

Equal Access
to Justice
for All



2014
Annual Report

NH CAMPAIGN
FOR LEGAL SERVICES

About the Campaign

For 15 years, the Campaign for Legal Services has brought together New Hampshire's business, legal and philanthropic communities to support the civil legal aid work of the Legal Advice & Referral Center and New Hampshire Legal Assistance.

Through personal outreach and annual initiatives, including a popular kick-off breakfast featuring nationally-known speakers, the Campaign promotes awareness of civil legal aid's effect in the state and raises private contributions so LARC and NHLA advocates can spend their time ensuring all New Hampshire residents have equal access to justice.

New Hampshire Legal Assistance (NHLA) was founded in 1971 through the merger of two smaller non-profit legal aid organizations. Since then, NHLA has grown to five branch law offices with almost 30 staff members. NHLA attorneys and paralegals provide advice and counsel and represent low-income and elderly clients in all levels of state and federal court, and in front of many government agencies, helping them with civil, non-criminal cases dealing with housing, benefits, family law and employment security. NHLA also advocates at the state level for systemic changes to policies that affect their client populations.

In 1996, Congress implemented new restrictions on organizations funded by the federal Legal Services Corporation (LSC). Rather than abandoning systemic advocacy and other efforts now restricted, New Hampshire's legal aid community created the Legal Advice & Referral Center (LARC), which serves residents within LSC guidelines.

LARC provides free information, legal advice, and assistance over the phone to litigants who will represent themselves in court and in front of state and federal agencies. LARC attorneys and paralegals refer some cases to NHLA for further help, and in many cases advocate on behalf of clients. In addition to the call center, LARC also maintains a website to improve the legal system for all involved by educating pro se litigants of the process and their rights.



From the Campaign Leadership Council Chair



Dear friends and fellow Campaign supporters,

I am honored to serve as the Chair of the 2015 Campaign for Legal Services, after supporting the Campaign since its inception in 2000. I am encouraged this year to see our staff and Council members strengthening our existing efforts and embarking on new projects, including this report to you about the Campaign's significant impact on the lives of New Hampshire residents.

Access to legal help is crucial in times of crisis, when legal aid clients need to protect their livelihoods, homes, health and families. The Campaign supports the advocates who serve New Hampshire's most vulnerable populations: domestic violence victims seeking safety, and families and seniors struggling to make ends meet and avoid homelessness.

Civil legal aid clients include veterans fighting new battles to access the care and benefits they've earned; parents working to get their children the educational supports they need; and people with disabilities navigating the complex bureaucracy of federal benefits programs.

All of us—we who work for the Campaign, and you who support us—want to ensure legal aid clients don't have to fight alone. We all benefit: The private, unrestricted funds raised by the Campaign help advocates secure federal benefits and child support for their clients, which generates cost-savings for our local communities by preventing homelessness and other crises. Your donation to the Campaign is a sound investment in our state's well-being. It's a way of saying you believe in our clients, and their ability to contribute to our New Hampshire community once their moment of crisis has passed.

Civil legal aid programs work to expand access to legal advice and representation for all people in our great justice system, not just for those who can afford it. But there are still people in our state who face legal crises alone, without support or guidance. If you are one of the more than 600 donors listed in this report who contributed to our efforts to change that reality, we are deeply grateful.

If you have not yet joined us, please read about our advocates' work, count up the amazing number of people our programs reach, and think about how you can help us move New Hampshire toward equal access to justice for all.

Emily Gray Rice

Emily Gray Rice, Chair

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Legal Advice & Referral Center ~ Concord

Back row: Karen Makocy Philbrick, Jeffrey Goodrich, Breckie Hayes, Ellie Boisvert, Jamie Rogers, and Beathan Regan. Front row: Steven McGilvary, Paula Foss, Connie Rakowsky, Audrey Logan, and Deb Stanley. (not pictured: Kim Flint, Dawn DiManna, Pat Gardner, Jim Marshall, Karl Durand.)



New Hampshire Legal Assistance ~ Claremont

Ben Mortell, Mary Krueger and Karen Leahy



New Hampshire Legal Assistance ~ Manchester

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New Hampshire Legal Assistance ~ Portsmouth

Michelle Wangerin, Kay Drought, Ruth Cartlidge, Erin Jasina



"(Our advocate) took it on like it was her own problem. She gave me the legal support for me to push as hard as I needed to get Joanne home in an appropriate way at the right time."

Errol, Barrington

Errol married his high school sweetheart Joanne in 1962, when they were both 20 years old. He is now Joanne's primary caregiver, after she suffered several silent strokes and the beginning stages of dementia.

Last spring, her needs became too intense for him to handle on his own, so Errol admitted Joanne to a nursing home until he could arrange for visiting nurses to help him with her care at home.

When he enrolled her in Medicaid to cover the high cost of her stay, the home scheduled her for discharge immediately, claiming there were no beds available for Medicaid patients at that time. An ally at the state Medicaid office told Errol to call New Hampshire Legal Assistance.

"Whatever I have to do for my family, I'll do it. But unless you've got some legal backing, it's hard to know if you're doing the right thing. Having legal assistance made me sure I was doing the right thing, and not saying something that could end up proving my case wrong."

With help from visiting nurses every day, Errol is caring for Joanne in their Barrington home again. He plans to care for her at home as long as he is able.

Errol and Joanne



"After dealing with all of this, I realized I wanted to be able to help people who are in that same situation, who can't fight for themselves," she said. "I want to fight for them because someone fought for me."

Elizabeth, Plymouth

Elizabeth was just 20 years old when her boyfriend, who had been abusing drugs, attacked her while she held their infant son. She knew she had to leave and get legal protections for herself and her son.

After she worked with an NHLA attorney through dozens of hearings, a judge ruled in Elizabeth's favor and granted her a final protective order barring her ex from contacting them for several years. Now, Elizabeth is studying at Plymouth State University, with hopes to be a public interest lawyer helping low-income clients, just like her NHLA advocate.

"I loved my son's father. So it was great that (my advocate) didn't only deal with the legal aspect of my case. When I was crying and saying I wanted to call him and drop the restraining order, she was there to tell me it would be okay and I could be strong. She was a huge support for me and my family. I might have done okay on my own, but I wouldn't know for a fact that my son is going to be safe."

Elizabeth



"We had no where to go. It's a life saving thing. When you're so low and you've got no resources, when someone makes you think, 'I can get through this,' that just means the world."

Kelli, Lisbon



"I was confused, I was lost, I was nervous. I felt abandoned. But after talking to LARC, I felt like the weight on my chest had been lifted. I think it makes a world of difference. Getting advice is a step toward getting your sanity back."

Debra, Merrimack

Kelli loved her work as a nurse, and loved being able to support her daughter and disabled mother, until she sustained severe brain damage in a stroke. The damage left Kelli unable to handle long-term critical thinking, like what to do after her landlord said he planned to kick her and her family out for not paying rent.

But she had always paid, in full and on time. Kelli believes he wanted her to leave because she complained about tripping in a hole he had left unfilled on the property. Not knowing what to do, Kelli called LARC, where an advocate found errors in the landlord's paperwork.

Kelli's advocate wrote a motion to help her get the case dismissed, and explained how she should present her case. Then Kelli went to court on her own and argued, successfully, against the landlord's experienced attorney.

"I wasn't even that scared," she said. "Before, I felt like I was all alone, like I had no teammates, and (my advocate) made it seem like I had a big team, even if it was just one person."

Kelli

Debra endured years of verbal abuse from her husband toward her and her son, who has Asperger's syndrome. One day, her husband attacked her son with a broomstick, and pushed her against a bannister, almost knocking her down the stairs. The abuse spurred her to petition for a restraining order. The next time they spoke, he said he wanted a divorce.

Debra suffers from bipolar disorder, and relies on her husband's insurance to cover her therapy and medication. Her treatment has allowed her to work part-time, but she doesn't get insurance, and her medication could lead to dialysis if she stops an expensive monitoring regimen. She also doesn't make enough to maintain their home on her own, and was worried her husband would stop paying for the mortgage and utilities, and leave her and her son stranded.

A case worker at Bridges, a Nashua-area resource for victims of domestic violence, told Debra to call LARC.

Attorneys at LARC reviewed Debra's case and found that she wouldn't be eligible for his insurance after a divorce. They recommended she pursue a legal separation instead, and Debra agreed.

"I'm glad I got this advice before I did anything," Debra said.

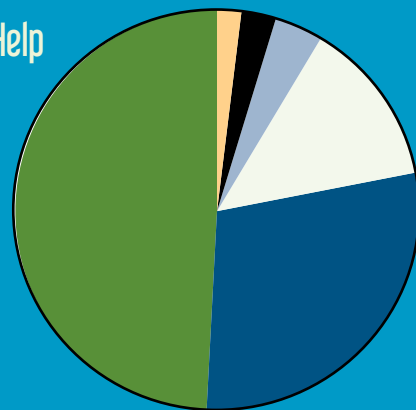
Debra

Together, We Make A Difference



How Our Programs Help

- 49% Housing Law
- 29% Family Law
- 13% Benefits Law
- 4% Consumer Law
- 3% Juvenile Law
- 2% Other



Working together, NHLA and LARC helped

13,938 people, including
3,948 children
1,433 disabled people
649 seniors
417 veterans



NHLA helped clients secure

More than \$10.7 million in federal benefits

Almost \$80,000 in unemployment benefits

More than \$23,000 in child support payments



LARC received

300 hotline calls every day

690 volunteer hours, worth more than \$46,000

85,900 unique website visitors



Your donation changes lives. Thank you.

In 2014, 610 donors gave almost \$250,000 to the Campaign for Legal Services.

We especially thank the attorneys at our Pacesetter firms who gave at least \$500 per attorney.

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"Those that are most vulnerable, those that are about to be evicted from their homes or are subject to domestic abuse, they don't have a voice and they don't know where to turn. They need legal aid. Without legal aid, what's life to them? And that affects all of us as a society and in the community."

Cathy Schmidt, CEO, McLane, Graf, Raulerson & Middleton

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