



from Connecticut Legal Services

Passing the Torch



***Eppler-Epstein
to Succeed
Farbman***



Executive Director Marvin Farbman

When Marvin Farbman assumed leadership of Connecticut Legal Services in 1995, he had been a legal services attorney for almost 20 years. During his tenure, staff attorneys opened more than 50,000 client service files. After guiding the agency to 11 years of stability and growth, Farbman is ready to meet his next challenge. He is confident that the CLS success story will continue when he steps down in January.

(Passing the Torch continued on page 2)

Annual Meeting

Connecticut Legal Services celebrated its 29th year of operation at its annual meeting in Middletown on the evening of October 18, 2006. At the meeting, CLS honored five members of the legal community for their work advocating for a new court rule that requires lawyers and law firms to place Interest on Lawyers' Trust Account (IOLTA) funds in financial institutions that pay the same interest rates or dividends on IOLTA accounts as they do on their best-paying comparable non-IOLTA accounts. IOLTA is a program enacted by the legislature in 1984 that generates funding for legal services to the poor.

The program also honored seven staff members who have made a lasting commitment to legal aid and the fight for justice. "The annual meeting offers an opportunity for us to recognize people who have made significant contributions to the legal services cause. The five leaders in the successful campaign to persuade Connecticut's Superior Court judges to pass the important new IOLTA rate parity rule are responsible for what promises to be a dramatic and greatly needed increase in legal services

(Annual Meeting continued on page 2)



briefly

(Annual Meeting, continued from page 1)

funding in Connecticut,” said CLS Executive Director Marvin Farbman.

The five leaders in the rate parity campaign were recognized for the key roles they played in this effort. Sandy Klebanoff, executive director of the Connecticut Bar Foundation (CBF) and William H. Narwold, director of the securities and consumer fraud practice group at Motley Rice LLC and president of the CBF, initiated and coordinated the advocacy effort. John Lawrence, a partner at Shipman & Goodwin, was the principal drafter of the rule change that the CBF proposed to the judges. He and Robert Dolian, former chair of the CLS Board of Directors and a partner at Cummings and Lockwood, had been organizing support for rate parity among members of the bar for several years. Aaron Bayer, vice chair of the CLS Board of Directors and chair of the national appellate practice group at Wiggin and Dana, prepared a crucial legal opinion arguing that the judges had clear authority to enact the rate parity rule change. As a result of these leaders’ efforts, the gap between the client population’s need

for legal aid and legal aid’s capacity to meet this need will narrow appreciably.

At its annual meeting, CLS also recognized staff members who have celebrated 20 or more years of service to CLS. Debi Witkin, director of development, has been with CLS for 20 years. She has practiced in each of the CLS substantive areas of legal practice and currently serves as the regional director of the Eastern Services Team and co-director of the Children at Risk Unit. She will become deputy director of CLS in January.

Linda Spada, the CLS comptroller, has been on the CLS financial team for 25 years. Richard Tenenbaum, Housing Task Force director, has been a legal services lawyer in Fairfield County for 30 years. Joanne Lewis, central regional director, has filled various positions at CLS and assisted in the creation and development of Statewide Legal Services during her 30-year legal services tenure. She is currently building the CLS immigration law practice.

Lorelei Weaver, in her 30th year, has been a paralegal and more

recently a member of the CLS support staff. The managing attorney of the New London office and director of the Disability Task Force, John Spilka, has dedicated 30 years to the cause. Also in the New London office and in the Disability Task Force, Mary VonDorster has had a 30-year career in legal services.

“We are very proud of the history of service we have at CLS. Many of our staff members have dedicated their entire careers to legal services, assisted hundreds of needy people, and made extraordinary contributions to social justice. We hope that the trend of long-term service continues here at CLS,” says Steven Eppler-Epstein, deputy director.

In a short business meeting prior to the dinner, the CLS Board of Directors elected the following five new members: Greg Daniels, Commission Counsel/Legislative and Administrative Manager—Freedom of Information Commission; Gary Gold, Partner—Gold & Levy; Sister Sally Tolles, Coordinator, Judge—The Tribunal, Roman Catholic Diocese of Norwich; Tonya Johnson, Director of Program Operations—Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence; and Kevin Rasch, Associate—Robinson & Cole, LLP.

(Passing the Torch, continued from page 1)

“I am delighted that the board has selected Steve Eppler-Epstein, the CLS deputy director, to succeed me as executive director,” says Farbman. “Steve and I have been close partners these last 11 years. He has vision, heart, a very sharp mind, and a prodigious knowledge of CLS operations. CLS could not be in better hands.”

Farbman is looking forward to his changed status, which he is reluctant to call “retirement.” He expects to continue his involvement in housing development work while exploring



Eppler-Epstein

new ventures that he is not yet ready to disclose. “You’ll just have to wait and see,” he says with a smile.

Eppler-Epstein is already rolling up his sleeves. “The needs of our clients are incredibly compelling, and our staff is well trained and highly motivated,” he says. “The reality is that there still aren’t enough

of us to do all the work that low-income households need us to do. We anticipate adding staff as a result of improved IOLTA rates (see page 4), which is a great start. Many battered women and elderly people, children

and disabled people suffer because their legal rights are not respected or they don’t have access to lawyers who can help solve their problems. We will need to show continued leadership and creativity about delivering services efficiently, partnering with the bar, and advocating for additional funding of legal services.”

Mitchell Pearlman, chair of the CLS Board of Directors, is optimistic about the future. “While we’re sorry to lose Marvin Farbman, the Board is also very excited about the prospect of Steve Eppler-Epstein’s leadership. We know that he’ll do a terrific job as executive director during what undoubtedly will be a very challenging period.”



Happy Trails to Yooou!

After years of dedicated service, three Connecticut Legal Services staffers have announced their plans to retire. Loris Cohen, an elder law attorney in the CLS Bridgeport office, has served the elderly community since the early 1980s. She took the lead on many issues of concern to elderly people and created partnerships with most of the community agencies in Bridgeport. She will retire at the end of this year.

“Lori served as an amazing resource for the Bridgeport elderly community. Besides being a leader in the area of elder law, Lori is an incredibly kind person who developed amazing relationships within the

elderly community. We will all miss her,” says Kevin Brophy, director of the Elder Law Unit.

Angie D’Alessandro is leaving her administrative secretary position after 29 years of service to CLS. She has an incredible institutional memory, having witnessed all the changes and growing pains that CLS has endured since its inception in 1977. Angie recalls the conversion to computers as one of the biggest changes for any support staffer at CLS. Although she says adapting to the change was hard initially, she successfully entered all the client data information once the system was fully functional.

Before coming to CLS, Angie was a stay-at-home mom, and family

remains a very important part of her life. She has always enjoyed helping clients and plans to work a few hours a week offering additional administrative support to the Middletown office, even though she’ll be “officially” retired. “Angie has been such a constant presence in the program. I have never known her to be anything but cool, calm, and efficient. The Middletown office will not seem the same without her,” says Nadine Nevins, a CLS regional director.

Marvin Farbman, the executive director of CLS, will also retire at the beginning of 2007. Read the story on page 1.



Helping Ex-Offenders Rebuild Their Lives

While low-income communities struggle with a huge influx of people, mostly men, returning from prison, ex-offenders struggle to find work. It’s not surprising, considering the following facts:

- U.S. prisons release more than 630,000 people each year, four times the number released 25 years ago.
- Three of every four inmates served time for non-violent offenses, such as drug and property offenses.

• One in five adults (50 to 65 million) has a record that will show up on a routine criminal background check.

Employment status often affects recidivism rates, according to a report prepared by the Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Project. People who can’t find jobs often fail to achieve stability outside of prison.

Thanks to Connecticut Legal Services attorney Nadine Nevins and others, finding work just got a little easier for ex-offenders who qualify for provisional pardons. Nevins was a leader in the two-year effort to pass legislation allowing the Board of Pardons and Parole to lift barriers against certain types of employment and licensure for ex-offenders.

The act, which took effect on October 1, 2006, prohibits employers and licensing agencies from denying employment or an occupational license to someone who has received a provisional pardon when the denial is based solely on a conviction that occurred before the employment began.

According to Nevins, Connecticut joins New York and Illinois as one of a handful of states with such legislation. “This is a great step toward helping ex-offenders become contributing members of society,” says Nevins. “Imagine being trained in prison to become a barber and then finding out that your ex-offender status prohibits you from getting a hairdresser’s license. It was as though the prison training arm of the state was completely at odds with the licensing arm of the state.”

Higher IOLTA Interest Rates Translate to More Legal Aid

Starting in 2007, low-income households in crisis will get additional help due to an anticipated increase in revenue in the state's Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts program (IOLTA). For many years, the interest rates paid on IOLTA accounts have lagged far behind market indicators. In June, the judges of the Superior Court amended Rule 1.15 of the Rules of Professional Conduct (effective

September 1). The amended rule requires lawyers and law firms to place their clients' IOLTA deposits in financial institutions whose IOLTA accounts have been approved by the Connecticut Bar Foundation as meeting a new parity standard. Banks must pay interest or dividend rates on their IOLTA account offerings that are equal to or higher than the best rates they pay on comparable non-IOLTA accounts.

The modification follows similar changes in IOLTA rules in a number of other states, including Florida, New Jersey, Michigan, Alabama, and Ohio. In those states, there has been no disruption of the relationships between law firms and financial institutions.

"We are working with individual banks to analyze the rates that will achieve parity between IOLTA accounts and comparable accounts at each bank," says Sandy Klebanoff,

executive director of the Connecticut Bar Foundation (CBF). A number of banks have aligned their accounts already, and we anticipate concluding discussions with additional banks in the near future. We don't know yet how much the IOLTA funding stream will increase, but it's clear that this change will have a significant, positive impact on the funding available for the legal services programs in Connecticut."

"The additional funding will present an opportunity for us to make a dent in the mountain of need that we see every day," says Steve Eppler-Epstein, deputy director of Connecticut Legal Services. (Eppler-Epstein will become executive director in January—see page 1.) "The extra funding means some low-income households in crisis are going to get legal help to make their lives better. And that's really what IOLTA is all about."



Staff News and Notes

Three new staff members have joined the Connecticut Legal Services community since the spring 2006 issue of *Briefly*. "We are always thrilled to welcome new members to our staff, and we couldn't be happier with the most recent additions to the CLS family," says Astrid Lebron, co-chair of the CLS hiring committee.

Ana Romero, the newest member of the Stamford support staff, is a fluent Spanish speaker. In addition to providing administrative support, Romero uses her language skills to interpret and translate for those clients who could not otherwise communicate with their attorneys. "We are very fortunate to have someone like Ana. She is caring and efficient,

and our Spanish-speaking clients have been very appreciative of her assistance," says Claudine Siegel, managing attorney of the CLS Stamford office.

Avery Moore fills a new position at the CLS Middletown office as the first administrative assistant/office manager. Moore earned a B.A. in psychology from Southern Connecticut State University in January 2006, graduating *summa cum laude*. Before joining CLS, she worked for a small insurance firm as a Commercial Lines CSR, where she developed and implemented a creative marketing plan for targeting new clients needing flood coverage. Moore will use her creativity and energy to help CLS with a broad array of work, from assisting with the CLS Campaign for Justice to becoming the new CLS webmaster.

Attorney James Haslam joins the CLS New London office with an initial

concentration in public benefits law. He graduated in May 2006 from Quinnipiac Law School. Haslam was a certified legal intern at a private law firm during his last semester in law school and interned with Attorneys Tom Ford and Kevin Brophy at the CLS Waterbury office last summer. "Jim has been a great addition to the unit, and I thoroughly enjoy working with him," says Shirley Bergert, director of the CLS Benefits Task Unit.

Haslam takes over the benefits position in New London from Attorney Joanne Charles. Charles has joined the Housing Unit working in the Bridgeport office. She takes over that position from Attorneys David Stowe and Astrid Lebron, who were job-sharing the housing position in both Bridgeport and New Britain. Stowe and Lebron will remain members of the Housing Unit but will now practice out of the New Britain office on a full-time basis.

CLS Honored With Rosenwald Award

Margo is an elderly woman who has physical disabilities. She is a resident of an assisted living facility, enjoys the community, and is very comfortable in her environment. The facility is close to her daughter's home, and the arrangement is ideal for her. The facility's administrators, however, filed papers to discharge Margo, saying they could no longer adequately care for her. Margo needed help—and Connecticut Legal Services stepped in.

Margo uses a wheelchair, and the arthritis in her hands makes opening the exit door difficult for her. The facility claimed it would be unable to help Margo in an emergency. She thought the claim was ridiculous and that the facility wanted to reduce staffing costs by finding residents who need less help.

Margo also thought that the facility was retaliating against her personally. The new owner had taken a check from Margo and cashed it without her permission. An attorney from CLS contacted state prosecutors, who advised the owner to avoid charges by returning the money. Shortly after the incident, the facility filed Margo's discharge papers.

● Attorney Joelen Gates represented Margo at a three-day discharge hearing. Under questioning by Gates, the facility was unable to prove that a nursing home placement was necessary for Margo, and the hearing officer ruled in her favor. Margo and her daughter were thrilled with the help CLS provided, which allowed them to go on with their lives.



● The work CLS does for Margo and many other people like her does not go unnoticed. In September, CLS received the prestigious Carol Rosenwald Award. CLS and two other providers were honored at the annual VOICES Forum, an event co-sponsored by the Statewide Coalition of Presidents of Resident Councils and the commissioner of the Department of Social Services. CLS attorney Steven Kilpatrick accepted the award on behalf of CLS, Greater Hartford Legal Aid, and the New Haven Legal Assistance Association.

● The award recognized the three legal assistance programs for their advocacy on behalf of nursing home

● residents and people living in other institutional settings. The programs represent residents in discharge and transfer hearings, residents who encounter Medicaid and quality of life issues, and people who need to relocate when a facility closes. In addition to advocating on behalf of nursing home residents, the legal services elder law attorneys also provide training programs and advice for the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program. For example, Kevin Brophy, who heads the CLS Elder Law Unit, recently held a training session regarding the rights of assisted-living residents in eviction actions.

● The Rosenwald Award was established in 2002 in memory of Carol Rosenwald. She founded the Statewide Coalition of Presidents of Resident Councils and provided counseling and empowerment to nursing home residents in Connecticut. The annual award honors individuals and organizations that take an active role in improving the quality of life and care of nursing home residents. Margo's story illustrates the type of advocacy low-income elderly people in Connecticut so value.

New Grant Helps CLS Aid Immigrants

Thanks to the Seaman Family Foundation, Connecticut Legal Services is expanding its services to low-income immigrants. The foundation has contributed \$50,000 to help fund an immigration law position in the CLS Bridgeport office.

CLS lawyers have received an increasing number of requests for legal help with immigration-related issues over the last several years. The new position will allow CLS to respond to many more immigrants, who, like any other state residents, experience domestic violence, evictions, denial of employment rights, and denial of medical care or other government benefits. CLS is the only law firm in the Bridgeport area that provides free legal services to low-income immigrants with serious life problems.

The following client stories illustrate the kind of help CLS can provide.

Milagros

Milagros is from Peru, where she lived until four years ago with her two children from her first marriage. She met Carlos, her present husband, through a friend who worked in the United States with him. They began to communicate through email and then by telephone. Eventually, Carlos helped Milagros obtain a tourist visa and a plane ticket to the United States so they could meet in person. After several months, Milagros and Carlos were married and Milagros's children were able to emigrate.

● Carlos began to abuse Milagros mentally and emotionally almost from the beginning of the marriage; eventually the abuse became physical. When Milagros told Carlos she was going to leave him, he threatened to revoke his sponsorship of her application for citizenship. Milagros did not know that as a victim of domestic violence, she could complete a self-petition for citizenship—she didn't have to rely on her abusive husband.

● Finally, the abuse became so intolerable that Milagros called the police. Carlos was arrested, and Milagros obtained a protective order prohibiting Carlos from having contact with her or her children. Milagros was able to move into a domestic violence shelter with her children, and the shelter referred her to CLS for legal assistance. CLS is helping Milagros obtain a divorce judgment that includes safety and financial orders to help maintain stability for her and her children. In addition, CLS filed a self-petition under the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) so Milagros can remain in this country and an application for employment authorization on her behalf so she can support herself and her children.

Juan

● Nine-year-old Juan currently lives with his maternal aunt, who also is his guardian. Juan came to the United States from the Dominican Republic three years ago with his mother, Rosana. She had a Fiancé(e) Visa based on her engagement to John, a United States citizen she met when John was vacationing in the

● Dominican Republic. Rosana and John married soon after Rosana and Juan arrived in the United States. One year later, when John began physically abusing her and Juan, Rosana filed a VAWA self-petition and an Adjustment of Status petition to obtain permanent resident status for herself and for Juan. Unfortunately, Rosana died of cancer while that process was pending. Because of her death, Juan had to begin the immigration process again.

● The combination of his stepfather's abuse and his mother's death left Juan with a host of psychological issues. Juan's aunt applied for Medicaid on Juan's behalf, and his Medicaid benefits helped pay for psychiatric counseling. Recently, because of new rules requiring the Department of Social Services (DSS) to verify the citizenship of people who receive Medicaid, DSS realized that Juan was neither a citizen nor a lawful permanent resident, so they terminated his Medicaid. A CLS lawyer requested a hearing on Juan's behalf and pointed out the policies that allow immigrants who are survivors of domestic violence to receive Medicaid in certain circumstances. DSS agreed that Juan's situation fit the required circumstances and reinstated his medical card.

● In addition to providing direct representation to people like Milagros and Juan, the Bridgeport CLS immigration lawyer will supply community education to clients and their service providers. Topics will include immigrant employment rights, immigrant rights to public benefits and health care assistance, immigrant education rights, and immigration status and opportunities to change that status. "Many immigrants work hard and contribute to American society. It helps the clients and it helps communities in general to provide immigrants with the tools they need to stabilize their lives," says Joanne Lewis, a CLS attorney who works with immigrant clients referred by domestic violence shelters in central Connecticut.

Leave Your Mark for Future Generations

According to Leave a Legacy (LAL) published statistics, Connecticut is, for the most part, a generous state. Each year, 72 percent of residents give money to charities. However, only 5.7 percent leave charitable bequests in their wills. The number-one reason for this gap? Most people say they were never asked or didn't think about it.

LAL Connecticut asks all Connecticut residents to think about it. "Everyone can help, regardless of in-

come, and each gift makes an impact," says Lyn Walker, co-chair of Leave a Legacy Connecticut, a partner with the law firm of Shipman & Goodwin, LLP, and a member of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel.

LAL Connecticut is a statewide public-awareness effort to promote charitable bequests. The campaign encourages people to make gifts from their estates to their favorite nonprofit organizations. LAL also urges people to discuss their intentions with financial and estate planners who specialize in this field. Many estate-planning professional organizations participate in LAL's collaborative efforts, as do more than 500 Connecticut nonprofit organizations.

LAL Connecticut and Connecticut Legal Services urge people to consider including charitable organiza-

tions in their wills. To find out more, visit the LAL Web site at <http://www.ctphilanthropy.org/lal>, or call the United Way Infoline at 211.

Please consider putting Connecticut Legal Services, Inc. in your will—your bequest will make a difference for low-income Connecticut residents.



Please Support the 2006 Campaign for Justice

I want to help CLS open doors for Connecticut's low-income population.

Name _____

Firm Affiliation _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail Address _____

This is my PERSONAL FIRM'S Donation.

Total Contribution Enclosed/Pledged* \$ _____

Special recognition: Our publications will highlight, among others, donors in the following categories: Leaders: \$1,000 & up; Pacesetters: \$500-\$999; Sustainers: \$200-\$499 (for firm donations, amounts are per attorney in the firm).

Mastercard

Visa Account # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Name (please print) _____

*If pledge: To be fulfilled by _____, 2006.

Contributions are tax deductible.

CONNECTICUT LEGAL SERVICES
 A Private Nonprofit Corporation
 62 Washington Street, Middletown, CT 06457
 Telephone (860) 344-0447, FAX (860) 346-2938
 e-mail PovertyLaw@ConnLegalServices.org



Connecticut Legal Services, Inc.
62 Washington Street
Middletown, CT 06457

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MIDDLETOWN, CT
PERMIT NO. 129



Inside: Passing the Torch
Higher IOLTA Interest Rates Translate to More Legal Aid
New Grant Helps CLS Aid Immigrants

**CONNECTICUT
LEGAL
SERVICES**
A Private Nonprofit Corporation

Administrative Office

62 Washington Street
Middletown, CT 06457
860-344-0447
PovertyLaw@ConnLegalServices.org

Law Offices

211 State Street
Bridgeport, CT 06604
(serving Greater Bridgeport)

587 Main Street
New Britain, CT 06051
860-225-8678; 1-800-233-7619
(serving the New Britain and Meriden areas as well as Middlesex County)

153 Williams Street
New London, CT 06320
860-447-0323; 1-800-413-7798
(serving New London County)

20 Summer Street
Stamford, CT 06910
203-348-9216; 1-800-541-8909
(serving the Greater Stamford and Norwalk areas)

85 Central Avenue
Waterbury, CT 06702
203-756-8074; 1-800-413-7797
(serving the Waterbury and Danbury areas as well as Litchfield County)

872 Main Street
Willimantic, CT 06226
860-456-1761; 1-800-413-7796
(serving Tolland and Windham Counties)

Satellite Offices
(Call the law office nearest you to make a satellite office appointment.)

5 Colony Street
Meriden, CT 06450

62 Washington Street
Middletown, CT 06457

98 South Main Street
South Norwalk, CT 06854

564 Prospect Street
Torrington, CT 06790

155 West Main Street
Rockville, CT 06066