

2007 2008



Report to the Community

Legal Advocacy For Marylanders With Disabilities

FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE

It is our distinct pleasure to present an annual report focused entirely on client stories. There is no better way to gain a sense of MDLC's impact than to hear directly from our clients how we have made a difference in their lives. Last year, we reported on a number of MDLC's advocacy projects to give our community a broad sampling of the kind of work we are doing to change the landscape for people with disabilities. This year, we move from that wide-angle viewpoint to take a closer look at what drives our work and successes – our clients.

MDLC's clients are people from many different walks of life that share some things in common, such as a strong sense of justice, a belief in a better way, and the courage to stand up for themselves and for others. They inspire us, not because they have achieved extraordinary or superhuman feats, but because of the strength, hope and humanity they exemplify on an ongoing basis. They are a few of the many people who are quietly changing our world – and us – for the better every day.

Our organization and the communities it serves are gratified to sense a growing awareness of disability issues and heightened support for our efforts. One example has been the decision to close the Rosewood Center, and to integrate and include more people with disabilities in our communities. Another has been the increase in charitable giving that enabled MDLC to reach its \$60,000 Challenge Grant goal and receive \$60,000 in matching monies from the Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation. We hope to continue and build upon this momentum to achieve our next Challenge Grant milestone of \$120,000, and accomplish additional important victories to improve the lives of people with disabilities throughout Maryland.

We trust that you will enjoy this report and greatly appreciate your support for our efforts. In this climate of renewed hope, we believe our vision can be realized.

Very best regards,



Virginia Knowlton
Executive Director



Michael Susko, President
Board of Directors



Michael Susko

Virginia Knowlton

STATEMENT OF FISCAL POSITION AS OF JUNE 30, 2008

Assets:

Cash	\$1,311,034
Accounts Receivable	116,834
Grants Receivable	200,190
Prepaid Expenses	22,500
	<u>1,650,558</u>
Net Property and Equipment	99,403
Total Assets	<u>1,749,961</u>

Liabilities and Net Assets:

Accounts Payable and	
Accrued Expenses	\$337,652
Total Liabilities	<u>337,652</u>

Net Assets:

Temporarily Restricted	12,206
Unrestricted	<u>1,400,103</u>
Total Net Assets	<u>1,412,309</u>

Total Liabilities	
and Net Assets	<u>1,749,961</u>

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES & CHANGE IN NET ASSETS

Revenues, Gains, and Other Support:

Public Support/ Contributions and Grants	<u>\$201,195</u>
Grants from Governmental Agencies	<u>2,096,098</u>

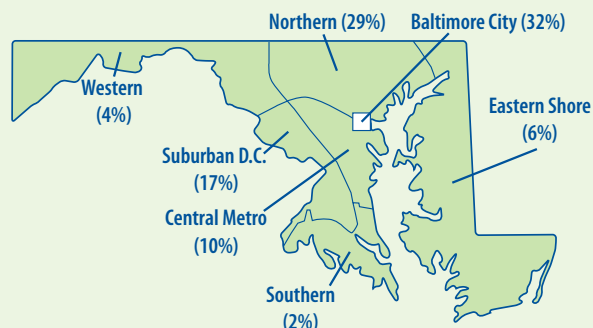
Program Service Fees	204,471
Interest	<u>16,319</u>
	<u>220,790</u>
Total Revenues, Gains, and Other Support	<u>2,518,083</u>

Expenses:

Program Services - Legal Assistance	2,034,882
Support, Management, and General	<u>502,130</u>
Total Expenses	<u>2,537,012</u>

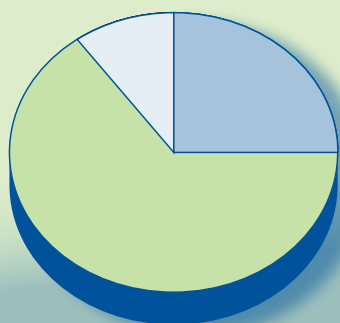
Change in Net Assets	(18,929)
Net Assets – Beginning of Year	<u>1,431,238</u>
Net Assets – End of Year	<u>1,412,309</u>

Services Provided by Geographic Region



A full financial audit is available by calling MDLC at 410.727.6352.

2008 Revenues Sources



- Maryland Legal Services Corporation
- Federal Grants
- Foundations, Contracts & Other



ROSEWOOD

Gus lived in the Rosewood Center for over 40 years and was diagnosed with intellectual disabilities. There were concerns about whether and how Gus would be discharged from Rosewood to a home in the community, because Rosewood was the only “home” he had ever known. Some people who knew Gus were certain that he would not want to move out of Rosewood. Gus was unable to say or write what he wanted because of his difficulties with conventional forms of communication.

However, when Gus finally visited a home in a tree-filled neighborhood and met the people who would become his neighbors, he was very happy. After returning to Rosewood from that visit, Gus immediately began to pack his belongings, including all the items he accumulated over the decades at Rosewood - a sure sign that he was ready to move on. Gus is now enjoying the simple pleasures of living among neighbors in a community, making choices about his everyday activities.

For many years MDLC has been involved with reporting abuses and deficiencies at Rosewood. In January 2008, Governor O'Malley signed an Executive Order announcing that the Rosewood Center would close its doors in June 2009. MDLC is working with state officials to ensure that each person leaving Rosewood has the opportunity to participate in developing an appropriate and safe plan that meets his or her individual needs. At one time, Rosewood housed over 3,700 people, but by February 2009, less than 70 people remained.

* The names and some details in these stories have been changed to maintain the confidentiality of the people represented.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Tomas is married, has two small children and a job. His earnings are not enough to support his family of four so he borrows money from relatives to make ends meet. Tomas is also deaf. He used to receive Social Security benefits, and several years after the benefits stopped, the Social Security Administration (SSA) told him he owed much of that money back. SSA put the debt on his credit report, which affected his security clearance at work and jeopardized his job. However, SSA was wrong.

Faced with a large debt he did not actually owe and the likelihood of losing his job, Tomas contacted MDLC. With MDLC's help, Tomas was able to keep his clearance and his job, and was overjoyed when an administrative law judge ruled that he did not owe any money to SSA. He hopes to get a better paying job and eventually buy a house for his family, but for now he is happy not to be saddled with a debt he never owed.

MDLC's Social Security project helps people who get SSA benefits solve the legal problems that are preventing them from getting or keeping a job. Assisting people with disabilities to become or remain independent is a core MDLC function.



SPECIAL EDUCATION

Jelena is an 8-year-old child who has emotional disabilities, and is a 2nd grade student at her neighborhood public school. Her mother reported to MDLC that Jelena was being restrained in a prone (face-down) position at school on a regular basis, about 2 to 3 times per week. Not only was her mother concerned that Jelena might be injured by this dangerous type of restraint, she was also concerned about how much instruction time was being lost due to the way the school was treating her daughter. As a result of MDLC's intervention, the school agreed to stop using prone restraint, provide a 1:1 assistant, and revise Jelena's educational plan. However, Jelena was eventually moved from the school's environment so she could have a fresh start at another school.

MDLC pursued further action with the school system based on Jelena's case, and eventually reached an agreement to end the use of prone restraint throughout that entire local school system. MDLC continues to advocate for other Maryland school systems to ban the use of prone restraint.

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES

HOUSING

Steven has difficulty with memory and concentration, symptoms associated with his traumatic brain injury. He was living in subsidized housing, and claimed that his local housing authority discriminated against him based on his disability.

When Steven forgot to attend his annual recertification appointment, the housing authority ended his Section 8 subsidy, effectively kicking him out of the program for missing an appointment in spite of laws requiring reasonable accommodations in housing for people with disabilities. The housing authority stopped payment for Steven's rent before giving him an opportunity to appeal their decision.

According to the settlement agreement MDLC reached with the housing authority, Steven was reinstated to the Section 8 program and therefore will not lose his home. He will also have his out-of-pocket costs reimbursed, and the county housing authority will adopt a reasonable accommodation policy to be posted in their offices and shared with Section 8 voucher participants during their annual income recertification. Steven is proud of being able to change the local housing system in a way that will help all people who use it in the future.

Addressing and preventing housing discrimination within public housing is one of MDLC's priority issues. MDLC's housing work has resulted in the creation of nearly 800 accessible housing units in Baltimore City, and 1,850 subsidized housing opportunities for very low income people with disabilities.



NURSING FACILITIES

Sharvette spent 7 years in a nursing facility before she saw an MDLC video titled "The Sun Shines Brighter at Home." She met with a representative from the Sun Shine Folk – a group of disability rights advocates coordinated by MDLC. Sharvette decided she wanted to leave the facility and move into her own home, too. MDLC helped Sharvette obtain admission to a Medicaid waiver program and move into the community, where she has reconnected with her faith community, found new friends, and is living with two profound beliefs: "The sun shines brighter at home!" and "Our homes, not nursing homes!"

The Sun Shine Folk is a group of former nursing home residents who help others understand that they do not have to remain in nursing facilities just because they need some assistance. The Sun Shine Folk give nursing facility residents information about Medicaid programs that allow them to receive care in their own homes. Unbeknownst to many people, Medicaid can pay for in-home nursing services and personal care services that will allow a person to live in an integrated community rather than an isolated medical facility.



MEDICAID (HOMES)

Rashad has quadriplegia and depends on others for all of his care. He receives nursing services in his home so his parents can work. When the Developmental Disabilities Administration refused to provide the hours of nursing care that Rashad's doctor recommended, he developed bedsores and his mother was forced to take Rashad to work with her. Not only did his mother risk her job, but Rashad was unnecessarily exposed to germs that his fragile immune system had difficulty fighting. MDLC's advocacy resulted in Rashad receiving the appropriate number of nursing hours in his home, where proper nursing services help him avoid bedsores and avoid compromising his immunity.

MDLC's Helping Obtain Medicaid Essential Services (HOMES) project assists people to have access to the Medicaid services they are entitled to, so they can receive care at home and not be forced to live in an institution. MDLC is grateful to the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation for its Challenge Grant funding that makes this project possible. The Weinberg Foundation will match donations up to a total of \$180,000. Please contact MDLC's Executive Director for more details.



MEDICAID (HOMES)

EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS



Angela is a trauma-survivor with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Angela had a seizure during a session with her community psychiatrist. The psychiatrist called 911 and Angela was transported to an emergency department. After spending several hours in the emergency department without being seen, Angela felt better and attempted to leave. A security guard blocked her exit and said he had been told that she was a “suicide risk.” Although Angela repeatedly advised that she was at the hospital for seizures and was not suicidal, hospital staff refused to let her leave. When she made another attempt to walk out, male security guards forcibly grabbed her and put her in 4-point restraints, and she was involuntarily injected with sedatives.

Angela’s community psychiatrist later confirmed that this emergency room experience had greatly exacerbated her PTSD symptoms. MDLC filed a complaint with the state’s licensing and oversight agency. Initially, the agency found no deficiencies but, based on MDLC’s advocacy, later reversed its position and found that the hospital had violated Angela’s right to remain free from unnecessary restraint and seclusion. The hospital was ordered to develop and implement a plan of correction, including staff training, to prevent the illegal use of restraint and seclusion.

Because MDLC frequently receives complaints from mental health consumers about their experiences in emergency departments throughout the State, we embarked on a two-year project, funded by the Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Foundation and the Leonard and Helen R. Stulman Charitable Foundation, to survey mental health consumers, examine emergency room practices and policies, and make recommendations for individual hospital and systemic reform. In 2008, MDLC published the findings and recommendations in a report entitled “*Maryland Citizens in Psychiatric Crisis*.” Copies are available by calling MDLC at 410.727.6352.

MENTAL HEALTH RIGHTS

MENTAL HEALTH RIGHTS

Patrick enjoys listening to music, like many young men his age. He says it is a calming, soothing activity. When he was in a psychiatric hospital, he was not allowed to listen to music with his headphones in any 'common areas' of the facility; he could only use the headphones in his bedroom. MDLC filed a complaint with the hospital because it is required to offer such soothing activities to its patients. The hospital agreed to change the policy and allow patients to use headphones in all areas of the facility. Patrick was relieved to be assured a small comfort that provided him some peace. Now that he is living at home, he is free to listen to his music, with or without headphones, whenever he wants to.

Supporting the rights of people in psychiatric facilities is a core mission of MDLC. We work to change policies and regulations relating to the use of restraints, forcible use of unwanted medication, and other things great and small that affect a person's ability and right to achieve recovery.



HOMES

Keisha

is a young woman with a cognitive impairment and cerebral palsy who had successfully progressed from relying on a wheelchair to being able to walk. Her progress was made possible through weekly physical therapy (PT) designed to stretch and strengthen her leg and hamstring muscles. Because Keisha's condition had improved, her Medicaid health plan denied continuation of this critical PT, despite recommendations by both her doctor and physical therapist that her PT needed to continue. Without this necessary health care service, Keisha would regress and no longer be able to walk.

Although Keisha's father attempted to work with his daughter himself, within five months after the PT stopped, she had deteriorated and was losing her ability to walk. At that point, Keisha's father contacted MDLC. MDLC intervened and, as a result of MDLC's advocacy, the health plan reversed its decision and approved continued PT for Keisha.

MDLC's Helping Obtain Medicaid Essential Services (HOMES) project assists people to have access to the Medicaid services they are entitled to, so they can receive care at home and not be forced to live in an institution. MDLC is grateful to the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation for its Challenge Grant funding that makes this project possible. The Weinberg Foundation will match donations up to a total of \$180,000. Please contact MDLC's Executive Director for more details.



APPRECIATING PARTNERSHIPS

MDLC is grateful to the following foundations, corporations, law firms, and individuals who have made financial contributions, and donated their time and talents to help us better serve our community.

\$5,000 +

Evan Thalenberg

\$1,000 +

Alan and Susan Berlow
Rose Berlow
Edwin & Sharyn Brager
Brian DeWitt
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Baltimore Ravens
Baltimore Symphony Orchestra
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Brian Brown
Charles Theater
Creative Alliance
Congressman Elijah Cummings
Dogwood Deli
Ben Dubin
Eddie's Market of St. Paul Street
Elements Natural Hair Care and
Design
Congressman Wayne Gilchrist
Pat Halle
Congressman Steny Hoyer
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Let's Dish!
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Maryland Science Center
Mark Moore
Congressman Dutch
Ruppersberger
Michael Taylor
Mills Fine Wine & Spirits
National Aquarium in Baltimore
Rocket to Venus
Congressman John Sarbanes
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Congressman Chris Van Hollen
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Family Services Commission for
Individuals with Disabilities
Baltimore City Board of Elections
Mental Health Association of Maryland
Deaf Independent Living Association
The Hearing and Speech Agency
Professional Interpreters Exchange

Leave A Bequest To MDLC

We envision an inclusive society that gives people with disabilities equal opportunities to participate and make their own choices. Despite our vigorous efforts, this vision may not be achieved in our lifetimes. Create a legacy for change by leaving a bequest to MDLC to continue our work. For more information, contact Virginia Knowlton at 410.727.6352 x2482.

* Our "Appreciating Partnerships" list reflects donations received July 2007 through December 2008. Every effort was made to ensure accuracy, but please contact MDLC if we have made an error.



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