

DISABILITY UNIT DEFENDS WORKER'S RIGHTS

Working for extended periods of time had always been difficult for Chelsea resident John Hancock. He was hit by a car as a child, and the accident left him with a traumatic brain injury and limited coordination. Now 42 years old, John had received Supplementary Security Income (SSI) benefits most of his life. Then, ten years ago, he found a job he liked and did well at the airport transporting people with disabilities. He notified the Social Security Administration (SSA) of his successful employment, and they informed him that his case would be reevaluated in nine months.



John Hancock came to CLSACC for assistance with a Disability case.

Over the next few years, John received several letters from the SSA notifying him that his benefits were being increased because of his work activity. Six years after he started working, John received another letter from SSA. It stated that he had been earning too much money to receive benefits, and that he should have stopped receiving checks years earlier. SSA claimed they had overpaid John \$41,000, and they now wanted him to pay back that impossible sum.

After months of frustrating appeals to SSA, John came to Community Legal Services And Counseling Center. CLSACC's Housing and Disability Attorney, **John Froio**, presented John's case to a judge, who waived the \$41,000 overpayment. Freed from such a massive burden, John was able to continue providing for himself. He is still working at the airport and loves his job.

CLSACC'S DISABILITY UNIT

CLSACC's Disability Unit works to foster independence and stability in the lives of low-income people with physical and mental disabilities. The Unit is staffed by one part-time attorney and serves non-English speakers and those who are homeless or homebound who have difficulty applying for disability benefits and negotiating the administrative process. Besides substantial retroactive payments and monthly benefits, the impact of successful legal representation is profound and goes beyond providing income. By becoming eligible for SSI/SSDI (Supplemental Security Income/Social Security Disability Insurance) recipients become eligible for health care coverage, rehabilitative and educational services, transportation vouchers and utilities discounts.

In 2008, the Unit assisted 112 disabled clients.

In better economic times, some of these individuals can find minimally paying jobs, but during a down economic period like the present, employment opportunities for this population are non-existent, making access to disability benefits crucial for subsistence living. During 2008 the Unit assisted 112 disabled clients by providing legal advice, referral, or representation to help them obtain or retain disability and related benefits, including health care. The Unit also provides consultation, technical support, and training for community-based agencies such as the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities, the Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee, Cambridge Health Alliance, the City of Cambridge Office of Veterans Affairs, the Guidance Center, Homestart, and On the Rise.

PLEASE SUPPORT CLSACC'S FUNDRAISING APPEAL!

Please take a few moments to respond to CLSACC's recent appeal. We depend on the generosity of all of our Friends to maintain our service levels each year. Send a check to CLSACC, One West Street, Cambridge, MA 02139, or donate online at www.clsacc.org. Thank you for your support!

CLSACC ON VOICE OF AMERICA

“What is asylum?” In layman’s terms, it’s basically when people flee to the United States for human rights violations and they seek sanctuary here and they ask for that sanctuary from our immigration system. If they are granted asylum, they are allowed to stay in the U.S. indefinitely and eventually get their green card and apply for U.S. citizenship,” explains attorney, **Lisa Laurel Weinberg**, at the **Community Legal Services And Counseling Center** in Cambridge, Massachusetts...”

Find out more about the asylum process and the work of **CLSACC’s Immigration Unit** in this month’s Voice Of America video blog, *“Ordeals in Seeking Asylum”* featured on the Voice of America website:

<http://voa-intheirownwords.blogspot.com>



SPRING VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION PARTY HONORS PAIR PROJECT

One hundred volunteer attorneys and clinicians were honored on April 6 at Lesley University’s University Hall Amphitheater. Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray presented the 2009 Dr. Joseph H. Brenner Leadership Award to the Political Asylum/Immigration Representation Project. To see more photos from the event, visit www.clsacc.org.



Immigration Attorney Lisa Laurel Weinberg, Counseling Volunteer Maureen McCormick, Legal Volunteer Wanda Luetgen, and Immigration Attorney Deirdre Giblin.



Lt. Governor Timothy Murray presents the Dr. Brenner Leadership Award to Sarah Ignatius, Executive Director of the PAIR Project, with Board President Anthony Mirinda.



State Representative Alice Wolf, Lt. Governor Timothy Murray, Executive Director Barbara Mitchell, Counseling Volunteer Paula Sacks, Legal Volunteer Andrew Cornell, and Board President Anthony Mirinda.