

# NH JUSTICE MATTERS

Campaign for Legal Services | [www.nh-cls.org](http://www.nh-cls.org)

*Supporting New Hampshire Legal Assistance and the Legal Advice and Referral Center*

**Donor Spotlight** Abigail Sykas Karoutas, principal, Sykas Law Office, Dover



"Life's complicated. It doesn't take very much to cause a total crisis, and if you can't afford a lawyer you're in a real

spot. There's a real need for legal aid to ensure the justice system is accessible for all and is not a tool just for the elite. I support the Campaign because it's a way for me to give back that doesn't involve me going to court or stepping outside my practice area."

To make a tax-deductible donation to the Campaign for Legal Services, visit [www.nh-cls.org](http://www.nh-cls.org)

## Staff Anniversaries

### LARC

Jeffrey Goodrich, 16 years

### NHLA

Ruth Cartledge, 11 years  
 Kay Drought, 18 years  
 Carol Graham, 28 years  
 Susan Guild, 13 years  
 Ruth Heintz, 11 years

## Campaign implementing plan to increase support for legal services

The Campaign continues to implement recommendations from a Business Initiative Planning Committee, a novel idea among legal services agencies nationally, to increase awareness and support for civil legal aid among New Hampshire's corporate leaders.

Our group, convened in spring 2013 and led by Chair **Joseph Reilly**, met for six months to develop ideas based on insightful comments and valuable advice from statewide business leaders.

By January this year, we had already implemented several committee recommendations including: a professional marketing plan from the **Bernstein Shur Group**, new professional staff dedicated to communications, **a new video** produced by **Heartwood Media**, and consistent, intentional outreach to business groups around the state.

This spring we also modernized the Campaign's visual brand. Leaders and staff

collaborated with designers to update the Campaign's logo and develop a new tagline, below.

The logo retains the fresh green color that has long been the Campaign's trademark, but creates a visual affirmation of equality in the logo to parallel the new tagline, **"Equal Access to Justice for All."** The new logo and tagline were introduced in the Campaign's first annual report, posted online at [www.nh-cls.org](http://www.nh-cls.org). Work is also underway to launch a completely redesigned web site incorporating these new visual elements.

With intense competition for valuable charitable contributions among so many worthy missions and nonprofits in New Hampshire, these efforts are essential investments in ensuring we put our best "face" forward as we work to interest and engage new donors across the state and beyond the legal community who share a commitment to increase **equal access to justice for all** in New Hampshire.

**NH CAMPAIGN**  
**FOR LEGAL SERVICES**

Equal Access to Justice for All

## NHLA in Action: Protecting tenants from lead paint

When William and Nicole learned they were expecting their first child last fall, they found a house to rent in Nashua with enough room for them and baby.

They also enrolled in a free counseling program to ensure the house was ready to be a healthy home for a newborn. Instead, they found lead paint on multiple surfaces.

When William and Nicole brought the inspection results to their landlord, he told them he would take the house off the market, but that they had to leave - immediately, and without their security deposit. Through case workers at Child & Family Services of NH, they were referred to the Legal Advice & Referral Center, and eventually to NHLA, where attorney Elliott Berry took their case.

A few months after he was born, baby Frank's blood showed an elevated level of lead. Lead dust can cause serious problems, including difficulty concentrating, lowered IQs, and behavior and learning problems. New Hampshire law requires landlords provide accommodations for relocation in cases of lead exposure, but baby Frank's lead levels were 1 microgram lower than the threshold which triggers those protections.

Attorney Berry cited their case in advocating for greater protections for tenants at the State House. The Legislature passed the bi-partisan bill lowering the threshold of lead poisoning that must be found before tenants are eligible for those protections.



William, Nicole and baby Frank, who has shown no symptoms of lead exposure since the family moved.

Attorney Berry also helped William negotiate to get his landlord to drop the eviction case and return the security deposit.

Though the couple won back their deposit, "we lost a lot as far as, we had to move (in with friends) in such a short amount of time, we had to donate a lot of furniture and things that we didn't have room for. But it was worth it because our son's fine.

*"He's doing very well, and we're just very thankful we were made aware early on in the process. It was an inconvenience, but his health was the most important thing."*

## NHLA and LARC in the community

- NHLA Litigation Director **Kay Drought** was a member of a NH Bar legal education panel on ethics.
- LARC Deputy Director **Breckie Hayes** presented at the national LSC Technology Innovation conference.
- NHLA Foreclosure Relief Project Director **Stephanie Bray** wrote about legislative updates in residential foreclosure law for the NH Bar News.
- NHLA staff **Candace Gebhart, Elliott Berry, Cheryl Steinberg** and Deputy Director **Mary Krueger** presented at the Governor's domestic violence and child abuse conference.
- NHLA attorney **Dennis Labbe** has held monthly educational forums at the Crossroads House shelter in Portsmouth, informing visitors about tenants' rights and public benefits programs.
- NHLA Senior Law Project Director **Cheryl Steinberg** spoke about state laws that criminalize financial exploitation of seniors to seniors' groups in Derry and Portsmouth, and as a member of panels at a state conference on domestic violence, and a NH Bar legal education event.
- NHLA attorneys **Chris Wellington, Ruth Heintz and Elliott Berry** conducted an educational event for the Berlin Housing Authority about fair housing laws.
- NHLA paralegal **Erin Jasina** was a panel member for the annual Crisis Center Advocate Training.

## ***LARC in Action:*** **Keeping the lights on**

Getting his mail one day, Brian\* noticed yellow tickets stuck to the front door of his apartment building. They were from the power company, threatening to shut off the electricity because of unpaid bills.

The landlord had left the bills unpaid as he negotiated to sell the building. But when the deal fell through, he had left Brian in the dark.

Brian tried to call the electric company and offer to pay the bill himself, but the company wouldn't talk to him because he wasn't the account holder. He started to panic.

With intense asthma, COPD and sleep apnea, Brian relies on electric machines to help him breathe. And his 13-year-old daughter relies on him.

"I can't go to sleep without using these machines, or I'll stop breathing," he said. "Losing power for who knows how long, that's just not an option for me."

A case worker at New Hampshire Housing told Brian to call LARC.

"The first conversation, it was an in-take call, and I didn't know what to think. I had already gone three days without answers from anyone," he said.

Within hours, a LARC advocate called Brian and advised him to contact the Public Utility Commission's Consumer Advocate, who might be able to prevent the shutoff. LARC also advised Brian of his right to file a petition at court to restore the electricity should the landlord allow it to lapse.

"I went from having no options, feeling like the big guy is stomping on me, to feeling like I don't have to have someone with big power controlling everything," Brian said.

***"LARC was a way to get the information that a normal average Joe wouldn't have any idea how to find."***

\*Client name has been changed

## **NHLA and LARC welcome interns:** ***"For me, the point of a legal education is to help."***

***NHLA and LARC welcomed six new interns this summer, four at NHLA offices around the state, and two at LARC. Here's why they wanted to serve civil legal aid clients:***

"People just want to be heard. Doing in-take, we deal with a lot of people who feel like they have no other venue and no one will listen to them. Just talking to people on the phone helps people feel better about what their rights are."

—Chelsea VanderWoude, UNH School of Law student, LARC intern.

"I know LARC does a lot of housing related work, and I was drawn to that because I have gone to a lot of different countries on humanitarian missions to build houses. I hope to join the JAG corps, which handles a lot of family and housing law cases."

—Jeremy Whalen, UNH School of Law student, LARC intern.

"It's really difficult in any situation where you're not represented, to stand up in court and explain your side of the story when you don't really understand the legal process. Working at NHLA, we're helping people who otherwise couldn't afford an attorney or someone to speak for them."

—Penina Wallace, UNH School of Law student, Daniel Webster Honor Scholar, NHLA intern.



From left, LARC intern Jeremy Whalen, and NHLA interns Penina Wallace and Madison Fiedler. All are UNH School of Law students.

"I'm really aware of the struggles of low-income clients who maybe have solid cases, maybe were wronged, but they can't afford to get legal help... Their case still deserves to be heard."

—Madison Fiedler, UNH School of Law student, Daniel Webster Honor Scholar, NHLA intern.

"I worked at the district attorney's office last summer, and I wanted a more well-rounded view of the civil legal world. At the DA's office you see horrific events day in and day out; it's kind of depressing. Here, you help people and accomplish something positive for them."

—Bryce Linden, Mercer University Walter F. George School of Law student, NHLA intern.

"For me, the point of a legal education is to help other people. That's why I went to law school. If I didn't use it to help other people, I would question what the point was."

—Sarah Merrill, College of William & Mary law student, NHLA intern.

## Legislative victory for New Hampshire homeowners

On June 26, Gov. Maggie Hassan signed into law new protections and resources for New Hampshire homeowners facing foreclosure.

New Hampshire Legal Assistance attorney **Stephanie Bray** worked with housing counselors and members of both political parties in the N.H. House and Senate to craft this important update to state law.

The new law requires mortgage holders to send a notice 45 days before a foreclosure sale is scheduled, nearly doubling the amount of time a homeowner has to respond.

However, under recently passed federal protections, if a homeowner applies for a loan modification 37 days before the sale, the

lender has to stop processing the foreclosure and consider the application. Often, homeowners don't realize how dire their situation is until they receive the official sale notice. With only 25 days' notice, New Hampshire homeowners who waited until they receive the notice might have missed out on the available federal protection.

The new law also requires the notice to include the address of the foreclosing entity, and a 1-800 phone number for the N.H. Banking Department. The Banking Department then refers eligible homeowners to housing counselors and when appropriate to legal aid advocates. The new law will take effect on 1/1/16.

### Legal services and our programs in the news

Concord Monitor:

[Legal aid a light for powerless camp residents](#)

Union Leader feature story:

[Free legal advice clinic in Candia to expand to Plymouth](#)

Nashua Telegraph, Concord Monitor:

[Foreclosure numbers continue to fall, Nearly 750 homes saved through Foreclosure Relief Project](#)

New York Times op-ed:

[Put lawyers where they're needed](#)

American Lawyer magazine:

[The Justice Gap: How Big Law is failing legal aid](#)