

Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid Celebrates Centennial with Toast to Past and Staff

Condoleezza Rice to speak at annual Law Day Dinner, Amy Klobuchar to offer remarks

Minneapolis – April 15, 2013—Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid, which provides access to legal assistance to residents of 20 counties in central Minnesota, today will mark its 100th year of advocacy for the legal rights of disadvantaged Minnesotans—not only those living in poverty, but also seniors and people with disabilities.

Legal Aid opened its doors on April 15, 1913. It has grown from a single paid attorney in Minneapolis to 60 attorneys spread across offices in Minneapolis, St. Cloud and Willmar. Each year, the organization that was renamed Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid in 2012 serves hundreds of families and individuals. The organization will celebrate its centennial year on May 23 when former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will provide the keynote address at its annual Law Day Dinner. U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar will also offer remarks. The event will highlight the contributions of the staff of Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid who have long provided legal help to Minnesotans unable to afford representation elsewhere.

“The work of our staff does make a real difference in the lives of our clients,” said Cathy Haukedahl, executive director of Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid. “As state support for our program has dwindled, the need for our services has expanded. From 2000 – 2010, the number of people in poverty in the area we serve increased by 48 percent. Through these challenging times, our staff has remained strongly committed to securing justice for our clients.”

Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid is supported by contributions from fellow lawyers, law firms, corporations, individuals, the local, state and federal governments, the United Way, and foundations. More than 85 percent of the support received goes directly to providing services to clients.

“Whether it’s a victim of domestic violence or a tenant threatened by an unscrupulous landlord, we continue to give voice to people who would otherwise not be heard,” said Haukedahl. “We provide important access to legal help and the most basic rights in order to meet essential human needs, including safety, housing, food, and health care, so that everyone has a chance to contribute to their community. Our work supports a healthy business community.”

Editor’s Note: Legal Aid’s pressroom: www.mylegalaid.org/news-events/press-room offers case histories, historical timeline, fact sheet, leadership bios and photos.

Two examples of needs Legal Aid meets in Minnesota:

- **Domestic Violence:** A mother contacted Legal Aid after being severely abused by the father of her sons. The father was placed in prison and telephone visitation was allowed, but the father used this as an opportunity to intimidate his sons. Working with the client, a Legal Aid attorney obtained a temporary order stopping the telephone visitation, and the mother later asked for a permanent “no contact” order, which was granted. As a result, one of the sons improved his grades from Cs to As and decreased

days absent from 40 to only three. With the help of Legal Aid, the family was able to return to a healthy, safe and non-threatening environment.

- **Landlord Abuse:** A tenant in subsidized housing was being intimidated and threatened by an unscrupulous landlord, who demanded \$200 in monthly illegal side payments. Legal Aid helped the tenant, by filing a suit against the landlord, who agreed to a settlement payment of \$6,000, partially to reimburse her for the payments she made and to compensate her for being a whistleblower. The landlord also had to attend fair housing training by a pre-approved trainer. The abuse of the vulnerable tenant was not only stopped, but the tenant received restitution. Legal Aid's action also helped stop a landlord from taking advantage of other tenants in the future.

About Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid

For 100 years, Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid has served the residents of Hennepin County. In 1974, it expanded its service area to include the St. Cloud area and in 1979 added the Willmar area. It now serves 20 counties in central Minnesota from the South Dakota to the Wisconsin border, providing free civil legal services to people and families with low incomes and/or disabilities. Legal Aid's Disability Law Center is the Protection and Advocacy System for Minnesota. As such it provides free civil legal services to children and adults with disabilities throughout the state of Minnesota. Today, 60 Legal Aid lawyers along with 29 legal advocates and assistants and 36 administrative and support staff help more than 10,000 individuals and families annually meet essential needs. To learn more visit www.mylegalaid.org and follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/LegalAid

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