, after finding Community Legal Aid, applied for a restraining order with the help of her attorney, Jeff. But to her shock, at the hearing, the judge denied Mindy’s request. Jeff knew that the request was denied on improper grounds, and he filed an emergency motion with the Mass. Appeals Court. A single justice reheard the case and ordered that a different judge in the Probate and Family Court hear the request. During the second hearing, Jeff and Mindy prevailed. Unfortunately, Mindy’s struggle wasn’t over. Tom had filed a request for visitation rights with their daughter.

Jeff was able to have Mindy’s daughter’s psychotherapist testify at trial that it would be extremely unhealthy for the child to have Tom in her life. Mindy was terrified that if Tom had visitation, she would be putting her daughter “in the arms of a monster.” She was afraid her daughter might not survive. Thanks to Jeff’s advocacy, and Mindy’s strength, the judge agreed and ruled that Tom was to have no contact of any kind with their child.

When asked about her plans now, Mindy says she is focused on only one thing: making sure her daughter grows into a healthy, safe adult. “My life revolves around her,” Mindy says. “I’ll be okay – I’m an adult. But I want to make sure she is great and successful in life and not ever in the same situation I was in. And now I can do that.” Of her experience with CLA, Mindy says, “Jeff is a great lawyer. He’s a fighter, and because of his fight, he pushed me to fight, and I’m very thankful. If it wasn’t for CLA, I don’t know what I would have done. I’m very grateful.”

*Names used in this story are pseudonyms. This picture does not portray actual client.

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The following attorneys volunteered substantial time in Fiscal Year 2013 to CLA and its clients:
Eva Chojnacki
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Lewis Popper
Judith Rothbard Tate

Special thanks to our panels of *pro bono* attorneys, who spend thousands of hours helping clients in need.

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Our dedicated board and staff members are truly what allows CLA to have such great impact.

Financial and Case Information

For the 12 months ending September 30, 2013

Revenue

Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corp.	\$3,235,057	56.0%
Government Grants	\$1,473,554	25.5%
Foundation Grants	\$328,833	5.7%
Private Fundraising	\$161,853	2.8%
Cy Pres Awards	\$143,372	2.5%
Attorneys Fees	\$129,957	2.2%
United Way Grants	\$114,833	2.0%
Other Income	\$189,545	3.3%
Total Revenue	\$5,777,004	

Expenses

Personnel	\$4,411,871	81.8%
Operations	\$419,896	7.8%
Occupancy	\$418,710	7.8%
Contract Services	\$79,160	1.5%
Library & Litigation	\$39,014	0.7%
Sub-grants	\$27,378	0.5%
Total Expenses	\$5,396,029	

Cases Handled

Elder Law
1,268 cases

Benefits Law
1,390 cases

Humanitarian
Immigration Law
494 cases

Housing Law
1,847 cases

Family Law
1,329 cases





Community Legal Aid

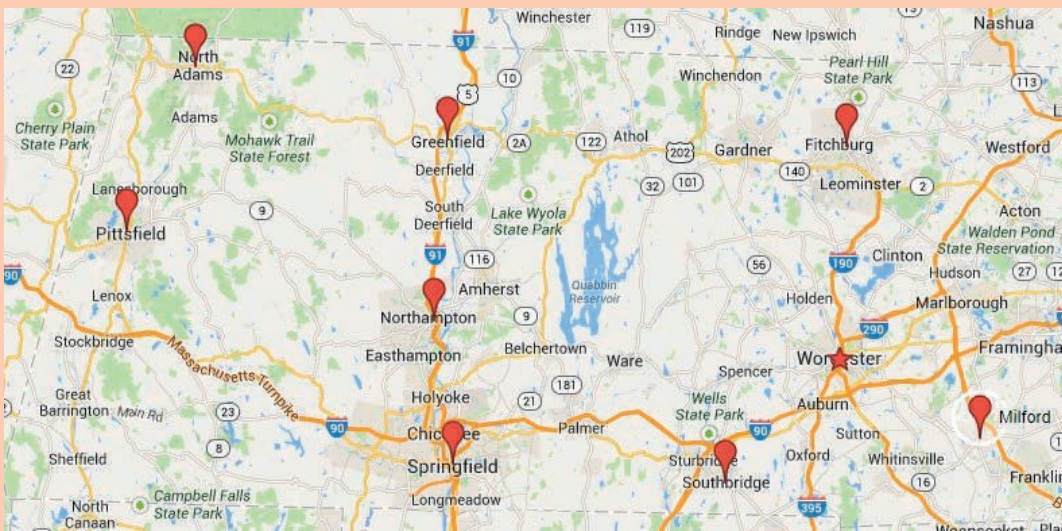
Fairness and justice... for all.

405 Main Street
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www.communitylegal.org

(855) CLA-LEGAL (855-252-5342)



For more than 50 years, Community Legal Aid and its predecessor agencies have ensured fairness in the justice system for our clients in moments of crisis, when their problem - protecting their livelihood, home, health, or family - requires an immediate legal solution.



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NORTHAMPTON 20 Hampton Avenue Northampton, MA 01060	SPRINGFIELD One Monarch Place Springfield, MA 01144
PITTSFIELD 152 North Street Pittsfield, MA 01201	WORCESTER 405 Main Street Worcester, MA 01608

Satellite Office Locations:

FITCHBURG 76 Summer Street Fitchburg, MA 01420	MILFORD 60 North Bow Street Milford, MA 01757	SOUTHBRIDGE 79 Elm Street Southbridge, MA 01550
GREENFIELD 55 Federal Street Greenfield, MA 01301	NORTH ADAMS 61 Main Street North Adams, MA 01247	