A Message from MFY’s Chair

Next year marks MFY Legal Services’ 50th anniversary. The organization has come a long way since 1963 when it opened its frontline office on the Lower East Side with a limited staff. MFY has now grown to become the largest civil legal aid organization in New York City, with over 200 attorneys providing pro bono assistance. MFY’s test cases on welfare rights led to the Supreme Court’s 1970 decision in Goldberg v. Kelly, guaranteeing the right to a fair hearing and ushering in the “due process revolution.” Decisions in cases on social security, medical care for the elderly, and Medicaid programs in the country. We thank you for your past support and urge you to continue your support in the coming year.

That description is just as appropriate today as it was in 1968, five years after MFY was founded. MFY’s early mobilizing efforts on behalf of the poor were matched by a wave of new organizations that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s to advance the “law and order” agenda. That agenda was defeated by the rise of the anti-poverty movement and the realization that poverty is a complex problem that requires a multi-disciplinary approach. MFY’s next 50 years will be even more productive than the first.

Jobs, housing, education—these are recognized as the major problems of the sixth of the nation that lives in poverty. But the poor cannot solve these problems without the help of those who are not poor. Young attorneys . . . is proving that access to legal rights can help the poor to attain the other basic rights.

In 1968, Robert Mitgang, writing an article in the November 10 issue of The New York Times Magazine entitled “The Front-line Lawyer Helps the Poor” described MFY Legal Services this way:

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Saving Housing for a Chinatown Family

Mrs. Z's family was at risk of losing their apartment when the landlord tried to evict them, claiming that the tenant of record terminated permission to use the apartment. Through discovery, MFY found that the landlord had fraudulently entered a minor tenant to avoid control notice rent. MFY showed that the minor tenant was a family member of the landlord and that the landlord had actual knowledge of Mrs. Z and her family. The case was settled out of the landlord recognized Mrs. Z as the lawful tenant and consented to realigned tenancy to the apartment. MFY's housing projects prevent hundreds of illegal evictions each year.

Staten Island Home Saved from Foreclosure

Mr. F., a Pakistani immigrant who supports his family as a taxi driver, applied for a loan modification to avoid foreclosure and keep his home. Although his income was sufficient to qualify for the modification, the bank threw up as many barriers as possible. After ten court appearances on Mr. F's behalf, MFY attorneys were able to knock down each barrier, convincing the court that an alleged investor restriction was incorrect and that the house in question was in Mr. F's primary residence. In the end, the bank offered to forgive $135,000 in principal due on the loan and dropped the monthly payment from $2,600 to $1,000 a month. MFY's Foreclosure Prevention Projects serving homes throughout Staten Island, Queens, and Brooklyn, where foreclosures are devastating entire neighborhoods.

Home Care Workers Win $1 Million in Class Action Settlement

As many as one thousand women who are New York City's elder and in- droppers, about $560 million in winnings in a ground-breaking class action lawsuit against Medicaid. MFY's Home Care Agency, which filed the suit in April 2010 by MFY, Attorney Speaker, Robert & Weinstein, LLP, and the National Employment Law Project, won the case after the court ruled in favor of MFY's claims.

A Stable Home with Her Aunt

When T's aunt sought help with a guardianship petition, MFY found that the aunt had a pending eviction case against her. Although employed, the added expense of caring for her niece had caused her to fall behind on her rent, and in application for public assistance for her niece was erroneously denied. Afterarded advocacy by MFY, the aunt's application for benefits was processed and approved, and she received the maximum amount for the child and herself in active income, allowing her to pay her rent in time and to secure a home for her child. MFY's Workplace Justice Project helps hundreds of individaul workers combat wage theft, benefit fraud, challenge discrimination, and secure the workplace.

After Long Battle, Credit Restored

Mr. W, age 65 and legally blind, was sued by a debt buyer for a debt he had previously paid in full to the original lender. The case was later also filed in Texas for which he had not been aware. Outcomes, MFY represented Mr. W in court, securing closure, saving necessary demands and moving for summary judgment. MFY won the case on summary judgment and then assisted Mr. W in sourcing appropriate moving expenses. MFY's Consumer Rights Project helps thousands of New Yorkers challenge improper debt collection practices and has successfully filed class action cases and “service” in debt collection cases.

Mobilizing for Justice: 2012 Highlights

Revenue Sources

■ Government: $3,611,463
■ Individuals: $233,310
■ Foundations & Corporations: $844,000
■ Special Events: $514,816
■ Donated Services: $400,000
■ Cy Pres Awards: $278,948
■ Other: $21,266

Total Revenue: $6,513,323

■ Legal programs for tenants and homeowners: 51%
■ Legal programs for people with mental illness: 11%
■ Legal programs for low-wage workers: 5%
■ Legal programs for low-income consumers: 4%
■ Legal programs for kinship caregivers: 7%
■ General/administrative expenses: 8%
■ Fundraising expenses: 2%
■ Special Event expenses: 2%

Total Program Expenses: $5,743,877

2012 Benefits to Clients in FY 2012

■ MFY handled 8,274 cases benefitting over 15,000 people
■ More than 3,000 New Yorkers attended one of MFY's “Know Your Rights” workshops
■ Mortgage modifications negotiated by MFY saved distressed homeowners $5.6 million in principal and interest
■ MFY secured $440,890 in Social Security benefits for people with disabilities
■ MFY secured $462,000 in affirmative landlord-tenant judgments
■ Pro bono attorneys and other volunteers contributed over 22,000 hours of service, completing 475 cases. Pro bono assistance was valued at $3.45 million.