

EQUAL JUSTICE UPDATE

iowalegalaidfoundation.org • Winter 2012

Thank you for your support

"I really appreciate your help when I have legal questions regarding my brother who is in a nursing home. It's a relief to know where I can get help for him. He certainly has no money to pay for legal services, so it's good to have someone to turn to..."

Thank you."

**Iowa Legal Aid client
with a tax law case**

As 2012 comes to a close, we at Iowa Legal Aid would like to thank all of our supporters, including those who donate their time and resources to help us continue our work to bring Hope, Dignity and Justice to low-income Iowans.

2012 marked the 35th anniversary of the program. It has been a notable year in Iowa Legal Aid's history.

The year began with Iowa Legal Aid being awarded *The Des Moines Register's* Aurora award, presented each year to a nonprofit agency for "outstanding contributions to the community."

In May, the Iowa Legal Aid Foundation sponsored the 2012 *Equal Justice After Hours* event, featuring noted commentator and author Frank Deford. It was the most successful *EJAH* in the nine-year history of the event, both in

terms of attendance and the amount of funds raised to support Iowa Legal Aid. At the event, Nick Drees was posthumously inducted into Iowa Legal Aid's *Hall of Fame*. Prior to his death, Nick was the Chief Federal Public Defender in Iowa.

Challenges in 2012 included significant reductions in funding from the Interest on Lawyers Trust Account Commission, as a result of low interest rates on bank accounts. Coupled with the loss of federal Legal Services Corporation funding, the result has been an annual loss of over \$1 million in funding since 2010.

With the ongoing support of donors, volunteers and all Iowans committed to equal access to justice, we look forward to the coming year.



Save the Date:
Equal Justice After Hours
March 28, 2013
Featuring Peter Edelman

We are very privileged to welcome Peter Edelman, one of the nation's foremost advocates for low-income Americans since the 1960's. Professor Edelman is a longtime law professor at Georgetown University Law Center who specializes in poverty, welfare, juvenile justice and constitutional law. He is the author of hundreds of journal articles and

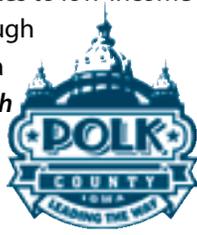
papers on social policy issues and several books, including *So Rich, So Poor: Why It's So Hard to End Poverty in America* (2012, The New Press).

For more information on the 2013 *Equal Justice After Hours*, visit the Iowa Legal Aid Foundation website: iowalegalaidfoundation.org.



Polk County and Prairie Meadows support Iowa Legal Aid

Iowa Legal Aid received \$200,000 from the Polk County Board of Supervisors to provide expanded critical legal services to low-income persons in Polk County through Iowa Legal Aid's Central Iowa Regional Office and its **Health and Law Project**. With the funds from Polk County, staff of the Central Iowa Regional Office are addressing a wide variety of civil legal problems many low-income Polk County residents face, including domestic violence, public benefit programs,



foreclosure, illegal evictions and consumer matters. **Health and Law Project** staff are providing assistance with civil legal problems that are causing or exacerbating the chronic health conditions of low-income Polk County residents.

On May 16, Prairie Meadows presented a check to Iowa Legal Aid for \$14,331. Iowa Legal Aid's **Legal Hotline for Older Iowans** used \$10,000 to present a three-hour seminar to nearly 500 participants over the Iowa Communications Network (ICN). The seminar was broadcast to classrooms around the state, with at least ten locations being in Polk and adjacent counties. The seminar educated older Iowans, their caregivers and service providers



about elder law issues involving Medicaid eligibility for long-term care and other public benefits; life-planning issues such as health care directives, powers of attorney, and guardianships; and consumer and financial issues involving predatory lending, debt collection practices and foreclosures.

The remaining \$4,331 will help support outreach efforts of Iowa Legal Aid's **Health and Law Project** in Des Moines, including outreach and intake at local community health care centers, homeless shelters and domestic violence shelters in the Des Moines area.

Iowa Legal Aid is grateful to Polk County and Prairie Meadows for their financial support of Iowa Legal Aid.



Seniors and caregivers at over 30 Iowa Communications Network classrooms took part in the seminar "Life Planning, Medicaid and Elder Abuse Issues" on November 1.

NEWS

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF IOWA LEGAL AID

A recently completed study found that in 2011, every dollar invested in Iowa Legal Aid by funding sources within the state yielded a return of \$6.71. Iowa Legal Aid's financial impact on the Iowa economy totaled \$28,729,300, plus an additional \$15,270,850 in non-federal financial benefits for clients, such as unemployment benefits or child support payments.

JEANS FOR JUSTICE – CASUAL DAY

The 3rd annual **Jeans for Justice** casual day event, sponsored by the Iowa Association of Legal Administrators to benefit Iowa Legal Aid, took place on October 26, 2012. Law firms throughout the state were encouraged to organize and participate in this project. For a donation of \$5, members of Iowa's legal community were permitted to dress more casually than is normally allowed, including wearing jeans. So far, \$2,142 has been raised from this year's event.



Iowa Supreme Court Chief Justice Mark Cady speaks at a reception in Des Moines on November 28th recognizing volunteers and celebrating the 35th anniversary of Iowa Legal Aid.

JUSTICE IN THE BALANCE: LOW-INCOME IOWANS AND THE COURTS

Iowa Legal Aid's Board of Directors has embarked on a new initiative, **Justice in the Balance: Low-income Iowans and the Courts**, that seeks to address the negative impacts of reductions in funding at the same time as the need for legal assistance is increasing. The most recent census data shows a 39 per cent increase in the number of Iowans who meet Iowa Legal Aid's income eligibility guidelines (125% of the federal poverty level). The **Justice in the Balance** initiative is taking a 3-pronged approach including steps to increase volunteer services by attorneys on behalf of low-income Iowans, increase funding for legal services, and educate the public about the value and importance of Iowa Legal Aid's services.

What Iowa newspapers are saying about Iowa Legal Aid

Among the most gratifying support this year has been the outpouring of positive comments on the editorial pages of newspapers. Here are some excerpts of what the editors had to say.

"I was very intimidated by my situation and the lawyer was so kind and helpful. She answered every question and sent the forms to me that day. I am disabled and very thankful."

Iowa Legal Aid client with a consumer law case

Des Moines Register

"Iowa Legal Aid has done a commendable job of stretching to serve the legal needs of a growing population. But the goal of its financial backers should be establishing a stable financial foundation to assure that all Iowans have access to the courts, regardless of their ability to pay."

Des Moines Register
August 8, 2012

IOWA CITY Press-Citizen

"We commend the work that Iowa Legal Aid staff and its volunteer law students and attorneys have provided for lower-income Iowans who have nowhere else to turn. And we hope funding can be found to ensure the organization continues to offer such critical assistance for decades to come."

Iowa City Press-Citizen
September 26, 2012

The Gazette

"Iowa Legal Aid is a good deal for low-income Iowans and for Iowa taxpayers. Serving all those in true need may never be attainable with so many social services clamoring for funds these days. But a future without much legal assistance for fellow Iowans would surely be much less just."

Cedar Rapids Gazette
September 26, 2012

GLOBE GAZETTE

"Iowans who feel they need legal assistance but can't afford it should be assured that resources are there for them at Iowa Legal Aid."

Mason City Globe Gazette
November 24, 2012

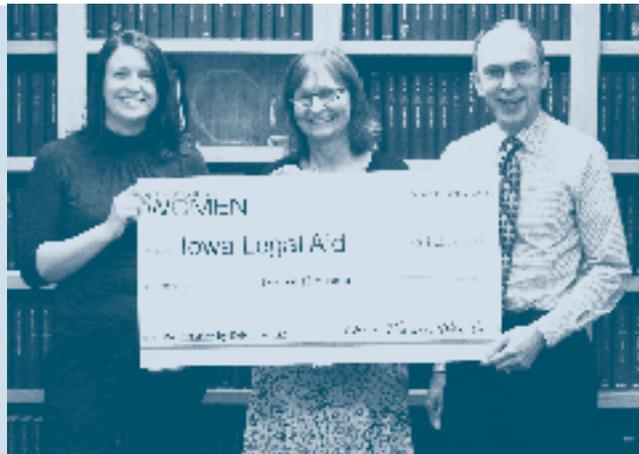
100+ Women Who Care caring about equal justice

The philanthropic group **100+ Women Who Care** of Des Moines selected Iowa Legal Aid's **Equal Justice Project** as the recipient of funds donated at its fall meeting to support services provided in Polk County. **100+ Women Who Care** is a group of women who support their local community. They come from all walks of life. As individuals, they found it difficult to make a very large impact but consolidating resources enabled more ways to contribute to community growth.

Deb Tharnish of the Davis Brown Law Firm spoke to the Des Moines group on November 7 about Iowa Legal Aid's **Equal Justice Project**. The **Equal Justice Project** provides legal advocacy to protect victims of domestic abuse and their children, working to help lift families out

"My daughter and I were trapped for years by abuse. Then, I got help from my lawyer who was compassionate, professional and treated me like a person. She got me through my court case and my home life is so much better now. My daughter is doing well in school. She is happy. She is safe and I don't have to worry anymore. Thank you doesn't say enough."

Iowa Legal Aid client with a custody case



From left to right: Shellie Mackel, Deborah Tharnish and Dennis Groenenboom.

of violent homes. The **Equal Justice Project** also participates in research to identify, implement and promote best practices to end domestic abuse through targeted legal advocacy and collaborative services.

Iowa Legal Aid is grateful to **100+ Women Who Care** for their financial support that will help increase safety and stability for families in the Des Moines area.

"Even though I don't have any money, I was still able to get legal help and was represented by a good lawyer."

Iowa Legal Aid client with a tax law case

Theisen's grants help domestic violence survivors

Iowa Legal Aid was recently awarded two grants from the Theisen's *More for Your Community Corporate Giving Grant Program* to provide legal assistance to survivors of domestic violence living in Jasper and Linn Counties. With this funding, Iowa Legal Aid will be able to help more survivors obtain court ordered protection from their abusers, access supportive services and stabilize their housing situation, which will ultimately allow them complete autonomy from their abusers. Iowa Legal Aid is grateful for the opportunity to provide additional services to survivors of Jasper and Linn Counties.



Volunteers honored for service

On November 28th, the staff and Board of Iowa Legal Aid honored many Des Moines area volunteers with an open house and award ceremony. The event featured a speech by Iowa Supreme Court Chief Justice Mark Cady. Chief Justice Cady thanked the attorney volunteers for their service in helping low-income clients and lauded their work as exemplary of the aspirational goal of public service by the legal profession. Iowa Legal Aid's Executive Director, Dennis Groenenboom, presented awards to the eighteen non-attorney volunteers recognized for their services. These individuals provide valuable assistance to staff by answering telephones, conducting intake and helping place cases with volunteer attorneys.



Chief Justice Mark Cady congratulates attorney Don Wine, among those recognized at the awards ceremony.

Dean's Cup Challenge takes place May 20th, 2013



An event for all golfers affiliated with Drake Law School or the Iowa College of Law – of every skill level – to support their law school while raising funds for Iowa Legal Aid. The 2013 year contest will be at the Finkbine Golf Course in Iowa City. The registration fee is partially tax deductible. To sign up and secure your spot in this prestigious event, or indicate interest in being a sponsor, click the *Dean's Cup* logo on probono.net/iowa.

"You can never understand how you freed me. All that you did for me I couldn't pay for. This gives me a chance again to go forward. You are the best. Thank you all."

**Iowa Legal Aid client
with a family law case**

Announcing the Iowa Legal Aid Foundation Sustaining Justice Club

The Iowa Legal Aid Foundation **Sustaining Justice Club**

is a community of supporters committed to ensuring that all Iowans are provided access to the civil justice system. Individuals who make a pledge or donation of \$1,000 or more each year will become members of the Iowa Legal Aid Foundation **Sustaining Justice Club**. Membership in the **Sustaining Justice Club** is renewed annually. For details, visit the Iowa Legal Aid foundation website at iowalegalaidfoundation.org.



Benefits of **Sustaining Justice Club** membership include:

- Invitation to attend Iowa Legal Aid's Annual Meeting and Luncheon at which clients and volunteers are recognized for their service and contributions to equal justice under law OR invitation to an Iowa Legal Aid event held elsewhere in the state.
- Complimentary attendance at two continuing legal education seminars coordinated by Iowa Legal Aid.
- Recognition as a member of the Club in the **Equal Justice Update**, circulated to over 11,000 individuals statewide.
- Special recognition on the Iowa Legal Aid Foundation website.
- Monthly email describing for members the impact of their support, challenges faced and opportunities.
- A special gift recognizing membership in the Club.

Thank you to all our sponsors throughout the state who support Iowa Legal Aid's work for hope, dignity and justice.

