

IN Roads

2009-2010 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



Advocating to Improve the Lives of Marylanders with Disabilities

INRoads

FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE

Dear friends and supporters:

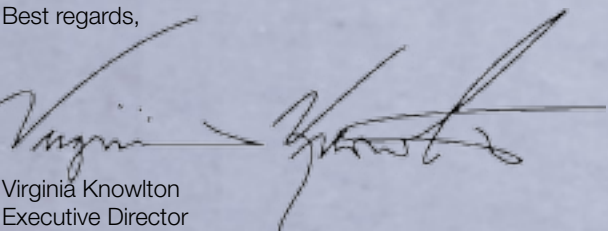
Thank you for your interest in MDLC's advocacy that improves the lives of people with disabilities. This year's theme, inroads, acknowledges that we are indeed making progress on the way to equality, justice, and full integration for people with disabilities.


Without question, it is a difficult journey. Breaking down societal barriers that keep people with disabilities from achieving their fullest potential requires strong, sustained efforts. At MDLC, it often feels like we are pushing a boulder up a mountain. Yet we are able to maintain consistent progress in part through the inspiration we draw from working together toward compelling, crucial goals. "Together" means not only the MDLC Board and staff but also our clients, people with disabilities; our allies working toward similar objectives; and our invaluable supporters who believe in the importance of MDLC's mission and our ability to accomplish it.

Recently, we all had occasion to take stock of how far the disability rights movement has come, as we celebrated the twenty year anniversary of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on July 26, 2010. People with disabilities are less segregated and more included in our communities today, with greater opportunities to live happy, healthy, productive lives. We have made inroads. Yet not all people with disabilities were free to celebrate the ADA anniversary this year. Many remain unnecessarily institutionalized, without access to adequate supports that would enable them to truly thrive, without a voice in the decisions that affect their lives. Stigma and discrimination abound, thwarting meaningful relationships between people with disabilities and their non-disabled peers. The struggle for human dignity continues. MDLC will not relent.

We profoundly appreciate all who have stood and will continue to stand by MDLC and people with disabilities as we advance disability rights. We are glad for this opportunity to express our gratitude to those care and support our work. For all the ways you enhance our efforts, from including people with disabilities to making financial contributions to MDLC, thank you for your partnership in improving the lives of people with disabilities.

Best regards,


Virginia Knowlton
Executive Director

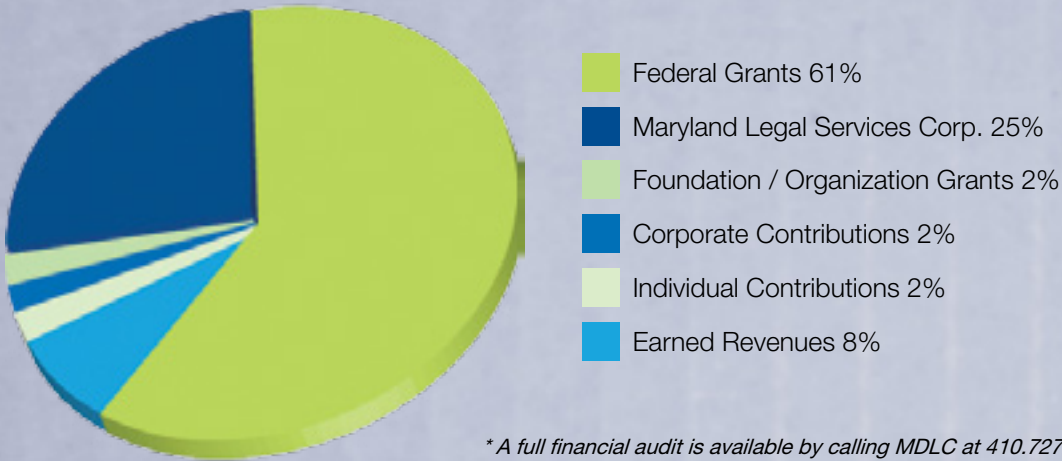

Brian Brown Esq.
President, Board of Directors



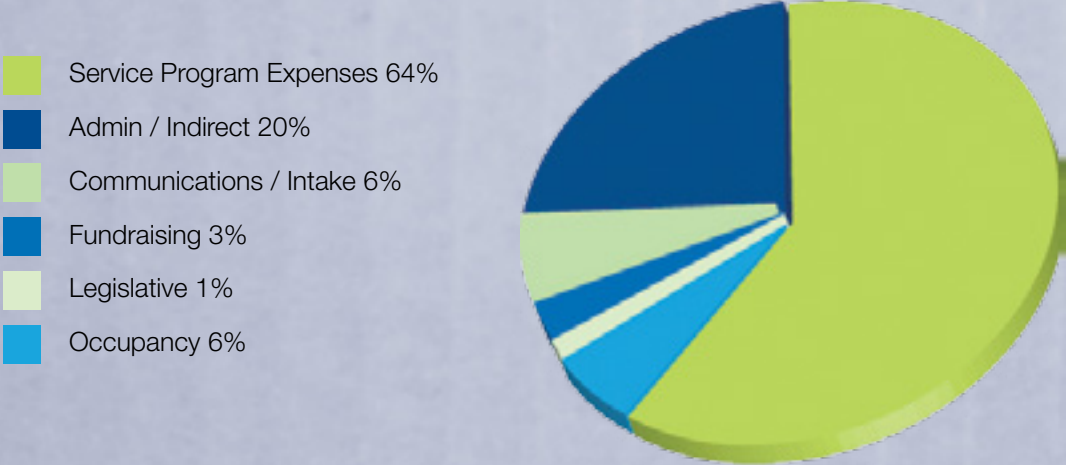
FINANCIAL

OVERVIEW

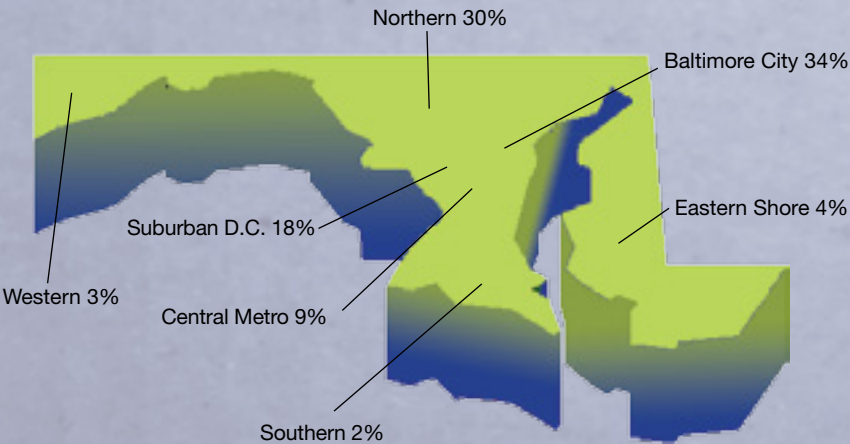
Where our support comes from



How our funds are used



Our Statewide Service Area



Services We Provide

Adult Mental Health	11 %
Assistive Technology	3 %
Children's Mental Health	6 %
Developmental Disabilities	14 %
Housing	14 %
Nursing Facilities	9 %
Social Security	8 %
Special Education	31 %
Traumatic Brain Injury	2 %
Voting	2 %

INclude

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

LaShonda

MDLC represented 63-year old LaShonda, who had been in a state residential facility (the Rosewood Center) until her early 30's, and in a nursing facility for the next 30 years. LaShonda's sister was her guardian and had never been successful in finding an appropriate community home. MDLC assisted LaShonda in applying for a Medicaid community-based waiver, but she was initially denied because there were "no more openings." Actually, pursuant to an MDLC initiated law, LaShonda was entitled to a waiver opening. MDLC brought an appeal for delay in processing LaShonda's application and providing transition services. The matter has now settled and LaShonda's sister is visiting community placements with one of the most experienced transition specialists at DDA.



Sonny

MDLC helped Sonny, a man with intellectual and physical disabilities, apply for a 2-bedroom public housing unit in order to accommodate a live-in aide. Sonny received a letter denying him public housing because the Housing Authority determined that his live-in aide was not eligible due to criminal history. MDLC advocated for Sonny to be found eligible for a 2-bedroom unit, even if he needed to seek approval for his live-in aide or find a different aide. The Housing Authority determined Sonny eligible for a 2-bedroom unit and approved a live-in aide. MDLC then advocated for Sonny to live in a public housing project close to his natural support systems. MDLC requested an accommodation to the Housing Authority's policy requiring public housing applicants to accept one of the first three housing units offered no matter where the unit is located. Sonny's request was granted.

**Names and some details in these stories have been changed to maintain the privacy of the people represented.*

Damon

MDLC assisted 33-year old Damon, who has visual, intellectual and physical disabilities, and has had several surgeries on his feet that did not properly heal. Damon had always lived at home with his parents but without enough services to attempt independence. Damon's family became distraught when he was sent into a nursing facility after a surgery. His elderly parents knew they could no longer care for him at home and had languished on a waiting list for assistance for twelve years. With MDLC's advocacy, Damon received the community support he needed. When he moved to a small 3-person group home, Damon told MDLC, "Thank you for all your help. I feel like I just started my life. I'm going to get a job, and go to the gym, and the library."



MDLC envisions a world where people with disabilities are fully included in the workplace, neighborhoods and all aspects of community life.

The SunShine Folk

The SunShine Folk (SSF) is a group of people with disabilities, primarily former residents of institutions, who work closely with MDLC to assist individuals with disabilities who want to move from nursing facilities into their own homes in the community. The SSF and MDLC collaborate to find and help facility residents hoping to transition to the community, with the SSF providing individualized, intensive peer support while MDLC works to overcome legal obstacles. With training, support and legal back-up from MDLC, the SSF reach out to nursing facilities where low-income people with disabilities are concentrated, inform residents and their families about options for receiving community-based long-term care, and report back to MDLC regarding individuals in need of legal assistance as well as barriers to deinstitutionalization they have encountered. This successful partnership between legal professionals and grass roots advocates has enabled hundreds of people with disabilities, including seniors and individuals with significant support needs, to fulfill their dream to move from an institution to the community and "get their lives back."



INspire

US TO CONTINUE

Heeling Neen

Healing Neen, MDLC's powerful documentary about Tonier Cain's journey from trauma, addiction and homelessness to becoming a nationally renowned educator and advocate, is phenomenally successful and raising awareness and igniting systemic change across the country.

Healing Neen has been incorporated into the trainings provided by the National Center for Trauma Informed Care, which is also distributing copies of the DVD. Since May 2010, more than 2,000 copies have been distributed throughout the country. Service systems, organizations and care providers, including the National Institute of Corrections, are incorporating all or part of the DVD in their staff training curricula. In September 2010, the film was screened in conjunction with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Conference of States Parties in New York City. More than 60 members of delegations from around the world attended, including South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Korea, the Philippines, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Representatives expressed interest in showing the film in their countries and invited Ms. Cain to work with them on the trauma issues unique to those locations. In late 2010, the film was screened at the Global Peace and Clearwater Film Festivals.

Ms. Cain continues to travel the country speaking at conferences and seminars, inspiring clinicians to understand and treat the whole person, and educating us about the importance of trauma-informed care.



Sean

MDLC represented Sean, a child with multiple disabilities whose family moved from the city to a suburban county. Sean's parents tried to place him in his neighborhood school so he could be with his peers, but the county insisted that the only appropriate placement for him was a segregated special education school. The county refused MDLC's request to convene another Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting at which the county's inclusion specialist could be present to discuss how Sean could be supported in general education with supplementary services. When the county requested mediation, MDLC moved to activate the "stay put" provision, permitting Sean to remain at his neighborhood school while we worked to resolve the dispute. We reached an interim agreement at the mediation conference, allowing Sean to stay in his neighborhood school while the county conducted assessments and planned for his partial inclusion. Sean did very well in his new placement and made more progress than anyone had anticipated.

Gretchen

With MDLC's assistance, 34-year-old Gretchen was in her own home for the holidays. Gretchen, who has a rare form of muscular dystrophy discovered in childhood, went into a nursing facility for rehabilitation in October 2008 after she fell with her power wheelchair and broke her hips. She had been in an abusive situation and needed a home, a service provider, and 24 hour/day staff. Although she was entitled to services through a Medicaid waiver, when Gretchen sought independent housing for health and safety reasons, the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) put her on a waiting list for residential services. After rehabilitation, Gretchen became stuck in the facility because she needed a subsidized apartment and services, and her Medicaid waiver applications became mired in the system. She encountered several barriers to transition: difficulty in getting a housing voucher, her nursing facility Medicaid payment was not approved (although she should have been approved immediately under state and federal law), the facility mishandled her Supplemental Security Income benefits causing her to be charged with an overpayment, and prospective service providers were dissuaded by the extent of her service needs. Eighteen months after MDLC began to work through the housing, Medicaid, SSI, and community capacity issues, Gretchen moved into her own home. She said, "I am so happy. I plan to go to graduate school and help as many people as I can. I may not have long but I will do all I can while I'm here." And, thanks to MDLC's Voting project, Gretchen was able to cast her vote for the first time.



Paul

Paul has paraplegia from a gunshot wound he sustained as a child. He eventually had to drop out of college because his public housing unit's wheelchair lift was continually breaking down. MDLC helped Paul get an immediate needs plan from the Housing Authority of Baltimore City, obtain a Section 8 voucher to rent a Fair Housing Act compliant unit in a recently rehabilitated development, request forgiveness of college bills, and obtain a plan for employment from the state vocational rehabilitation agency. Paul has been approved for driving lessons and his current rehabilitation plan calls for a career assessment so he can go back to college this spring.



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INjustices

OVERCOME BY STRONG ADVOCACY

Helping Obtain Medicaid Essential Services (HOMES)

Helping Obtain Medicaid Essential Services (HOMES) is MDLC's successful advocacy program that helps low-income individuals with developmental disabilities access the health care services they are entitled to receive under Medicaid. HOMES takes a multi-faceted approach to ensuring people with disabilities can access needed health care services. MDLC provides legal advice and representation in individual cases; recruits, trains and supports private pro bono attorneys who also take cases; engages in systemic advocacy efforts to break down barriers affecting large numbers of Medicaid beneficiaries; and provides informational materials, outreach and training to a wide variety of stakeholders so more people will know their rights and can advocate for themselves or on behalf of a person with a disability.



Akalena

MDLC was contacted by a pediatric hospital social worker because her 18-month-old patient, Akalena, was ready for discharge but could not leave the facility after she was verbally denied in-home nursing services by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH). Akalena's treating physicians were adamant that she could not go home without services, since she had lived in a hospital setting since birth and her parents, who are not fluent in English, had not found alternative services. MDLC worked with hospital staff to gather the appropriate documentation to make a formal request for nursing services that was approved by DHMH, and Akalena was discharged to live with her family.



Marcos

Marcos is a Spanish-speaking man with a significant brain injury who was admitted to a state psychiatric hospital, where he was offered neither a Spanish-speaking clinician, nor adequate interpreter services. He occasionally received interpreting services for a maximum of 2 hours per week, but frequently several weeks passed without any interpreter services at all.

According to his records, Marcos was assigned to various therapy groups, none of which he could understand. His treatment team reviewed his treatment plan with him in English, giving him no opportunity to comprehend or assist with planning. MDLC advised the facility that it was violating Marcos' rights under state and federal law, as well as its own policies. We demanded that the facility immediately provide sufficient interpreter services and notify us of any attempts to secure bilingual clinical staff. The facility swiftly agreed to significantly increase the amount of interpreter services provided to Marcos. We also met with state officials about our concerns, and the state agreed to work with MDLC on policies and procedures that ensure access to bilingual clinicians and/or sufficient interpreter services for all non-English speaking patients.

Brian

Brian is a 3 year-old boy diagnosed with failure to thrive, reflux disease and a developmental disability. A year ago, his managed care organization (MCO) denied him 8 hours overnight nursing services. Due to the lack of services and in-home support, Brian's mother was in the heartbreaking process of placing Brian in foster care. MDLC worked with Brian's pediatrician, social worker, and the MCO to secure adequate services. After several months of advocacy, the MCO approved the service hours, which allowed Brian to remain at home with his family.



MDLC is forever grateful to the Baltimore Community Foundation (BCF) and the Betty Lee and Dudley P. Digges Memorial Fund for supporting MDLC’s SunShine Folk (SSF) program (see p. 5). MDLC tackles difficult issues that require sustained efforts, yet finding long-term support for such endeavors is all too rare. Because BCF and the Digges family have chosen to fund the SSF program for several years, hundreds of people with disabilities languishing in nursing facilities with no knowledge of their right to choose community under Medicaid law have found their way home.

Foundations

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University of Baltimore School of Law
University of Maryland School of Law

Every attempt was made to ensure the accuracy of this list reflecting donations through December 2010. Please contact MDLC if we have made an error.

LEAVE A BEQUEST TO MDLC

We envision an inclusive society that gives people with disabilities equal opportunity to participate and make their own choices. Despite our vigorous efforts, we realize this vision will 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 ext. 2482.

BREAKINGBarriers

2010 BREAKING BARRIERS

On April 22, 2010 MDLC hosted the first annual Breaking Barriers event, to celebrate inspiring advocates who “break barriers” for people with disabilities, paving the way for full integration into community life. Guests enjoyed fantastic food, drink and music; mingled with fun, interesting and caring folks; and saw the presentation of our Breaking Barriers achievement awards honoring advocates in the struggle to secure legal rights for people with disabilities.

2010 Breaking Barriers Award Recipients

Public Policy Award

In recognition of significant public service achievements that improve the lives of people with disabilities:

Congressman C.A. Dutch Ruppertsberger

Legal Advocacy Award

For providing exemplary legal service to people with disabilities:

Earl Bartgis, Jr.

Grassroots Advocacy Award

For an advocate whose efforts have created remarkable changes in the lives of people with disabilities:

Floyd Hartley

Lifetime Achievement Award

Lorraine Sheehan, posthumously (presented to Laura Carr & John Sheehan by Senator Benjamin L. Cardin)



Mrs. Peggy Ruppertsberger accepting on behalf of Congressman C.A. Dutch Ruppertsberger, with MDLC Executive Director Virginia Knowlton.



Earl Bartgis, Jr. with presenter Lauren Kallins, MDLC pro bono coordinator.



Floyd Hartley accepting the Grassroots Advocacy award.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Lorraine Sheehan

Lorraine Sheehan was by many accounts the heart, soul and mastermind of the disability rights movement in Maryland. She was also a pioneer in the involvement of women in public life in our state. After serving in the House of Delegates for nearly a decade, Lorraine was appointed in 1983 to be only the third woman to serve as Maryland's Secretary of State.

Lorraine's primary focus and passion in both public and private life was to bring about social change, policies and programs to promote the integration and independence of all people with disabilities into community life. When Lorraine's son John was born with disabilities and later found to have autism, Lorraine refused to institutionalize him as was suggested by his doctors and educators.

Instead, Lorraine led the struggle, not only for her own family, but for all people with disabilities to live in the community with decent housing, adequate services and supports, and meaningful opportunities, choices, and relationships. Lorraine introduced the first bill addressing the state Developmental Disabilities Administration's waiting list for residents eligible for services, a battle she fought until her death in December 2009.

Lorraine was Maryland Disability Law Center's Director of Public Policy. She was an invaluable advisor who was admired and respected by all; her contributions to MDLC's work cannot be overstated. Lorraine also served as the President of the Arc of the U.S., a family support organization for people with developmental disabilities. Among her many honors, she was inducted in 2002 into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame. Lorraine was the mother of four children: John, Peter, Niall and Laura.

John and Laura accepted the first MDLC Lifetime Achievement Award on Lorraine's behalf at the inaugural Breaking Barriers. Henceforth, this award will be known as the Lorraine Sheehan Lifetime Achievement Award.



Lorraine Sheehan



Lorraine Sheehan and her son, John Sheehan.



Laura Carr accepting the lifetime achievement award from Senator Benjamin L. Cardin.



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