

LASP

Legal Aid
of Southeastern PA

ANNUAL REPORT 07/08



breaking the cycle

OF **POVERTY** AND **INJUSTICE**



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LASP

provides **quality legal representation** to low-income and vulnerable people, **to empower** them to solve problems without legal representation through legal education and increased access to the courts, and **to change community practices** and systems that cause or aggravate poverty.



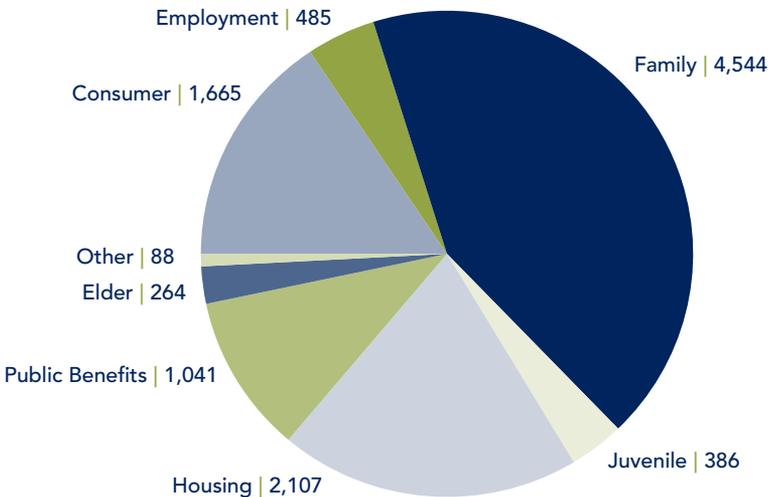
From the Executive Directors

In the 2007-2008 fiscal year, Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania was able to help more low-income and vulnerable clients than ever before. We continued to be amazed at the dedication of hundreds of volunteer attorneys, paralegals and program volunteers who gave generously of their time to make sure domestic violence victims, the elderly, and economically vulnerable members of their communities gained access to the courts and a fair hearing of their legal problems. We developed new partnerships to reach clients in isolated and rural areas of the four counties. We expanded the hours of our helpline and launched a redesigned website to improve access to legal information and navigation of our services. Lastly, the board and staff of Legal Aid developed a strategic plan to take it into the next decade. This annual report offers highlights of the year and illustrates the impact of our work throughout the region.

Elizabeth Wood Fritsch, Esq. and Harvey F. Strauss, Esq.
 Co-Executive Directors

Cases and Clients

76% of LASP's clients this year were women; 32% were members of racial or ethnic minority groups and 16% were age 60 or older. The 10,665 legal cases we handled for these clients (1,041 more than the previous year) were distributed as follows:





Mrs. Reed* lived in an apartment with her young daughter. When the ceiling in her apartment began to collapse, she tried repeatedly to get her landlord to repair it. Finally, she gave notice to her landlord that she was withholding rent until the repair was completed. Her landlord brought an eviction action against her for her failure to pay rent and she was threatened with becoming homeless. A Legal Aid attorney represented the woman in court, presenting a substantial body of evidence to show that the landlord had breached the implied warranty of habitability. As a result, the Court abated one-half of the woman's rent for three months and refused to grant the eviction. Ultimately the repair was made and she and her daughter were able to remain in a safe and habitable apartment.

*No actual client names or photographs are used in this report.



family law

PROTECTING AND ASSISTING FAMILIES

Legal Aid provides legal advice and representation in domestic abuse, custody and child dependency cases. Assistance is provided through our telephone helpline, clinics, and representation in administrative and judicial proceedings. Last year, **orders were entered providing protection from domestic abuse for 1,125 adults and children and 1,007 custody arrangements were established or stabilized.**

housing law

PRESERVING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

In a region that has a shortage of affordable housing and at a time when home owners struggle to hold onto their houses, Legal Aid provides critical legal services to help families remain in their homes. Its work includes representation of tenants in evictions and other landlord/tenant disputes, Section 8 housing subsidy denials or revocations, homeowner issues such as mortgage foreclosure and tax liens, and advice and education on Fair Housing violations. Through our efforts, last year, **decent habitable housing was preserved for 455 people.**



consumer issues

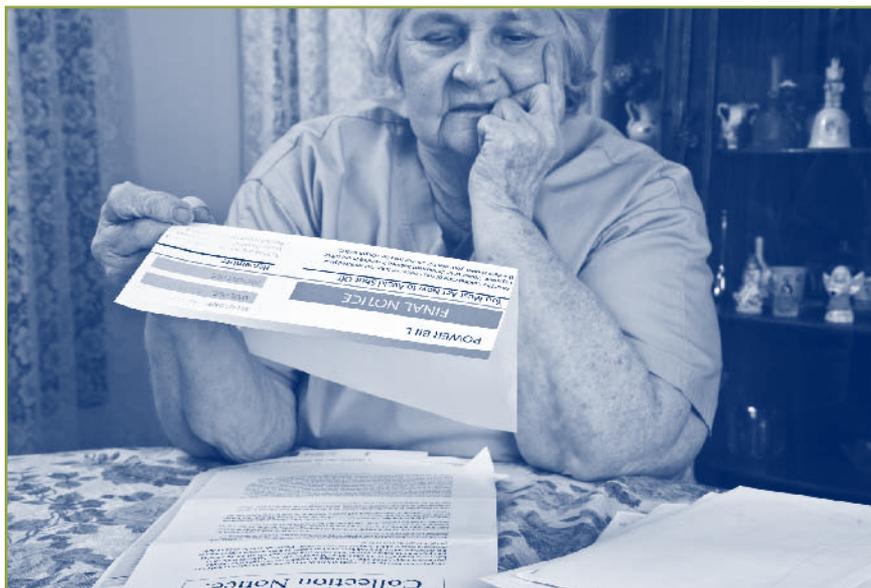
RELIEF FROM **DEBT** AND **PREDATORY LENDING**

As lenders have become increasingly aggressive in marketing to vulnerable populations, Legal Aid has seen the demand for its consumer law services grow rapidly. Whether reviewing loan and sale documents, negotiating with creditors or representing clients in bankruptcy, the result of our work can help individuals regain control of their finances and their lives. Last year, **relief from debt problems, including bankruptcy protection, was obtained for 444 people.**

public benefits

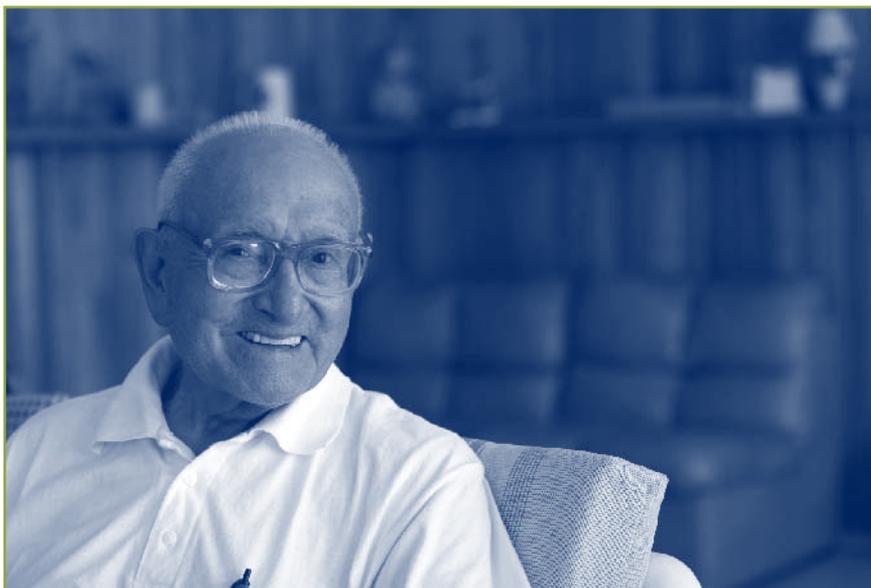
ENSURING **HEALTH AND INCOME SUPPORTS**

For families fleeing domestic violence, for the working poor, for families caring for a disabled family member or experiencing an unexpected job loss, government Unemployment, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Medicaid, Food Stamps and Cash Assistance are absolutely vital safety nets. Legal Aid steps in when oversights or errors result in benefit loss or denial. In the 2007-08 fiscal year we **recovered \$594,898 in lump sum payments and established \$135,967 in monthly payments for our clients.**



Mrs. Rodriguez*, a 78 year old widow, was still recovering from the death of her husband when she learned that she was being sued in County Court by a major credit card company over a debt that had been padded with late fees, over-the-limit fees and 27% interest. Mrs. Rodriguez's husband had always paid the couple's bills and she was distraught over the notice and had no idea how she could handle the debt. Her Legal Aid attorney was able to negotiate with opposing counsel a large reduction in the amount she would be required to pay and established an affordable payment plan. He was also successful in obtaining an agreement by the company to note in her credit report that the matter had been resolved, so it would not negatively affect her credit in the future.

*No actual client names or photographs are used in this report.



Mr. Conrad*, a disabled older adult living on a very low income in a mobile home park in Upper Bucks County, contacted Legal Aid when management of the park filed a complaint against him, seeking possession of his home because his yard had become unkempt and overgrown. Mr. Conrad feared he would lose his home. Legal Aid went to court with Mr. Conrad and worked out an agreement with park management not to file for possession if the outside of his home was cleaned up. With a neighbor's help, his yard was cleared of overgrowth and debris. The mobile home park management, pleased with his effort, agreed not to file for possession against him and Mr. Conrad is once again secure in his housing.

*No actual client names or photographs are used in this report.



employment law

REMOVING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

As rising unemployment increases competition for jobs, Legal Aid has expanded its work removing barriers to employment that stem from past or incorrect criminal records. Legal Aid clients are also helped to overcome job discrimination, obtain back wages, prevent discharge from their jobs and, when job loss can't be prevented, to obtain unemployment compensation. Last year, **LASP handled 484 employment cases, an increase of 19%** from the year before.

elder law

HELP FOR OLDER ADULTS

The four suburban counties served by Legal Aid are "graying" at a rapid pace, and Legal Aid is seeing increased demand for its services among people 60+. Older adults face the same challenges as other LASP clients, but must also deal with end-of-life issues and the need for more durable powers of attorney as they age. **Problems with government benefit programs, credit, and housing can be especially catastrophic for older adults** who are no longer able to work. Legal Aid, supported through funding from county aging offices and private charitable foundations, is an important resource for vulnerable older adults in our region.

Statement of Financial Position 07/08

FUNDING

State – IOLTA & PLAN	\$2,261,789
Federal – LSC	\$1,089,254
County	\$ 408,070
Annual Appeal	\$ 207,351
Foundations	\$ 187,300
Area Agencies on Aging	\$ 158,432
Don't Borrow Trouble	\$ 107,824
Miscellaneous	\$ 81,263
Bar Associations & Foundations	\$ 67,500
Court Awards-Cy Pres	\$ 64,381
United Way & Donor Option	\$ 21,473
Corporations	\$ 20,500
Special Events	\$ 17,315
Total Funding	\$4,692,452

EXPENSES

Personnel	\$3,499,739
Consultants & Contract Services	\$ 384,697
Space Costs	\$ 224,216
Furniture & Equipment	\$ 75,421
Consumable Supplies	\$ 60,576
Telephone/Internet	\$ 57,081
Miscellaneous	\$ 54,207
Travel	\$ 43,282
Library Upkeep & Subscriptions	\$ 31,636
Postage	\$ 26,434
Insurance	\$ 18,418
Litigation Expenses	\$ 5,490
Total Expenses	\$4,481,197

NET ASSETS

Beginning of Year	\$1,204,075
End of Year	\$1,414,318
Change in Net Assets	\$210,243



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LASP Locations

BUCKS COUNTY

1290 Veterans Highway, Box 809
Bristol, PA 19007
215-781-1111

100 Union Street
Doylestown, PA 18901
215-340-1818

CHESTER COUNTY

222 N. Walnut Street
West Chester, PA 19380
610-436-4510

DELAWARE COUNTY

410 Welsh Street
Chester, PA 19013
610-874-8421

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

625 Swede Street
Norristown, PA 19401
610-275-5400

248 King Street
Pottstown, PA 19464
610-326-8280

CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Elizabeth Wood Fritsch, Esq.
Harvey F. Strauss, Esq.

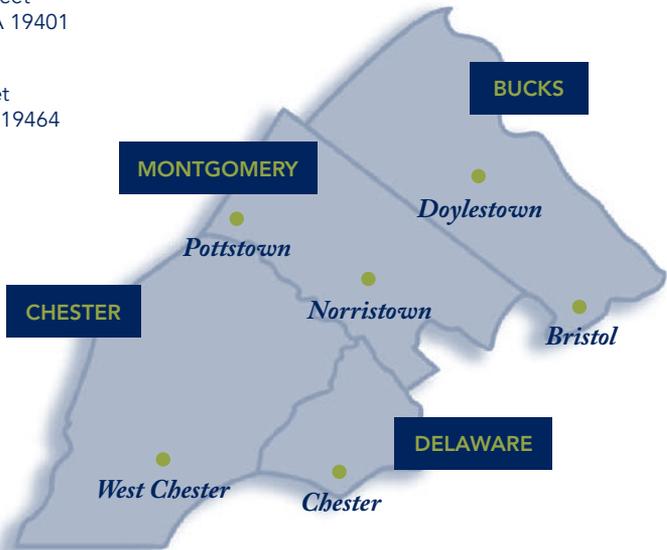
On the Web
www.lasp.org

LASP Helpline
1-877-429-5994

Mon - Fri, 9am - 1pm (Toll-free)

Don't Borrow Trouble
1-888-275-8843

Help with predatory lending
and mortgage foreclosure.
Mon - Fri, 9am - 1pm (Toll-free)





Legal Aid of Southeastern PA

1290 Veterans Highway
Box 809
Bristol, PA 19007

ADMINISTRATION
625 Swede Street
Norristown, PA 19401

WWW.LASP.ORG



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