PROVIDING SELF-HELP
260,193 visits to LawHelpMN

CONNECTING WITH RESOURCES
2,100 people were served at Housing Court Project in partnership with VLN.

MAINTAINING INDEPENDENCE
896 people became citizens or permanent residents.

PARTNERING TO SERVE
1,100 people gained access to health care.

SECURING BASIC NEEDS
2,100 people were served at Housing Court Project in partnership with VLN.

WORKING TOWARD CITIZENSHIP
896 people became citizens or permanent residents.

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896 people became citizens or permanent residents.

76% of our consumer cases were related to unfair debt collection.

FIGHTING FOR CHANGE
Helped 224 children with Special Education issues.

KEEPING FAMILIES SAFE
3,200 individuals and families maintained their housing.

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS
Stabilized more than 1,000 families experiencing violence.

ASSISTED people with disabilities in 85% of MN counties.

KEEPING KIDS IN SCHOOL
Helped 224 children with Special Education issues.

MAINTAINING INDEPENDENCE
Assisted people with disabilities in 85% of MN counties.

PROTECTING CONSUMERS
896 people became citizens or permanent residents.

PROTECTING RIGHTS, IMPROVING LIVES
A HOLISTIC APPROACH BRINGS LASTING CHANGE

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SECURING BASIC NEEDS
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DEAR FRIENDS,

Legal Aid has begun to celebrate our centennial year — yes, 100 years of working for justice in Minnesota! Opening for business in 1913 as “The Legal Aid Department of the Associated Charities of Minneapolis”, John Benson (co-founder of Faegre & Benson, now Faegre Baker Daniels LLP) was its solo full-time attorney. A century later, many things have changed, including the reach of our services beyond Minneapolis. In 2012, we took steps to streamline our organization and now have one board of directors and one name — Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid (Legal Aid). Our focus on client needs, however, remains the same. And our relationships with the many partners, volunteers and donors who make it possible for us to provide comprehensive legal services for our clients is vital in our ability to provide much-needed services every day.

Holistic Legal Services
A primary area of focus — and a strength — for Legal Aid is to help clients address multiple legal needs that present obstacles for our clients. We consider this the legal equivalent of “holistic” health care. We have become increasingly skilled at tracking the difficulties that take our clients from despair to self-sufficiency, and we’ve developed innovative ways to bring together resources from within Legal Aid and the larger community to address each client’s situation in a way that brings about real, lasting change.

One example is the Stearns County Domestic Violence Court Partnership (highlighted on page 10). This partnership brings together prosecutors, Legal Aid attorneys, judges, corrections, a local battered women’s shelter, mental health and chemical dependency professionals, and law enforcement to create significant change for hundreds of families. The results of the partnership have been dramatic. In the past three years, 136 felony domestic violence offenders involved in the project collectively committed a total of only five assaults.

Legal Aid’s St. Cloud office plays a key role in this partnership by meeting the civil legal needs of victims and their children.

Donor and Volunteer Support
Although income from government and foundation sources is down, private sector fundraising has become our most stable source of financial support. In addition, pro bono legal work and volunteerism enable us to broaden the scope, expertise and reach of our services. For example, in 1913, University of Minnesota third-year law students were required to spend 36 hours working at a legal aid office as a condition of graduation. One hundred years later, we have multiple volunteers from many law schools, undergraduate institutions and law firms helping us all year, every year. What a difference our donors and volunteers make in our clients’ lives!

Recently, a domestic violence client told us that her older two children took it upon themselves to start doing lawn care for some elderly neighbors. When asked why, they said “Well Mom, when we couldn’t get what we needed for our family someone gave it to us. It’s time for us to give back.” These children illustrate the rippling effects of justice for all. When one family gets access to the holistic help and services they need, they have resources and energy to help the next, and so it continues...

Thank you for your support. Together, we’ll continue to work toward justice for all throughout our community.

Cathy Haukedahl, Executive Director
Ms. Yassin thought she was going to live the American dream. In 2003, she met a Somolian man who was a U.S. citizen and seemed like a decent, caring and loving individual. They became engaged and married in 2007. Ms. Yassin brought their two small children to the U.S. in 2009 so they could all have a better life together.

"After I arrived here, he started to hide things from me," Ms. Yassin said. "He would not allow me to go outside. He controlled all of the finances. He did not want me to work or get an education, and when I said I wanted a computer so I could learn at home, he refused. He banged on walls and threatened me, and I would lock myself in another room."

Things became worse when she got pregnant again. Soon after the third child was born, she asked him to get diapers for the middle child, and he came home without them. When she asked why he didn't get diapers, he accused her of having another man in the apartment. He hit her, kicked her in the stomach, and pulled out a huge chunk of her hair.

Ms. Yassin called the police and went to the hospital that night. Her grandparents, who also reside in Minnesota, connected their granddaughter to Fathia Warsame, a legal assistant at Legal Aid who speaks Somali. Fathia helped Ms. Yassin through the intake procedure and has assisted her with filing for a divorce, securing child support, completing her immigration process and receiving healthcare benefits.

Divorce was not an easy decision for Ms. Yassin. She was under a great deal of cultural pressure to stay in the marriage and she was terrified of being deported. Because she came to the U.S. under conditional residency, her husband made her believe that she could only stay here under his permission. She finally made her decision, telling family law attorney Jayne Barnard McCoy, “I need peace in my life.”

Fathia kept reassuring me,” says Ms. Yassin, “but I was still very paranoid. My husband had really frightened me, and I was so afraid he would send me back, and then I would never be able to get away from him.”

Ms. Yassin’s husband had no interest in his children, so custody was not an issue. The judge ordered child support of $1,000/month, plus spousal support of $400/month for three years. At the same time, Ms. Yassin began her immigration case with immigration attorney Kirsten Olson to remove the conditions for residency.

“It was a straightforward case,” says Kirsten. “Ms. Yassin had documented evidence of abuse and she was in the process of obtaining a divorce, so she easily met the criteria for the waiver.” They started the paperwork and six months later, Ms. Yassin became a full-fledged permanent resident with the right to apply for citizenship.

“They helped me with everything,” she says of Legal Aid. “I told Fathia I had a problem with a medical bill, and they helped me with that, too.” That was a simple case for consumer finance attorney Jeremy Carvell. Ms. Yassin was sued on a Medical Assistance debt that she shouldn’t have been billed for in the first place.

Today, Ms. Yassin is now living in a two-bedroom apartment with her three children. Child and spousal support are enough to support her family’s basic needs. She no longer collects cash benefits and her need for food stamps is lower than when she first was on her own, which is beneficial to both Ms. Yassin and the community. She also attends school to learn English, and she recently completed a citizenship class. Well on the way to an independent, healthy and safe lifestyle, Ms. Yassin, credits her renewed chance at a better life to the help she received from Fathia and the extended resources Legal Aid provided.

“I want to become a citizen,” she says. “I’m so grateful to everything Legal Aid has done for me. I’m happy now. My children are safe, we have a good home, and my ex-husband cannot do anything to us anymore.”
They helped me with everything...I told Fathia I had a problem with a medical bill, and they helped me with that too.
Sometimes, one problem leads to another... and another. And eventually, it’s all problems and no solutions. Sometimes, you end up where you never thought you’d be — homeless, no money and nowhere to go. Then adding insult to injury, the mice chew a hole in your sleeping bag, and it’s October with snow on the way.

“Rob Stanton” came to Legal Aid in October to get help with disability benefits from Stearns County. He needed evidence from a doctor to get the benefits, but he couldn’t go to a doctor because he didn’t have money or healthcare insurance.

Rob had been living under a bridge. He wouldn’t go to the homeless shelters because he didn’t do well in close quarters with strangers due to a mental illness. He’d been trying to figure out

Caring solutions for tangled problems

For Ralonda and the others at Legal Aid who followed Rob through a seemingly endless tangle of problems, it was one of the best housewarmings ever.
how to get the disability benefits himself but had trouble with the paperwork. Despite his efforts, he was escorted out of the county building several times for becoming frustrated and yelling at people. The fact is, Rob wasn’t capable of getting the help he needed on his own. But things changed when he met Ralonda Mason.

“I told Rob he could come to my office and yell,” said Ralonda Mason, staff attorney. “Only in my office — not in the waiting room. And he couldn’t throw or hit anything, but he could yell all he wanted.”

Ralonda and other staff worked with Rob almost daily over a six-week period, helping him navigate systems. He didn’t want to be certified as disabled because he didn’t like what the doctors were saying about him, but with Legal Aid’s help, he obtained Medical Assistance. He often came to the office in the morning to warm up and drink some hot coffee, and staff began working to find housing for him. They helped him clear up a past problem with a utility bill so his housing record was clean.

In mid-November, legal assistant Marcia Pohl heard that a property manager for housing for the disabled was willing to accept a signed document from a doctor, without the details of the disability. When moving day came, the entire office showed up to help Rob move and celebrate his new home. One person donated a coffee maker, and another donated sheets and towels. When they arrived at Rob’s place, they found that others in the apartment building donated furniture and groceries after seeing him moving in with nothing but a few garbage bags of belongings.

Rob sat on the bedroom floor with Ralonda and, with tears in his eyes, said, “I’m going to sleep here tonight.” For Ralonda and the others at Legal Aid who followed Rob through a seemingly endless tangle of problems, it was one of the best housewarmings ever.

Rob still lives in that apartment. He recently completed a recertification for disability benefits, is current on his rent, and would like to lead fishing and bowling groups for other tenants. He’s warm. He’s dry. He’s safe. And he doesn’t miss the mice that still live under the bridge.

“I’m going to sleep here tonight.”
Angie was scared and lost. She and her five children were victims of domestic violence and Angie didn’t know where to start to seek safety, shelter or the financial resources she would need to escape her abusive situation and provide a safe, healthy home for her family. It was all very overwhelming.

Angie began her journey to find safety two and a half years ago by applying for an Order for Protection (OFP). Unfortunately, the court denied Angie’s request, leaving her defeated and unsure of where to turn. “My life was so ugly, I didn’t even want to admit it was mine,” commented Angie. “Until you lose your dignity, you don’t know how important it really is.”

Angie was introduced to Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid services from a nurse at St. Cloud Hospital. She had gone into premature labor as the result of domestic violence, and a nurse suggested she get some legal help. Angie connected with Anna Marie’s Alliance, a domestic shelter in St. Cloud that is a part of the Stearns County Domestic Violence partnership. Safe for the first time in a long time, Angie began working with a team of Legal Aid lawyers who would help her successfully get an Order for Protection and begin her long journey to a safer, happier life for her and her children.

Angie’s needs were multi-fold; they needed safe housing, stability and financial help to start over. “Legal Aid was a huge information resource for us,” said Angie. “They connected the links between what I needed and what was available. They kept asking me how they could help me move forward.”

While the OFP case was pending, Angie was served with divorce papers and grandparent visitation papers, so her Legal Aid lawyers focused on getting a permanent order to keep Angie and her children safe. When, due to a court error, her abuser found out where she was living and began to harass the family, Legal Aid connected her with the Safe At Home program. “Legal Aid couldn’t help me with my criminal case,” explained Angie. “But they saw me all the way through the very difficult divorce process.” They also negotiated an agreement to put grandparent visitation on hold until custody was decided in the criminal and divorce courts.

Legal Aid also connected Angie with Catholic Charities and their Bridges Program, which helps families find affordable housing. With Catholic Charities’ assistance, Angie and her family successfully moved into an affordable home. “There was so much I didn’t know, ways to get help that I never would have found on my own. I didn’t know I could file with the County for help with first and last months’ rent. Legal Aid looked at the whole picture, over and over, and helped me find options and opportunities to take back my own life.”

Continued on next page.
Legal Aid looked at the whole picture, over and over, and helped me find options and opportunities to take back my own life.
With a home to live in, Angie still faced the issue of financial debt and limited income. She avoided her creditors because she could not pay money she owed. Again, Legal Aid stepped in and helped her prioritize debt, contact creditors and develop payment plans to get her finances back in order.

When Social Security was denied for Angie’s son, who has a disability, a legal assistant helped her file for reconsideration, and the request was approved.

Today, Angie and her five children live in a modest home. Angie works from home, and her children are safe. “It was such an enormous gift to have someone on my side, every time. Their goal was our stability, our happiness, and my children’s safety. You can’t imagine how important that is to a mother, getting help to protect my children.”

“Every penny, every ounce of energy that goes from the community to support Legal Aid — it really changes lives. Helping me find my dignity, so I can hold my head up as I go about rebuilding my life — there’s no way to repay that. It means everything.”

Changing the World: Stearns County Domestic Violence Court

In April of 2009, Legal Aid’s St. Cloud office entered a unique partnership called the Stearns County Domestic Violence Court Project. Headed by Stearns County Attorney Janelle Kendall, the highly successful project includes judges, probation officers, victim services, county law enforcement, and Legal Aid. Focusing on 40–50 multiple repeat felony offenders at a time, the partnership addresses offender accountability and victim safety. This project, the first repeat felony domestic violence court in the nation, redefines how to provide services for victims and places a priority on better results for children.

Early in the planning process, a consultant gave this advice to County Attorney Kendall, “The thing that will change your world is a Legal Aid lawyer.” Both the consultant and County Attorney Kendall recognized that Legal Aid is uniquely positioned to build a relationship with victims that help lead them to safety. Building on this common vision, the partnership was born.

As a testament to the value of this partnership, Riann Meyer, the Legal Aid attorney representing victims of the offenders, commented “Providing holistic legal representation to victims who are struggling with paying rent without two incomes, or who are trying to get child support from an abuser who is angry at them for calling the police, gives victims a voice and gives them the help they need to be safe and keep their kids safe.”

The project team has received recognition from multiple state and national organizations:

- Recognized as one of ten innovative criminal justice programs in the nation at the Innovations in Criminal Justice Summit II Conference in February 2013, sponsored by the American Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, the Center for Court Innovation and the U.S. Department of Justice.
- Recipient of the January 2013 Local Government Innovation Award from the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. This award is given in partnership with InCommons, the Association of Minnesota Counties, League of Minnesota Cities and the Minnesota School Boards Association.
- Received the December 2012 Outstanding Service Award from the Association of Minnesota Counties.

The project team has also been asked to deliver presentations at several national conferences:

- The 2012 National Center for Victims of Crime Conference;
- The 17th International Conference on Violence, Abuse, and Trauma;
- The 2012 National Legal Aid and Defender Association (NLADA); and Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) conferences.
Expert advocacy lightens the load

Lauree Ovshak is very resourceful. She’s the one her friends call when they need to find help with a problem. And she’s a fighter. But last October, she was ready to give up.

Her daughter Abby has autism, an anxiety disorder, significant developmental delays, and several health conditions, including Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, which limits her physical activity. Abby is incapable of most self-care tasks and needs daily assistance and supervision. She had been receiving Social Security benefits and Consumer-Directed Community Support Option under the Developmental Disabilities waiver program.

When Abby turned eighteen, the County said they needed another screening. The new assessor used an old report from a school Abby had attended for less than six weeks, and based on inaccurate information, the County terminated Abby’s benefits. Lauree took Abby for a neuropsychological exam to back up her case. The doctor noted at that time, “Without services, Abigail would likely need residential care to meet her developmental needs.” So while Lauree had compelling evidence to support the need for services, she did not have the expertise to overturn the County’s decision.

At the same time, Abby’s federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability benefits were up for reassessment and she was found ineligible. Lauree filed an appeal, but the Social Security office never received it.

“I started to doubt myself,” Lauree reflected. “I started to think they were right, that Abby didn’t qualify for benefits, and that I’d just have to figure this out on my own.” The loss of these resources would make it nearly impossible to provide Abby with the care she needed. Lauree was overwhelmed but determined to fight for her daughter’s needs.

Lauree called Legal Aid’s Minnesota Disability Law Center (MDLC). “I just needed someone with that education and knowledge — that authority — to tell me I wasn’t wrong.” With the help of Bud Rosenfeld, a Legal Aid attorney who specializes in disability cases, the Ovshaks won both cases. “Those months of uncertainty were tough,” says Lauree. “They took a real mental and physical toll. I know how to advocate my way through systems, but the cost is tremendous. It made all the difference to have the help — not just the knowledge and expertise, but also the reassurance and support.”

“I’m almost ashamed to say, I never thought about Legal Aid before this,” says Lauree. I am so grateful for the generosity — for all those people who made it possible for Legal Aid to be there for me and Abby.”
**FINANCIALS**

**REVENUE & EXPENDITURES | 2012**

**REVENUE**

United Ways 597,789  
Federal 3,090,970  
State 3,604,594  
Foundations 368,847  
Local Government 552,645  
Fund for Legal Aid 1,100,000  
IOLTA 920,348  
State Support & LSAP 393,707  
Fellowships/Clerks 201,534  
Attorney Fees 241,315  
Miscellaneous 134,148  
**TOTAL** $11,205,897

**EXPENDITURES**

Poverty Law 6,635,182  
Disability Law 1,991,168  
Administration 1,134,888  
LSAP 458,324  
State Support 487,045  
Fundraising 404,678  
**TOTAL** $11,111,285

**CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEETS | 12.31.12**

**ASSETS**

**CURRENT ASSETS**

Cash and Cash Equivalents $3,229,079  
Receivables:  
- Grants and Contracts 1,474,060  
- Pledges and Other 148,400  
Prepaid Expenses 124,497  
**TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS** 4,976,036

**PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT, at cost 1,301,073**

Less Accumulated Depreciation (514,775)  
**TOTAL PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT (NET)** 786,298

**OTHER LONG-TERM ASSETS**

Funds Held by Community Foundation 1,762,429  
Client Escrow Funds 6,438  
**TOTAL OTHER LONG-TERM ASSETS** 1,768,867  
**TOTAL ASSETS** $7,531,201

**LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS**

**CURRENT LIABILITIES**

Accounts Payable $413,913  
Client Trust Deposits 6,438  
Accrued Expenses 327,800  
**TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES** 748,151

**NET ASSETS**

Unrestricted Net Assets 4,877,126  
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets 405,045  
Permanently Restricted Net Assets 1,500,879  
**TOTAL NET ASSETS** 6,783,050  
**TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS** $7,531,201
2012 Giving Report

You are our community of donors — individuals, law firms, corporations and foundations. Thank you for your generous giving to Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid which comes either through your gift to The Fund for Legal Aid or directly to one of Legal Aid’s offices or programs. Your support to our Minneapolis, St. Cloud, Willmar offices and to the Minnesota Disability Law Center is greatly appreciated. On behalf of our staff and clients, thank you.

Legal Aid makes every effort to properly acknowledge each of our donors. If we have misspelled or inadvertently omitted your name, please let us know. We will correct it in future publications.
10,115 cases closed

BY THE NUMBERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA OF LAW</th>
<th>CASES CLOSED</th>
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<tr>
<td>Preventing homelessness</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Securing basic needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working toward citizenship</td>
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<td>2.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keeping families safe</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
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</tbody>
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GIVING REPORT

10,115 cases closed in 2012

25 Number of languages spoken by clients served

90% of households served by MMLA had income at or below 125% of the poverty level

That's 843 cases per month

There is ONE legal services attorney for every 4,453 eligible clients in Minnesota.

85% of the support we receive goes to providing services to our clients

Patron ($500–$999)

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Shari and Ryan Aberle

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Safety Center Inc.

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“Estate planning is an easy way to give”

Tricia Bloodgood and Chris Cleveland married and moved to the Twin Cities as new lawyers in 1984. Both soon identified the strength and effectiveness of Legal Aid, and it was a cause they would both stand behind for the next 20 years.

“We immediately noticed the robust and effective presence of Legal Aid here in Minnesota and the wonderful community of firms who gave it such healthy support,” explains Tricia, who served on The Fund for Legal Aid Board in the 1990s. She was a long-time partner at Lockridge Grindal Nauen P.L.L.P., and is now Of Counsel at Zimmerman Reed, PLLP.

“I have a firm belief in supporting legal services,” comments Chris Cleveland, a Legal Aid donor and attorney at Briggs and Morgan. “We only function as an orderly society if we follow the rule of law, and that can only happen if we all have access to the legal system.” Tricia agrees, and adds, “I’ve been so impressed over the years by Legal Aid’s leadership. Every time I hear Legal Aid lawyers speak about the various projects, I’m impressed again by the competence and passion they bring to their jobs.”

Chris and Tricia have been steady donors to Legal Aid for well over twenty years now, including their annual involvement in the One Hour of Sharing campaign, which they were introduced to through Briggs partner Jerry Rotman, an Emeritus Director of The Fund Board.

Legal Aid’s simple but critical mission, along with their steady, visionary leadership, played a large part in Chris and Tricia’s recent estate planning decision. “It was a no-brainer for us that part of our estate would go to a charity organization,” says Chris. “Legal Aid was at the top of our list. It is a treasure here in Minneapolis and is coming up on its 100-year anniversary on solid ground despite significant cutbacks in government funding. I wouldn’t put an organization in my will without confidence in its long-haul capacity.”

“It’s true,” says Tricia. “It’s such an important institution, and there’s a peace of mind to settling the estate planning, and knowing that part of our estate goes to an organization we’ll happily support into the future. As our baby-boomer generation ages, we can look at estate planning as an easy but crucial way to give – it takes nothing from our checking account now, but if those of us who contribute to Legal Aid year after year give even a small portion of our estates to Legal Aid, it will be on solid footing well into the next hundred years.”
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90% of households served by MMLA had income at or below 125% of the poverty level

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Recognizing excellence and passion

At our core, Legal Aid staff advocate for the legal rights of our clients. It’s in our mission statement and describes the job. But what makes the work of Legal Aid truly stand out is the extra passion that ignites the work, and often goes far beyond just meeting the needs of our clients. It restores justice and changes lives.

Each year, Legal Aid staff members are recognized for the quality of their work and the impact they have in the community. These 2012 awards are a testament to the experience, skill, dedication, and commitment that is the lifeblood of the services we provide and the lives we improve.

Law Technology News Innovation Award
For Best Use of Technology in a Pro Bono Project (2011, received in early 2012)

The LTN Awards highlight some of the most innovative ideas arising internationally in law firm technology. The awards recognize vision, perseverance, and a steady hand guiding technology development. The Pro Bono Award went to Legal Services State Support, under the leadership of Supervising Attorney John Freeman, for development of the “Start-to-Finish Expungement Tool.” Working with the Volunteer Lawyers Network and the Council on Crime and Justice, the group created an online resource that enables pro bono attorneys with no prior experience to help clients through the process of expunging records. With a clean record, these citizens are then on their way to become fully productive members of society.

Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota’s Movement of Hope Award
Anne Henry of Legal Aid’s Minnesota Disability Law Center, long-time lobbyist at the Capitol for disability rights and services, received the 2012 Lutheran Social Services (LSS) Movement of Hope Award. The Award is given to the individual or organization that has made the biggest difference stirring up a movement of hope for people served by LSS. Henry and her fellow award recipients John Tschida (Courage Center) and Steve Larson (The Arc of Minnesota) worked to advance self-direction for persons with disabilities in both long-term services and support, and in health care.

Hennepin County Bar Association Awards
The Hennepin County Bar Association, in keeping with its declared values and mission, gives annual pro bono awards to recognize individuals for their commitment to legal services.

Public/Judicial Sector Excellence Award recognizes current or recent excellence in service by an individual from the public/government/judicial sector. The 2012 award went to Drew Schaffer, a Legal Aid staff attorney specializing in tenant rights. After the tornado ripped through North Minneapolis, Drew assumed the role of coordinator for the development and distribution of legal education materials designed to meet tornado victims’ needs. He directly represented victims, coordinated pro bono placement of other cases, and served as the point person for the media, legal services and the pro bono communities. His dedication during these months was truly remarkable.
Staff Attorney Rick Macpherson was among the 2012 honorees. Rick’s advocacy on behalf of deaf people have improved access to a number of services most Minnesotans take for granted, including access to medical care and services. His work has helped to reshape access to justice for people with disabilities in Minnesota.

LSS Financial Counseling Service Financial Advocacy Awards

Ron Elwood, Supervising Attorney of the Legal Services Advocacy Project (LSAP), was one of five honorees selected by Lutheran Social Services to receive its 2012 Financial Advocacy Award. The award recognizes people or organizations that serve to improve economic justice and advocate for people and families in vulnerable financial situations. Ron was honored for his extensive work at the legislature combating predatory financial services practices, including LSAP’s contribution to the passage of two bills providing regulation and protections for consumers using debt management service providers.

Minnesota Lawyer’s Up & Coming Attorney

Each year, Minnesota Lawyer magazine honors a group of individuals new to the profession as “Up and Coming Attorneys.” They are nominated by members of the Minnesota legal community for distinguishing themselves early in their careers. Justin Page, a staff attorney at Legal Aid’s Minnesota Disability Law Center, was among the Up and Coming of 2012. Justin’s practice focuses on disability access and discrimination litigation. He has successfully represented individuals with disabilities in a wide range of cases involving public accommodations and governmental entities.

Minnesota Lawyer Attorney of the Year

Minnesota Lawyer annually recognizes achievements in the Minnesota legal profession with the Attorneys of the Year awards. The 2012 attorneys were chosen based on their leadership, involvement in major cases or other newsworthy events, excellence in corporate or transactional services and public service. Legal Aid’s Minnesota Disability Law Center was among the 2012 honorees. Rick’s advocacy on behalf of deaf people have improved access to a number of services most Minnesotans take for granted, including access to medical care and services. His work has helped to reshape access to justice for people with disabilities in Minnesota.

NASS Medallion Award

The NASS Medallion Award allows Secretaries of State to recognize extraordinary public service. In 2012, Minnesota Secretary of State Ritchie presented awards to individuals who made outstanding contributions to Minnesota’s Safe at Home Address Confidentiality Program, which was designed to protect victims of domestic violence and administered by the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State.

Melinda Hugdahl, staff attorney, is with the Legal Services Advocacy Project, was instrumental in passing important legislation in Minnesota that further ensures participants’ addresses remain confidential when they are involved with ongoing legal actions. “There is no doubt,” said Secretary of State Ritchie, “that the excellent work these individuals have done on behalf of Safe at Home participants has improved outcomes and saved lives.”
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There is **ONE** legal services attorney for every 4,453 eligible clients in Minnesota.

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