

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends:

As we move into winter, CLSACC is excited to share our program achievements with you as well as the challenges we face in the coming year. CLSACC continues to work to ensure that low-income individuals have access to justice and have their mental health issues addressed by our experienced and very capable staff and volunteers. During the fall, we kept

**CLSACC faces the most significant cuts in its 39-year history** families facing eviction in their homes, obtained custody and protection orders for battered women, and helped disabled individuals obtain their federal benefits. Our Immigration Program has had many successes. In one week alone, Attorney **Valerie Fisk** received notice that 5 of her clients--a juvenile and 4 victims of domestic violence--received legal status in the U.S. Within the Counseling Program, **Lauren Shebairo**, LICSW, started a group for immigrant women who are facing social isolation with the help of CLSACC Board Member, **Dr. Julia Byers**, Director of Expressive Therapies at Lesley University. Group members are currently working together on a visual arts project.

Even with all these wonderful achievements, the continuing economic crisis leaves CLSACC facing significant financial challenges in the coming year. Legal services across the state are being hit, and CLSACC faces **the most significant cuts in its 39-year history**. At the same time, the tough economic situation means a greater need for CLSACC's services, as the low-income population not only grows, but more people face problems like eviction or domestic violence. In order to maintain our services, CLSACC will need the help of each and every one of our supporters. This newsletter will share with you just a glimpse of the great work CLSACC is doing.

Best Regards,

*Barbara Mitchell*

Executive Director

## CLSACC KEEPS CAMBRIDGE RESIDENT IN HER HOME

"Michelle" did not know where to turn. She had been a great tenant for 14 years, but now she was stuck. She had fallen behind in her rent and didn't know how she would get back on track. She was devastated when her landlord began eviction proceedings, worried that she and her four children would end up homeless. The week before she was to appear before a judge for a trial, she received a letter from CLSACC through our Court Outreach Project informing her that she could receive free legal assistance if income-eligible. Hopeful, she responded to the letter, and CLSACC agreed to represent her.

Michelle, whose monthly rent was \$859, owed her landlord \$2,865. CLSACC Attorney **John Froio** reviewed Michelle's income and determined why she was having so much difficulty paying her rent. Her rent was subsidized and based on a calculation of her household income. Due to a recession-related reduction in hours, her daughter's income had decreased greatly and therefore, Michelle's rent should have been substantially lower. Attorney Froio, with the help of a volunteer law student, defended Michelle's eviction case in court, worked with local social service agencies to obtain rental assistance, and convinced the local housing authority to make a rent adjustment.

With CLSACC's help, Michelle got back on track. She was able to pay \$1,400 of her back rent, and two social service agencies helped her pay the remaining \$1,465. The housing authority reduced her future rent based on her actual family income. Now, Michelle can rest easy through another cold New England winter, confident that she and her family can stay in their home.



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**CONGRATULATIONS!**

• CLSACC proudly announces that our long-time volunteer Family Law attorney **Andrew Cornell** is a recipient of the **2009 Adams Pro Bono Publico Award**, an award presented each year by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court to lawyers or law firms that have made an extraordinary commitment to represent poor and disadvantaged individuals in Massachusetts.

• CLSACC Immigration attorney and Dwyer & Collora Fellow **Laurie Carafone** received a **Women of Justice Award** from Mass. Lawyer's Weekly with the Women's Bar Association and the Mass. Association of Women Lawyers. This award honors attorneys' inspirational contributions to social justice. Laurie's work to expand our asylum intake program has greatly increased the number of people we can help each year.

• CLSACC celebrates Immigration attorney **Lisa Weinberg's** recent **International Award of Courage** from Safe Homes in Worcester, MA for her work on LGBTQ refugee rights. Lisa received the award as part of Safe Homes annual People of Courage awards. The awards are presented to local adults and youth who have demonstrated leadership, commitment, and courage, promoting equal rights for all in their professions, schools, and the community.



CLSACC staff and volunteers celebrate Pro Bono Month with an event sponsored by CLSACC attorneys Deirdre Giblin and Ellen Wilbur, at the home of Volunteer Attorney Susan Corcoran. From Left: Volunteer Herb Epstein with Housing & Disability Attorney John Froio; Executive Director Barbara Mitchell greets the guests with Legal Director Ellen Wilbur.



Volunteers Cindy Palmquist and Andrew Cornell smile with CLSACC Immigration Attorney Valerie Fisk; Volunteers Emily Leung & Scott Edminston with CLSACC Administrative Coordinator Laura Diss.