

*Legal
Services
of
South
Central
Michigan*

ANNUAL REPORT 2012

MAKING JUSTICE A REALITY



Your support allows us to make a positive and important difference in the lives of thousands of families each year. In 2012, we achieved positive outcomes in over 96% of the cases where we were able to provide full representation. Following are some examples of the positive outcomes achieved:

Protected rights to income and assets for over 1,370 families and individuals

Helped over 1,650 families facing eviction or foreclosure remain in their homes

Ensured the safety from domestic violence of approximately 1,240 women, the majority are single mothers with children

Total Cases handled in 2012: 9,926

Cases completed in 2012: 8,032

Cases continued into 2013: 1,894

LSSCM's Clients -

36% of clients are minorities

19% of clients are seniors

73% of clients are female

49% of clients have children in the home

LSSCM Circle of Excellence

In 2012, the following firms made significant contributions to LSSCM:*

Conlin, McKenney & Philbrick
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Soble Rowe Krichbaum LLP

Thrun Law Firm, P.C.

Warner Norcross & Judd LLP (Lansing office)

*All of these firms met the State Bar of Michigan's Voluntary Pro Bono Standard because each lawyer within these firms donated at least \$300 or provided 30 hours of free representation for low income persons. The State Bar is revising its Circle of Excellence beginning in 2013 to recognize two tiers of donors—one at \$300 per lawyer and the other at \$500 per lawyer. The firms printed in **bold** are “early adopters”—who began donations at the \$500 level in 2012.

DEAR FRIENDS,

Thousands of low income individuals have a better life today because of the services provided by LSSCM staff and pro bono attorneys. Your support for the program has been critical to sustaining these services.

Civil legal aid assures fairness in the justice system. LSSCM's work makes the legal system accessible to clients and helps them secure life changing resolutions – preserving homes, protecting income and assets, ensuring safety for women and children.

In 2012, LSSCM experienced a reduction in staff due to a loss of over \$440,000 to our annual budget because of federal and state funding cuts. Meanwhile, poverty in Michigan has increased 66% since 2001- the largest increase in poverty in any state in the country.

With your support and LSSCM's ability to use this funding well, our staff and volunteers handled more than 9,900 cases in 2012, providing legal assistance to over 19,900 men, women and children. In addition, LSSCM continued to expand advocacy to vulnerable populations and create new and innovative ways to help more people.

Even during these difficult times, we continue to diversify our funding and reduce our agency's reliance on federal government funds. Our funders include private foundations and local United Ways. Further, we receive tremendous support from our pro bono attorneys, the community organizations we work with, and our donors. In 2012, we received approximately \$2 million in donations to support services to LSSCM clients – donated time equivalent to \$1.8 million and financial contributions of over \$200,000.

This 2012 Annual report highlights the tangible, sustained impact our work has on the lives of the people we help. Thank you for the opportunity to make justice a reality for the most vulnerable members of our community.



Robert Gillett
Executive Director



Thomas Daniels
Board President

PROTECTING RIGHTS TO INCOME AND ASSETS

A FAMILY OF FIVE contacted LSSCM when they were sued over an old hospital bill. Jada, the mother, was on Medicaid at the time that she needed emergency gall bladder surgery and had the surgery at her local hospital. However, there was an error in billing and the hospital sued the client for payment rather than pursuing reimbursement from Medicaid. LSSCM represented the family in court; we also worked with the Department of Human Services to seek Medicaid reimbursement for the hospital for the bill. In the end, LSSCM was successful in getting Medicaid to fix the billing error and pay for the services. As a result, the Court dismissed the collection action. In a note to LSSCM, Jada wrote, "Thank you for getting done what I could not."

SARAH BOUCK, a staff attorney from the Lansing office, received a LSSCM Outstanding Case Advocacy Award for her work on Amelia's case. Amelia, who is now 13 years old, was exposed to cocaine while in the womb; she was adopted and is being raised by her grandmother. The Social Security Administration attempted to terminate the child's Supplemental Security Income benefits. The grandmother had very limited income and difficulty understanding the forms she received from the Social Security Administration and as a result missed a deadline to appeal the cut off. LSSCM was able to get the case re-opened and the benefits reinstated. Sarah's persistent, outstanding advocacy secured a positive result for Amelia.

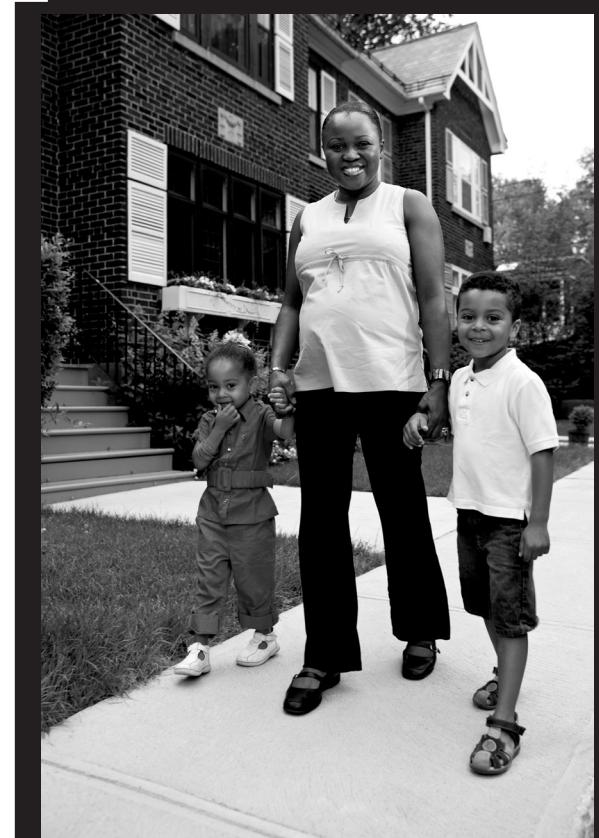


SARAH BOUCK

ENSURING SAFETY FOR FAMILIES AND SENIORS

Kristin, a MOTHER OF THREE CHILDREN, called LSSCM because she was being harassed and stalked by her abusive husband's recently released cell mate. Kristin had suffered years of abuse until her husband was put in jail for child pornography. When her husband's cell mate was released from jail, he began to intimidate and frighten Kristin. The former cell mate began appearing at her home and at court hearings concerning her children. LSSCM assisted the client in obtaining a Personal Protection Order against the cell mate to be in place until her youngest child was an adult. The cell mate filed an appeal to the Court of Appeals which upheld the Personal Protection Order.

The MICHIGAN ELDER JUSTICE INITIATIVE was developed in 2011 to provide training and support to legal services staff, advocates, social service providers and consumers about elder justice issues. In 2012, Alison Hirschel, MEJI's Managing Attorney, worked with the National Center for Abuse in Later Life (NCALL), the American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging, and other partners to develop a project to train legal services lawyers about elder abuse. The Department of Justice announced at a White House event in June, 2012 that it would be funding this effort and sharing the training materials with every legal aid program in the country. This year, MEJI and NCALL will receive funding to create the training materials.



PROTECTING THE LEGAL RIGHTS OF FARMWORKERS

FARMWORKER LEGAL SERVICES Attorneys were honored for their advocacy on behalf of Michigan's 90,000 migrant and seasonal farmworkers.

TOM THORNBURG received the Champion of Justice Award from the State Bar of Michigan. Tom is Co-Managing Attorney and Co-Founder of LSSCM's Farmworker Legal Services. In 2010, Tom led efforts that resulted in the Michigan Department of Civil Rights releasing a report on the conditions faced by migrant and seasonal farmworkers. In March 2013, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission adopted a progress report on the recommendations.

KARA MOBERG, FLS Staff Attorney, received LSSCM's Outstanding Case Advocacy Award. In 2012, Kara successfully negotiated a settlement of a federal lawsuit on behalf of ten migrant farmworkers, resulting in payments of over \$2,200 to each of the 10 plaintiffs in unpaid minimum wages and statutory damages resulting from the defendant-employer's violations of the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Workers Protection Act (AWPA). This case was the most recent of three multi-client settlements she has achieved in the past few years. In addition, Kara developed a set of protocols to assist advocates in handling future multi-client litigation.

TOM
THORNBURG &
KARA MOBERG



JULIE
FERSHTMAN,
TOM
THORNBURG
& BRUCE
COURTADE



SAVING DECENT AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The **MICHIGAN FORECLOSURE PREVENTION PROJECT (MFPP)** is a statewide collaboration, led by LSSCM, of all the legal services providers in the state. The program provides representation to homeowners facing foreclosure. The MFPP collaborates with housing counselors to resolve foreclosures early in the process and coordinates statewide policy advocacy. The MFPP saved approximately 1600 homes from foreclosure in 2012 and achieved positive case outcomes for an additional 1,013 families. Through the MFPP, LSSCM was involved in numerous successful post foreclosure appeals on technical foreclosure-related legal issues.

ELIZABETH RIOS, staff attorney in LSSCM's Lansing office, received LSSCM's Effective Community Project Award because of her involvement with the Eviction Diversion Program in the 55th District Court. The purpose of the project is to prevent evictions by having social and legal services available to tenants in the court room on eviction docket days. The community partners involved include the Department of Human Services (DHS)—so that requests for emergency funding can be immediately approved on site. The project has both the court and social services agencies working with landlords and tenants to explore if there is any way to avoid the eviction. Liza was instrumental in developing the program and now spends at least one afternoon a week educating tenants about their rights and working with them to resolve their cases.



PROVIDING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The **MICHIGAN POVERTY LAW PROGRAM** provides training, case consultation, and advocacy support to all the civil legal aid offices in Michigan. In 2012, MPLP provided trainings to over 1,040 legal aid attorneys, pro bono attorneys, housing counselors, and law students. In addition, MPLP assisted with approximately 2,184 requests for advocacy support in family law, elder law, consumer law, housing law, foreclosures, public benefits and immigration. MPLP is often involved in significant litigation affecting low income individuals. One example is *In Re Schafer*, where a bankruptcy trustee challenged the law in Michigan that allows additional homestead protection for individuals with disabilities. MPLP filed an Amicus Brief and the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the statute so that the individual was able to keep his home after filing for bankruptcy due to medical debt.

MICHIGAN LEGAL HELP is a statewide website that provides legal information to self-represented litigants; the site permits litigants to respond to simple questions—and those answers populate court forms. MLH assisted over 4,500 self-represented litigants in handling relatively simple legal matters on their own from the public launch date in August, 2012 through the end of the year. In addition, over 10,000 individuals completed interviews and received information and/or referral regarding their legal issue. LSSCM has received very positive feedback about MLH, one user said “I was so scared that I wouldn’t be able to do this all by myself, and your site has made this painful process a little easier.”

PATRICK CLEMENT, staff attorney in LSSCM's Monroe office, received LSSCM's first 110% Award for his advocacy on behalf of tenants facing evictions who were being denied the right to a fair hearing. As a result of Patrick's advocacy, the State Court Administrative Office intervened and directed the local courts to change their landlord-tenant hearing process.



CREATING A MORE POSITIVE AND INCLUSIVE ATMOSPHERE FOR IMMIGRANTS

The **MICHIGAN IMMIGRANT RIGHTS CENTER** expanded in 2012 to continue providing support and coordinating statewide immigration and immigrant rights advocacy among pro bono attorneys, legal aid attorneys and immigrant service providers. MIRC administers a panel of 116 pro bono attorneys that help with citizenship clinics, clinics to help refugees, cases for crime victims including unaccompanied minor children, and other issues affecting immigrants.

WELCOMING MICHIGAN - The Welcoming Michigan initiative, led by the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center, was publicly launched in the spring of 2012. The primary goal of the Welcoming Michigan initiative is to promote mutual respect between foreign-born and U. S. born Americans through public education and media outreach. In 2012, Welcoming Michigan held events in Sterling Heights, the Chadsey-Condon neighborhood in Detroit, Hamtramck, and Van Buren County. The events were attended by over 1900 individuals.

SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY

MEGAN REYNOLDS, Managing Attorney of LSSCM's Battle Creek office, received an award from Creating Change, a community organizing grass roots agency in Battle Creek, honoring her advocacy efforts on behalf of residents of a local mobile home park.

LSSCM serves as counsel for all the legal aid programs in Michigan and has worked with pro bono lawyers to represent these programs as amicus curiae in important cases in appellate courts.

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**LSSCM congratulates Dan Sherrick and Mary
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Other Governmental Funding	\$706,588
<i>Foundations</i>	\$503,673
Local United Ways	\$263,986
<i>Local Area Agencies on Aging</i>	\$93,958
Other Grants	\$81,156
<i>Miscellaneous Income and Interest</i>	\$117,703
Contributions	\$195,651
<i>Donated Goods and Services</i>	\$1,802,574
Expenditure of Fund Balance	\$193,264
TOTAL REVENUE	\$7,636,374
EXPENSES	
<i>Program Services</i>	\$7,243,529
Administration and Fundraising	\$392,845
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CLOSING NET ASSETS	\$1,617,996

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