WORKING TOGETHER

Expanding impact with community partnerships
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DEAR FRIENDS,

In 1913, Legal Aid opened its doors with one attorney, who quickly had more work than he could handle. A partnership with the newly-founded University of Minnesota Law School Clinic expanded services and opportunities for clients, law students and Legal Aid, beginning our tradition of working with partners in our community.

We thank you for being among our most important partners. We appreciate your financial and volunteer support as we seek new ways to ensure the laws work as they were meant to, protecting the rights of Minnesotans regardless of financial resources. Now more than ever, partnerships are fundamental to Legal Aid’s impact.

In this report, you’ll read about collaborations across the spectrum of our work, from well-established community clinics to brand new partnerships in cooperation with various neighborhood organizations to meet specific needs.

We have intentionally developed new strategies for meeting our clients where they go in their every-day life to solve their problems — the doctor, neighborhood organizations, domestic violence shelters and government offices. Working closely with other organizations, we can achieve more holistic representation and better leverage of both Legal Aid and community resources.

We provide trainings in a variety of settings to help our clients understand their rights, and to advocate for themselves. We give people education and advice to self-represent because we lack the resources to represent everyone who needs our help. We also train our partners, who in turn help us educate their clients on their legal rights, identify issues an attorney can help with, and gather the information and documentation needed for efficient and effective advocacy. This enables Legal Aid to help more people, and to continue our investment in advocacy to make systems more effective and fair.

As a supporter of Legal Aid, you support all of the community organizations with whom we partner. Thank you for all you do to bring access to justice to families and individuals, to the organizations they turn to for help, and to our community as a whole.

Cathy Haukedahl, Executive Director

To advocate for the legal rights of disadvantaged people to have safe, healthy and independent lives in strong communities.
MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIP

Legal Help at Medical Clinic Improves Health Outcomes

“My husband and I were living in a truck. The county stopped my food support and said I had to pay them $25/month. I started selling my things so I could buy food. When I told my doctor, she said there was a lady from Legal Aid right there at the health center who might be able to help me.” — Laura

Former Staff Attorney Heidi Hovis worked with the Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP) at the CentraCare Family Health Center in St. Cloud since its inception in 2014 through late 2016. The goal of the MLP, initially funded by a grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS), is to improve patient health by addressing legal needs. After seeing two years of health benefits to their patients through the MLP, CentraCare has agreed to a three-year plan to take on the funding for a full-time attorney at the health center.

Meanwhile, four smaller rural clinics with widely varying populations and legal needs have pitched in to pay half the salary of another St. Cloud attorney. The other half is funded by a University of St. Thomas fellowship. The attorney travels between clinics and, like Heidi, also has an office at Legal Aid where he can draw on the resources of the organization, including the expertise of colleagues.

Of the 299 MLP patients seen in the past year, 40% had more than one legal issue, up to as many as 8 legal needs for one patient. Initially 86% of the patients felt those legal issues affected their health. Six months later, 78% of the same patients felt that getting legal help had reduced their stress and anxiety levels.

SOLVING LAURA’S DILEMMA

“Heidi was the first person to really focus on me as a whole person,” says MLP client Laura Alexander. “She didn’t just look at one problem. She asked questions and opened things up. Then she started to fix things, little by little.”

Heidi found that Laura and her husband were eligible for food support, so instead of paying $25 every month, they should have had $180 coming in. But then suddenly, the benefits stopped.

“I had just helped with the renewal form, so I was surprised,” says Heidi. “We called, and the county said they’d received notice from Arizona that Laura was employed there.”

Laura had never been to Arizona in her life. Heidi helped her leap the paperwork hurdles to prove that she was not working out of state. Eventually, the county reinstated the benefits along with a retroactive payment for the months without support.

“Many times, it’s just a matter of advocacy and paperwork,” Heidi says. “A lot of our clients have been told ‘no’ by the system for so long, they don’t think they can fight it so they just go without.

Although Laura is a U.S.-born citizen, she grew up in Mexico and is not fluent in English, so the
forms alone were a barrier. We eventually discovered her Social Security number had been used in five other states. She was a victim of identity theft.”

Laura and her husband now have an apartment. They are both working, paying rent, grateful for the help, and turning to Heidi for other questions as they arise.

“This is a huge advantage of the MLP,” says Heidi. “The scope is so wide that I can assist clients who might not otherwise qualify for our services. I can tackle their legal problems one at a time, sort things out, and be sure they are receiving the services guaranteed by law.”

EXPANDING ON-SITE PARTNERSHIPS
Encouraged by the success of the medical-legal partnership, the CentraCare Family Health Center is building an even wider network of holistic care, expanding on-site services to address food security. Second Hand Harvest, working in coordination with the MLP, will operate a food shelf in the clinic, help patients to apply for food support, and screen for other legal issues.

“CentraCare is doing some serious groundbreak-ing,” says Heidi. “A one-stop shop with a holistic view on meeting client’s basic needs can change the way we think about both medical and legal services. It makes sense when you think about health care spending and return on investment.”

“Having a lawyer at the clinic is a great idea,” agrees Laura. “Heidi came like an angel in our lives. She found a solution for every problem we had.”
At the age of 15, Josie* was taken from the only home she’d ever known because an older relative had been arranging “dates” for her with adult men. She was separated from her beloved brother and taken to a local shelter.

As of 2014, the state of Minnesota no longer treats minors like Josie as criminals. Under the Safe Harbor Law, sexually exploited youth cannot be charged with delinquency prostitution charges for that exploitation. Instead, they are funneled to the child protection side of juvenile law. The shelters are locked from the outside but not the inside; if teens want to leave, they can.

MMLA Supervising Attorney Irene Opsahl is the go-to person for Safe Harbor legal support. She brings more than 25 years of experience with Legal Aid’s Youth Law Project to the statewide network of advocates who work with sexually exploited children.
LISTENING TO AND EMPOWERING YOUTH AFTER TRAUMA

“Someone like Josie may not see herself as a child, and she isn’t looking to be saved,” says Irene. “Many kids in ‘the life’ don’t identify as victims of exploitation. The challenge is to help them understand the services that are available, and to help the system understand which services they need. When someone is ready to accept help, the door has to be open right now — not next week.”

When Irene gets involved with a case, advocates find that county officials are more forthcoming with information. She holds service providers accountable, which helps to keep checks and balances in place. She also empowers the kids themselves, making sure they are involved in the decisions about their lives.

“[Irene] tells them what they can do under the law. She takes complex legal issues and makes them understandable to a kid with a 5th-grade reading level. That kid walks out of the meeting with Irene grasping the legal concepts and feeling empowered.”

Irene sees her work with Safe Harbors as a culmination of everything she’s learned in her career. She has tremendous respect for her clients and their resiliency. Thanks to Irene’s intervention, Josie stayed at the shelter until a plan was in place. She received schooling, counseling and other services, and the county kept her properly informed of her options. When it came time to determine placement, Josie participated in the decision.

“It treat my youth clients to the extent possible like any adult client,” says Irene. “It’s the ethical rule for lawyers. But at the same time, you have to be aware that they are kids, and most of them are victims of trauma.”

“A kid calls the police, and Irene has them come under the law. She tells them what they can do under the law. She takes complex legal issues and makes them understandable to a kid with a 5th-grade reading level.”

Irene has an aerial view,” says Quisha. “She sees the kids as more than their present situation, and she talks to them about the big picture. Irene tells them what they can do under the law. She takes complex legal issues and makes them understandable to a kid with a 5th-grade reading level. That kid walks out of the meeting with Irene grasping the legal concepts and feeling empowered.”

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Sarah Florman, program manager at Brittany’s Place, another support organization for this population, agrees. “Irene doesn’t just tell them ‘this is how it’s going to be.’ She has a dialogue, listens to their concerns and tells them the real-world truth. She’s such a strong advocate. They feel like if Irene walks into a room and says what ought to happen, the other adults might actually listen.”

TRAINING ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH

In addition to regular visits to metro-area shelters, Irene provides statewide trainings and legal tips for Safe Harbors Navigators. She connects youth advocates with local legal services and is available to advocates and youth throughout the state for consultation. She helps advocates, prosecutors, agency providers and law enforcement come together to explain and expand options.

“We take care of kids’ immediate needs like food, clothing and shelter,” says Quisha. “They call us back and ask for her number. She’s diligent, and she treats these kids as though she’s billing a thousand dollars an hour.”

*A pseudonym is used to protect the privacy of the client.
**Pro Bono Partnership Creating Pathways to Stability**

**My old landlord is in jail now,** says Dianna Jones. “He was a slumlord and they finally got him.”

**BUILDING A WRONGFUL EVICTION CASE**

Not long ago, Dianna and her three children lived with bedbugs, cockroaches and numerous repair problems. With seven evictions on her record, Dianna had little hope of moving. Legal Aid represented her, getting five of those evictions expunged. And then, just as Dianna was preparing to move, the landlord filed two more.

Even if an eviction is without merit and the tenant prevails in court, it stays on the record. A separate motion and hearing is required to expunge the eviction.

“Some landlords use evictions to retaliate against tenants who complain about substandard housing,” says MMLA Pro Bono Director Kirsten Olson. “They appear to file on tenants for the purpose of destroying the tenants’ rental history. Landlords understand that a single eviction can make it almost impossible for a client to find new, affordable housing.”

Dianna is one of the 64 clients – some with multiple expungements – served by Legal Aid’s Pro Bono Eviction Expungement workshops. The workshops, held every other month at Whittier Clinic in south Minneapolis, partner with volunteer attorneys to extend the reach of Legal Aid’s housing unit.

“We provide full training and mentoring for the attorneys,” says Kirsten. “We then pair them with screened clients who have relatively straightforward cases. We offer support throughout, helping with any questions that arise. We try to set everyone up for success – both clients and lawyers.”

Katie Giedt from UnitedHealthcare worked on Dianna’s case. She attended the training and, a week later, met with Dianna at Whittier Clinic. Together, they went over Dianna’s documented evidence of rent payment, bedbugs and repair issues, and Katie drafted the motion. Soon she will represent Dianna at Hennepin County Housing Court.

“It’s substantive law, working with a real client,” says Katie. “Litigation isn’t part of my work in my present position, so I’m happy to get the opportunity. The case is concrete and contained, which makes it easy to work into my schedule. Dianna was in a terrible situation, and I appreciate the chance to help out someone in our community.”

**TRAINING ATTORNEYS ON HOUSING LAW**

The expungement workshop is an excellent first step for attorneys who have never worked in housing before. For some, it’s their first appearance in a courtroom. They have the full support of Legal Aid housing attorneys and they can see tangible results. Although the first goal is for clients to get service, the secondary goal is to give more attorneys training and experience.

“Many of the lawyers we train help clients through our workshops,” says Kirsten. “Others work with the Volunteer Lawyers Network or help clients independently. There is a huge unmet need for expungement help, and the more lawyers with
training, the better. It can take up to six months to get an expungement, even with a lawyer.”

The workshop can’t guarantee success — that depends on the referee — but the workshop pairings almost always result in expungement. In addition to straightforward facts, Kirsten looks for clients with the most urgent need.

“A clean record opens a whole new category of housing with responsible landlords,” she says. “There’s also a generational impact. A move to safe housing makes a significant change in the lives of everyone in the family.”

Although Dianna had worked with Legal Aid previously, this was her first time attending a workshop at Whittier. She had complete confidence in the process with Legal Aid’s support, and she appreciates the convenient location.

“I’ve told a lot of people about it,” she says. “It’s so great to work with someone who cares about what these landlords are doing. They take your money and they don’t want to take care of the property. These workshops give us a voice.”

MOVING FORWARD AFTER SUCCESSFUL EXPUNGEMENT

Dianna is in culinary school and is very relieved to be out from under the evictions. She has her new kitchen set up like a restaurant and plans to have her own food truck. Without housing worries, she and her kids can focus on school.

“This apartment has an awesome management company,” she says. “I have no complaints at all.”
Caren was violently assaulted by her ex-boyfriend, who threatened to find her wherever she went. When she arrived in Minnesota, she went to the police to be sure the out-of-state protection order was valid. The police officer told her she would have to apply for a new order.

“She was so afraid he’d find her here, and we didn’t know how to advise her,” says Dee Peterson, Outreach Coordinator at Safe Avenues, a Willmar organization that provides advocacy, parent-child visitation services and emergency shelter for victims of domestic and sexual violence. “But we were pretty sure Legal Aid could help.”

Legal Aid’s Willmar office has a strong partnership with Safe Avenues. The two programs work closely, exchanging information and trainings and supporting one another’s work.
COLLABORATORS WITH COMMON GOALS

“With most non-profits, resources can be thin,” says Legal Aid Supervising Attorney Dan Morris. “We have to make the most of what we can with what we have. Our partnership serves a similar population in the same community, and we have a lot of the same goals.”

Part of the intake process at Safe Avenues is an assessment of potential legal questions or difficulties. The advocates pass the information to Legal Aid, help to gather any pertinent documentation, and explain Legal Aid’s role. The attorneys meet with clients at the shelter at designated appointment times.

“The appointment with a lawyer is so important,” says Dee. “When clients arrive, their lives are usually in total chaos. That legal appointment helps to give them self-respect and hope. They don’t have the money, they don’t have the means, but they are treated with respect and given answers. The lawyers don’t sugarcoat things. They give it to them like it is.”

LEARNING TO WALK IN THE CLIENT’S SHOES

Dan and the other attorneys have been thoroughly trained by Safe Avenues staff. They have learned how to put themselves in the clients’ shoes and to understand the decisions made under duress.

“Legal Aid understands the dynamics of domestic violence,” says Jen Johnson, Safe Avenues Executive Director. “Many lawyers don’t, and that can be an added burden to the victims.”

“So much of being an advocate is about credibility and connection with clients,” says Dan. “Safe Avenues taught us how to ask the questions, and how to sit with someone who has been through trauma in an empathetic and understanding way.

We are then better able to convert their experiences into legal arguments that will hopefully translate to someone who might not have had the same experiences, but who has the power of decision over their safety and their children.”

“You see a huge change when the clients have representation at an order for protection (OFP) hearing,” says Jen. “Most of our clients don’t have any experience in court, and it’s intimidating. It’s a tremendous relief to have someone who understands speak on their behalf.”

CONFIDENTIALITY A KEY TO CAREN’S CASE

In Caren’s case, Dan went back to the office and did some research. He learned how to confidentially register an out-of-state OFP with local law enforcement in Minnesota.

Legal Aid staff has also toured Harmony Visitation Center so they thoroughly understand the procedures and protections in place for Safe Avenues clients and their children when it comes to parent-child visitation.

“I can tell them that I’ve been there and it’s a good environment, right down to the specific toys on hand,” says Dan. “Because I can directly address their fears, they trust me a bit more as we problem-solve each step of their case.”

“Legal advice is often key in our clients’ decision-making,” says Jen. “Legal Aid gives them the facts and helps them thoroughly understand the consequences of various decisions. They begin to take the critical steps from chaos to solutions. They can see a direction to go with their future.”

“A pseudonym is used to protect the privacy of the client.
Dalaine Remes is the Minnesota Disability Law Center’s (MDLC) Legal Advocate in southern Minnesota, and she is on a mission. A single-person outpost of the MDLC based in Mankato, she works with other advocacy organizations, county workers and agencies, ombudsman offices, schools and courts to ensure that people with disabilities have access to the services and protections guaranteed by state and federal law.

“I communicate with both service providers and the people who need services,” says Dalaine. “When you’re in touch with enough people, you begin to see patterns of problems in smaller towns and rural areas. You see the barriers, the challenges, and also the possibilities. The farther you get from the metro area, the less understanding and education there is about what legal avenues are out there.”

MDLC is a statewide program of MMLA, and one of its biggest challenges is advocating for clients in Greater Minnesota across great distances. Southwest Minnesota’s resources are scattered across a very large rural area. County agencies, school systems and other advocacy groups’ limited resources are stretched thin.

KNITTING A WEB OF ADVOCACY RESOURCES

Dalaine’s strategy is to knit existing resources together into a workable web. She connects various advocacy organizations that help people with disabilities get employment supports, transition from school to work, and access other services that enable them to live in their communities and become more independent. Her efforts have resulted in the formation of the Southern Minnesota Advocates Network, which includes other advocates, county personnel, service providers, family members of persons with disabilities and guardians.

“We support each other, network, and provide ideas for better, stronger, faster advocacy,” explains Dalaine. “When we have success, we share what we did and how we did it. We strategize to help our clients and families get results, and we discuss how to seek solutions for systems issues like the very limited integrated employment opportunities in rural or small towns in Minnesota.”

This collaborative approach led to a successful outcome for Clara, a 16-year-old with developmental disabilities and mental health diagnoses. She was living with her family, but the situation became untenable for lack of needed services. Clara’s family had been frustrated in its attempts to get disability support services from the county, even with help from the ombudsman’s office.
When Clara was improperly moved out of the family home into a juvenile detention center, the ombudsman's office reached out to the Network for help. Building on the ombudsman's efforts, MDLC agreed to assist by filing an appeal with the state Department of Human Services to obtain mental health services for Clara. While the appeal was pending, MDLC successfully advocated for Clara to be released from the juvenile detention center and placed in a children's residential treatment facility with mental health and other services. As a result of this collaborative advocacy, Clara, her family, and her treatment team developed a person-centered plan that enabled Clara to move to a new small, fully-staffed residential setting in her home community near her family and her school.

**EMPOWERING PEOPLE THROUGH SELF-ADVOCACY EDUCATION**

The foundation of Dalaine's work is education and training. One of MDLC’s key goals is for people with disabilities to become their own advocates. Empowerment requires knowledge of both the substance and the procedure of the programs and systems. MDLC trainings provide basic information on legal rights to help people advocate for themselves and their loved ones.

Dalaine also reaches out to service providers and government agencies. She gives presentations on MDLC’s priorities and services and shares information and ideas. She encourages service providers — like the ombudsman in Clara’s case — to bring their challenges forward so they can work with DLC and people with disabilities to solve problems.

When working with the Southern Advocates Network, government agencies or schools, self-advocates and clients and colleagues at MDLC, Dalaine relies on the amplification of resources that comes with a knowledgeable, connected team.

“In my work, I’m standing side by side with my friends,” says Dalaine. “I’m lucky to know so many self-advocates and allies in action.”

*A pseudonym is used to protect the privacy of the client.*
Innovative Community Partnerships

Sometimes, people who need help the most don’t know their rights have been violated. Or if they do, they don’t know who or how to ask for help. As Legal Aid looks for innovative ways to work with limited resources, community partnerships are key to extending the reach of services to people who might not know how to contact — or feel comfortable contacting — a law office.

**THE CARDOZO CLINIC**
The Cardozo Clinic has served north Minneapolis for more than 10 years. The Cardozo Society, an organization of Jewish judges, lawyers and law students with a commitment to justice, provides volunteer attorneys. The Minneapolis Urban League provides the office, and Legal Aid provides the administrative support and legal backup. Every Monday, anyone from the community can walk into the Urban League office and sign up for 20 minutes of free help from a Cardozo Society lawyer. The volunteer provides legal advice and referrals and, if time allows, may negotiate with a landlord, draft a power of attorney or write a demand letter.

“The benefit of human, face-to-face connection is so important on both sides,” says Legal Aid Supervising Attorney Jay Wilkinson. “For clients, to have someone with knowledge of the law listen carefully and sympathetically can make an enormous difference. For the volunteers it’s an extraordinary opportunity to serve justice. Even if the attorney can’t provide all the answers or fix the problem in those 20 minutes, they can give the client an idea of the shape and boundaries of the legal system and help them to take the next step forward.”

**SIEMPRE PADRES**
Elsa Marshall, Legal Aid’s Education for Justice coordinator, organizes Legal Aid outreach with a number of local agencies and clinics. She also manages the collection of fact sheets on www.lawhelpmn.org, a statewide resource for legal advice and education.

“Siempre Padres, a parent support program at Urban Ventures Colin Powell Center, is a great example of our work with local agencies,” Elsa says. “We’re in our third year with them. Attorneys give educational presentations on specific topics — housing, government benefits, health care — and stay to answer questions. They provide information and build trust, which is so important in working with immigrant communities.”

**ISUROON**
Staff Attorney Greger Calhan heads up a new outreach project from his office at Isuroon, a woman-led program in south Minneapolis focusing on the needs of East African immigrants. A few months into the project funded by the Pat and Tom Grossman Family Fund of the Minnesota Community Foundation, Greger is seeing a steady stream of clients with legal concerns.

“My Peace Corps experience in Chad and Mauritania left me with appreciation and respect for African communities in Africa and in the diaspora,” he says. “I learned that you really can build trust and rapport cross-culturally, but it takes time and consistent demonstration of follow-through.”

Some of the issues Greger sees are straightforward and can be explained on the spot. Others are more complicated such as immigration, debt
collection and family law. At its core, the project focuses on individual client representation, helping recent immigrants understand and exercise their legal rights here in the United States. But Greger also wants to continue outreach with public education and advocacy.

“The goal of the project is not only to provide concrete services to individuals who need them, but to show Muslim immigrants that they are welcome here. We want to help that community navigate the complexities they encounter, and understand the rights afforded to them.”

**NORTHSIDE RESIDENTS REDEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**

Another new partnership with the Stinson Leonard Street law firm and Northside Residents Redevelopment Council (NRRC) draws on the unique talents of Staff Attorney Joshua Ladd. The project is modeled after the very successful Adopt a Neighborhood Project in Kansas City.

The goal in Kansas City — and now here, on the north side of Minneapolis — is to provide legal assistance to reduce blight, retain quality, affordable housing and improve community economic development in low-income neighborhoods. Joshua, with a part-time office at NRRC, will focus on the Near North and Willard-Hay neighborhoods.

In addition to his legal expertise, Joshua brings a master’s degree in urban and regional planning to the work. He is a native of Dayton, Ohio and grew up with a personal interest in improving urban conditions.

“Dayton was a dying industrial town when I was growing up there in the 1980s,” says Joshua. “I found that troubling, and I was always wondering how to make cities better. This project is an amazing opportunity, drawing on all aspects of my education and background. It’s a perfect fit.”

Joshua is new to the Twin Cities and understands that the first part of the job is to understand the community in which he’s working. The Northside neighborhoods were among those most severely affected by the 2011 tornado and then by the foreclosure crisis. So far, Joshua is seeing questions of property ownership, absent landlords, liens and concerns around a major neighborhood construction project and a historic site designation.

“There is a lot of tension in the area,” he says. “It’s really important as an outsider to immerse myself in the community, be present, and meet stakeholders and residents. I’m starting to walk through processes with them, help them understand the points of influence and grasp what the legal realities mean to them.”

The collaborations with Siempre Padres, Isuroon and NRRC are the most recent examples of Legal Aid innovations to address the shifting needs in our state. As with the longstanding Cardozo Clinic and ongoing outreach efforts, the goal is to foster relationships with community partners and extend services where the need is the greatest.
MINNESOTA JUSTICE FOUNDATION’S ADVOCATE AWARD
The Minnesota Justice Foundation presented its 2016 Advocate Award to Ann Conroy, Office Manager/Training Coordinator with Legal Services State Support. The honor recognizes Ann’s demonstrated commitment to expanding services to low-income and disadvantaged clients for more than 18 years.

As office manager and training coordinator, Ann has a unique and multi-faceted role at State Support. She supports both the statewide legal aid community and the public who turn to State Support for civil legal referrals and information.

“We are thrilled with this recognition for Ann,” says State Support Supervising Attorney Mary Kaczorek. “Ann’s work is not the most visible to the community, but her impact is felt throughout our work. She is truly the backbone of the State Support team. Her mentorship to me and the other newer staff has been invaluable.”

PARTNER IN JUSTICE
Ron Elwood, Supervising Attorney of the Legal Services Advocacy Project (LSAP), received a Partner in Justice award from Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota (LSNM).

Ron has been with LSAP for almost 20 years. He brings his signature energy and enthusiasm to advocating at the legislature for policies that best serve people with low incomes throughout the state. He specializes in consumer, landlord/tenant, tax, policy and utility law.

LSNM Executive Director Anne Hoefgen says, “Often the work of the legislature feels far away from those of us in Greater Minnesota, but Ron reminds us that without good policies we are hamstrung in our ability to help clients in the best ways possible. At the same time, Ron is always the first to express his appreciation for the boots-on-the-ground work of civil legal aid practitioners. We wanted to thank him for years of service and for all the help he has brought to our client communities through his efforts. It’s good work, and it changes lives.”

MINNESOTA STATE BAR ASSOCIATION
BERNARD P. BECKER LEGAL SERVICES STAFF LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE AWARD
The Minnesota State Bar Association conferred its Legacy of Excellence Award on staff attorney Mike Persellin for his career-long commitment to excellence in the legal services field. The award recognizes exemplary dedication to providing zealous and skilled legal representation for low-income and disadvantaged clients.

Mike has had a lengthy career as an all-around utility player for MMLA. For his first 17 years, he served clients as a staff attorney and in management, stepping in and out of these roles as the program’s needs demanded. In 2000, he began to specialize in senior poverty law, and his current practice centers on Social Security, debt collection and Medical Assistance appeal issues.
A recent client wrote: “I want to congratulate you on a job well done and to express deep gratitude for the hard work and dedication, both of which bore the desired result: winning. I also want to thank you for the kindness, sympathy and high regard that you showed towards me in both words and deeds. Please be assured that such feelings are truly and unreservedly reciprocal.”

MMLA Deputy Director Greg Marita says, “Mike has been serving MMLA, the legal services community, his colleagues and clients for over 30 years. Many, many, many of us would have easily and willingly signed on to this client’s letter.”

UP & COMING ATTORNEYS OF 2016

Minnesota Lawyer selected MMLA Staff Attorney Rebecca Scholtz as one of the Up & Coming Attorneys of 2016. The Up & Coming Attorneys award recognizes lawyers who have made significant contributions to the profession in the first 10 years of their practice. Steven Thal, a respected immigration attorney in private practice, nominated Rebecca for her outstanding work on behalf of immigrant youth.

Rebecca represents children in asylum and special immigrant juvenile cases (SIJS), a task that can be especially challenging because of the trauma many unaccompanied children go through before, during and after their journey to the U.S.

“Rebecca is a brilliant, tenacious, passionate lawyer,” says Managing Attorney Peggy Russell. “She is recognized as a national expert on the representation of unaccompanied children. In addition to direct representation, she devotes significant time to training and mentoring other attorneys on SIJS cases and appeals. Rebecca works tirelessly on behalf of the young and vulnerable, and she is a highly valued member of our staff.”

Civil legal aid creates a significant economic benefit for Minnesota

LEGAL AID ROI

For every $1.00 invested in civil legal aid

$3.94 in economic benefits are returned to the community
### Financials

#### Revenue & Expenditures | 2016

#### Revenue

- United Ways: $534,745
- Federal: 2,963,979
- State: 4,153,100
- Foundations: 1,047,100
- Local Government: 846,901
- Fund for Legal Aid: 1,300,000
- Legal Services Advisory Committee (LSAC): 1,256,802
- State Support and LSAP: 396,261
- Fellowships/Clerks: 191,072
- Attorney Fees: 345,787
- Miscellaneous: 393,065
- **Total** $13,428,812

#### Expenditures

- Poverty Law: $8,585,855
- Disability Law: 2,143,329
- Administration: 1,236,380
- LSAP: 641,980
- State Support: 488,168
- Fundraising: 412,127
- **Total** $13,507,839

Prior Reserve: 2,686,981

Year End Reserve: 2,607,954

#### Consolidated Balance Sheets | 12.31.16

#### Assets

**Current Assets**

- Cash and Cash Equivalents: $2,592,379
- Receivables:
  - Grants and Contracts: 1,438,168
  - Pledges and Other: 165,263
- Prepaid Expenses: 60,466
- **Total Current Assets**: 4,256,276

**Property and Equipment, at cost**

- 1,302,524
- Less Accumulated Depreciation: (509,916)
- **Total Property and Equipment (Net)**: 792,608

**Other Long-Term Assets**

- Funds Held by Community Foundation: 2,534,483
- Client Escrow Funds: 11,747
- **Total Other Long-Term Assets**: 2,546,230

**Total Assets**: 7,595,114

#### Liabilities and Net Assets

**Current Liabilities**

- Accounts Payable: $343,753
- Client Trust Deposits: 11,747
- Accrued Expenses: 342,139
- **Total Current Liabilities**: $697,639

**Net Assets**

- Unrestricted Net Assets: 4,249,308
- Temporarily Restricted Net Assets: 900,568
- Permanently Restricted Net Assets: 1,747,599
- **Total Net Assets**: 6,897,475
- **Total Liabilities and Net Assets**: $7,595,114
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  - Working toward citizenship: 13.3%
  - Disability Law: 10.4%
  - Preventing homelessness: 28.3%
  - Protecting consumers: 5.0%
  - Keeping families safe: 9.2%
  - Keeping kids in school: 1.4%
  - Other: 1.7%

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Pro Bono 3.9%

St. Cloud 37.2%

Willmar 8.5%

Pro Bono: 3.9%

Minneapolis: 40.0%

DLC: 10.4%

St. Cloud: 37.2%

Willmar: 8.5%

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