



AT THE LEGAL CLINIC

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LEGAL CLINIC FOR THE DISABLED, INC.

Summer 2005

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The official registration and financial information of the Legal Clinic for the Disabled, Inc. may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free within Pennsylvania 1(800) 732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Legal Clinic Donors and Friends:

For 15 years the Legal Clinic for the Disabled has been providing free legal services to low income people with physical disabilities in the Philadelphia and its suburbs. We focus on representation of individual clients, we measure our success through the stories of the people we represent. On page 2 of this newsletter, you will read a few of those stories. You will also hear about the many new goings-on at the Legal Clinic this year.

We have had lots of big changes in our office. After seven years of dedicated service, staff attorney *Esther Miller* left the Legal Clinic. Luckily, Esther is only a phone call away when we need advice on how to handle a problem. New staff attorney *Bill McLaughlin* has stepped into Esther's shoes and is doing a tremendous job. We were also privileged this summer to have a hardworking Higginbotham fellow, Victoria Nicholson, who just finished her first year of law school at Rutgers-Camden. Our Independence Foundation fellow *Surisa Langbell* has toiled away building our new special education project, and has made great progress helping area school children get the special education services they need. Luckily, the foundation renewed Surisa's fellowship and she will be around for another year.

Funding continues to be a challenge, and we continue to diversify our funding base. We received two new grants this year – from the Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation and the Connelly Foundation – and several existing grantors have renewed their support. Special events play a big role in funding, and they give the community a chance to connect with our organization. Our next special event will be our Fourteenth Annual Stroll & Roll on Kelly Drive on Sunday, September 11, 2005. We hope you can help support our programs by attending.

Tom Prettyman
Executive Director

Want to support the Legal Clinic in its mission to help low income people with disabilities solve their legal problems? Please send your donation to Legal Clinic for the Disabled, Inc., 1513 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102, or designate the Legal Clinic to receive your United Way contribution (Donor Choice #1720).

LEGAL CLINIC CLIENT SUCCESS STORIES

LEGAL CLINIC OBTAINS DISMISSAL OF SUIT TO ENFORCE FRAUDULENT LOAN. In February 2005, *Bill McLaughlin* took over as our General Legal Services project staff attorney. Among the issues he sees is consumer protection and identity theft. Recently, he represented a blind client whose estranged wife had, unbeknownst to the client, taken out a loan in the client's name. A collection agency sued the client on the debt in Municipal Court. The client found the Legal Clinic through and outreach we did at Associated Services for the Blind in Philadelphia. Bill represented him in Municipal Court and convinced the collection agency to dismiss the lawsuit.

LEGAL CLINIC COMPELS TRANSFER OF CHILD WITH READING DISORDER TO BETTER SCHOOL. In September 2004, the Legal Clinic welcomed attorney *Surisa Langbell* as a new Independence Foundation Public Interest Fellow. Since then, Surisa has built the Legal Clinic's PERK ("Protecting the Educational Rights of Kids") special education project from the ground up. Under PERK, Surisa helps low-income parents of children with developmental disabilities obtain a free, appropriate and safe education for their kids. She recently represented the mother of a 7th grader with Specific Reading Disability. The child attended a chaotic middle school where his schoolmates regularly picked on him and beat him up for his poor reading. Overwhelmed by the harassment, the child got into a fight with a schoolmate and was arrested. Surisa reached an agreement with the school district allowing the child's return to school with a revised Individualized Education Program (IEP) and a behavior support plan. Unfortunately, the school could not support the child in its chaotic environment, and another incident occurred in the new classroom. Surisa compelled the school district to transfer him to a more organized and structured school, where he has been excelling ever since, and received all As and Bs on his Spring 2005 report card. In June 2005, when the Independence Foundation announced that it would renew Surisa's one year fellowship, the Legal Clinic and the families Surisa represents breathed a sigh of relief that she will be with us for another year.

TO RECEIVE A LARGE
PRINT VERSION OF THIS

PUBLICATION, PLEASE
CALL US AT 215-587-3350.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Over 223,000 people with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 64 lived in Philadelphia County in 2000.
- 70% of all working age Americans with disabilities do not work.
- The average annual income in 2000 for Philadelphians with disabilities was \$12,600.
- A person with a physical disability is five times more likely than a person without a disability to be abused by a partner, spouse or household member.

LEGAL CLINIC OBTAINS DISMISSAL OF FRAUDULENT CREDIT CARD DEBT. *Tom Prettyman* recently represented an elderly woman with Alzheimer's Disease. A collection agency had sued her for \$3900 in credit card debt. The collection agency said she had incurred the charges for, among other things, automobile tires. The Legal Clinic learned from her son, however, that his mother had never owned a car and had never had a driver's license. It was clear she was a victim of identity theft. Tom convinced the collection agency's attorney to dismiss the suit.

FUNDING NEWS

IOLTA RENEWS LEGAL CLINIC FUNDING. In June 2005, the *Pennsylvania Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts* (IOLTA) Board announced that it would renew a \$21,000 general legal services grant to the Legal Clinic for July 2005 through July 2006. We are extremely gratefully for the IOLTA Board's continued funding of our services and the services of our sister legal services agencies throughout the Commonwealth.

CONNELLY FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES GRANTS

TO LEGAL CLINIC. In July 2005, the *Connelly Foundation* announced \$17,000 in grants to the Legal Clinic, which will fund delivery of general legal services to low income people with physical disabilities.

SPOTLIGHT ON PROGRAMS

LEGAL CLINIC ANTI-VIOLENCE INITIATIVE: BREAKING THE CYCLE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES. Did you know that a person with a physical disability is five times more likely than a person without a disability to be abused by a partner, spouse or household member? Staff attorney *Linda Peyton* – a twenty year veteran of the Defender Association of Philadelphia – represents people with disabilities that are victims of domestic violence. Domestic abuse can take many forms – physical, sexual, verbal or economic. Linda also encounters disability-related abuse: a client’s spouse and caregiver might withhold personal care, medication, transportation or adaptive equipment that is necessary for the client’s independent survival.

The first step to helping the client break the cycle of violence is obtaining a Protection From Abuse order (PFA) in Family Court. A PFA typically orders the abuser to have no contact with the client for 18 months. Where appropriate, Linda then helps the client obtain housing, government benefits, and medical and attendant care; she represents the client in custody, spousal support, child support and divorce proceedings; and she takes other steps necessary to help the client live independently from the abuser.

Do you know someone who is the victim of domestic violence? Here are some important telephone numbers they can call for help:

Legal Clinic for the Disabled
215-587-3357

Women Against Abuse
215-686-7082

24 Hour Domestic Violence Hotlines
Philadelphia 215-386-7777
Bucks 800-220-8116
Chester 888-711-6270
Delaware 610-565-4590
Montgomery 800-642-3150

Police
911

Family Court Domestic Violence Unit

SPECIAL EVENTS

SILENT AUCTION RAISES OVER \$21,000 TO FUND FREE LEGAL SERVICES FOR LOW INCOME PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES. On April 7, 2005, the Legal Clinic held its Third Annual Spring Celebration & Silent Auction at *Blank Rome LLP’s* Comisky Conference Center. Over 200 people attended, helping to raise over \$21,000 to help low income people with disabilities solve their legal issues. At the event, we honored our White Hat Award winners for 2005, *Ronald Fisher, Lisa Washington, Bernadette Sparling, Juliet Sarkessian* and *Jeffrey Lichtman*, and our Special Recognition Award winner, *Joyce Collier*. Thanks to the many volunteers, donors and attendees who helped make this event a success. Special thanks to musicians *John Green* and *John Woods* for providing the evening’s entertainment and to *The Communication Connection* for providing sign language interpreters.



Legal Clinic board member Tom Brown, Special Recognition Award Winner Joyce Collier, Heidi Heller and past White Hat Award Winner Greg Heller at the Silent Auction, April 7, 2005.

THE LEGAL CLINIC GOES DRAGON BOAT RACING. The Legal Clinic for the Disabled has entered a team of staff members, board members, volunteers and friends in the Fourth Annual Philadelphia Dragon Boat Festival. This all-day racing event will take place Saturday, October 1, 2005 on a 500 meter course on the Schuylkill River. We'll be racing three times against 127 other teams in traditional Chinese dragon boats.

The Legal Clinic will have a tent in the Athlete's Village near the St. Joseph's boathouse on Kelly Drive for teammates and spectators to relax, enjoy food and beverages, and watch the races. Come on out and join the fun!

For more information on the dragon boat races, visit www.philadragonboatfestival.com.

PEOPLE

MEET 2005 HIGGINBOTHAM SUMMER FELLOW VICTORIA NICHOLSON. This summer the Legal Clinic hosted *Victoria Nicholson* as its Higginbotham Summer Fellow. The Philadelphia Bar Association's Public Interest Section awards the Higginbotham Fellowship annually in memory of the late Judge A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr. to a law student working in the Philadelphia public interest legal community. Victoria is a member of the Class of 2007 at Rutgers School of Law in Camden. She graduated from the State University of New York – Binghamton with Bachelors and Masters degrees in History and English. She was a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

Victoria told us she originally wanted to get a doctorate degree, but then she decided she needed a job where she could earn a decent living and pay her bills. If that was her motivation, we can't understand how she wound up in public interest law, but we are glad she did.

Victoria spent 11 weeks working at the Legal Clinic. She put together a how-to guide for estates administration; she prepared a paternity action, powers of attorney, wills and living wills; and she helped with client intake and case management. She became the Legal Clinic's go-to person for VA benefits.

We wish her luck upon her return to law school for the Fall 2005 semester. We're proud to announce that she will return to work for us part-time this fall so that she can continue to help low-income people with disabilities solve their legal problems.

Want to volunteer to provide pro bono representation to a low income person with disability or to help out at Legal Clinic special events? Please contact us at 215-587-3500 or tprettyman@mageerehab.org.

VOLUNTEER PROFILE: MARYELLEN DALEY. When it comes to energy and creativity, *MaryEllen Daley* not only takes the cake, but she can bake and decorate it too. As a veteran member of the Stroll & Roll and Silent Auction committees, MaryEllen uses her artistry and imagination to help make these events special. She is always among the first to arrive and last to leave. She was in large part responsible for the unique display tables at this year's silent auction. Aside from her service to the Legal Clinic, MaryEllen is a legal assistant at *Eisenberg, Rothweiler, Schleifer, Weinstein & Winkler*, wife to *Raymond*, and mom to *Lauren*. Volunteers like MaryEllen are crucial to the Legal Clinic's work. Thanks, MaryEllen!

Visit the Legal Clinic's website at www.legalclinicforthedisabled.org. Thanks to Jamie Burdette and Miguel Guerriero of Webjectives, Inc. (www.webjectives.com) for their generous donation of website development services.

GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH THE LEGAL CLINIC'S NEWEST BOARD MEMBERS. The Legal Clinic welcomes Beth Freeman, Daniel Hessel, Christopher Roe and Sandra Schmehl to its Board of Directors. Thanks to Beth, Dan, Chris and Sandy for being such good sports in sharing the following important information about themselves.

<p>BETH FREEMAN <i>Associate, Kline & Specter, P.C.</i> Quotation to live by: "Life is what happens while we're busy making other plans." -- John Lennon TV show I am not ashamed to admit I watch: Reruns of Bewitched. Favorite type of music: R&B Living person I'd most like to join for dinner conversation: David Sedaris Heroes from history: The women and men who have died serving our country. Magazines I read regularly: <i>Vanity Fair and Nutrition Action Healthletter</i> Websites I visit regularly: <i>CNN, KYW and The Onion</i> Last concert attended: Bette Midler Favorite desert: Chocolate ice cream One goal as a board member: To increase awareness of the services provided by the Legal Clinic for the Disabled within the legal community and beyond.</p>	<p>DANIEL HESSEL <i>Member, Cozen O'Connor</i> Quotation to live by: "Character is doing what is right when no one is watching." TV show I am not ashamed to admit I watch: With the phrase, "not ashamed to admit" being key, my answer will have to be CSI. Favorite type of music: Rock and Roll Living person I'd most like to join for dinner conversation: John Grisham Heroes from history: Lincoln, JFK Magazines I read regularly: <i>US News and Sports Illustrated</i> Websites I visit regularly: <i>Yahoo</i> Last concert attended: Better Than Ezra Favorite dessert: Chocolate soufflé One goal as a board member: Raise public awareness of the great things that can be accomplished through volunteer service and funding.</p>
<p>CHRISTOPHER ROE <i>Partner, Fox Rothschild, LLP</i> Quotation to live by: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." TV show I am not ashamed to admit I watch: NOVA/Sports Favorite type of music: Rock/alternative rock. Living person I'd most like to join for dinner conversation: My wife, Joanie, and my children. Heroes from history: Abe Lincoln Magazines I read regularly: <i>Enviropolitics and New Yorker</i> Websites I visit regularly: <i>New York Times and Pacer (federal courts)</i> Last concert attended: Great Valley HS band/orchestra/choir Favorite dessert: Ice cream One goal as a board member: Explore opportunities to improve protections for recipients of in-home attendant care services under state and federally funded programs.</p>	<p>SANDRA SCHMEHL <i>Senior Paralegal, Blank Rome LLP</i> Quotation to live by: "Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you" TV show I am not ashamed to admit I watch: "Sponge Bob Square Pants" Favorite type of music: Rock Living person I'd most like to join for dinner conversation: Bono of U2 Heroes from history: There are so many great men and women. It is hard to pick just one. Magazines I read regularly: <i>Philadelphia Magazine</i> Websites I visit regularly: I Google everything. Last concert attended: Eagles Favorite dessert -- Anything with chocolate, even better, chocolate and peanut butter One goal as a board member: Our fund raising events are great, and hopefully we can take them to the next level.</p>

SAVE THE DATE!

Legal Clinic for the Disabled's Fourteenth Annual Stroll & Roll

Sunday, September 11, 2005

9:00 am Registration / 10:00 am Start

at Lloyd Hall on Boathouse Row, Aquarium & Kelly Drives Philadelphia, PA

This year's theme is "Fun in Philadelphia" with Mummers, the Phillie Phanatic, Philly style snacks, face painting, t-shirts and more.

For more information, contact the Legal Clinic for the Disabled at
(215) 587-3350 or email us at tprettyman@mageerehab.org.



Legal Clinic for the Disabled, Inc.
1513 Race Street
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And thanks to the following people and businesses that helped make our 2005 Spring Celebration and Silent Auction a success:

Blank Rome LLP
City Source
Magee Rehabilitation Hospital
John Woods and John Green
The Communication Connection
Jacoby Donner, PC
Jeffrey Lichtman, Esquire