

A Message from MFY's Chair

2005 has been an exciting and productive year for MFY. With pro bono assistance from the private bar, MFY is pursuing major impact litigation to end the re-institutionalization of mentally disabled people. MFY's work to preserve affordable housing for mental health consumers, protect the rights of adult home residents, and address health, disability and civil rights matters for the mentally ill is now unmatched in the nation.

In July MFY launched the Manhattan Legal Aid for Seniors Project to help older residents age in place in their own homes. As we develop this practice, we will build on our experience to tackle critical legal issues confronting the elderly in nursing homes.

In 2005 MFY attorneys demonstrated their expert litigation skills by taking on a record number of complex holdover cases and preventing homelessness for scores of individuals and families. MFY's Workplace Justice Project, with help from pro bono attorneys, filed its first law reform case on behalf of low-wage janitors who were locked in supermarkets overnight, spurring the enactment of more stringent laws to protect their health and safety.

The dedication of MFY's staff, vigorous pro bono assistance from the private bar, and continued financial support from government, private philanthropies, law firms and individuals have truly made MFY the "place to go for justice," for thousands of low-income New Yorkers.

Your support, generosity and friendship have made it all possible. We thank you.

Eric M. Roth
Board Chair

2005 Highlights

Fighting Evictions, Promoting Family Stability, and Protecting Workers

MFY's attorneys handled over 4,000 cases during the past 12 months (November 1, 2004-October 31, 2005). Three out of four clients received help with housing, public benefits and disability problems.

- ◆ Over 2,000 households kept their housing as a result of MFY's work.
- ◆ Over 500 low-wage workers won Unemployment Insurance benefits, recouped unpaid wages, and addressed a wide range of workplace issues, from unsafe conditions to discrimination.
- ◆ MFY helped over 750 people access public benefits and entitlements and resolve debt problems that threaten the wellbeing of their families and their housing.
- ◆ Seventy pro bono attorneys from large law firms represented foster care parents who were adopting children in their care as part of MFY's **Pro Bono Adoption Project**.

Helping Seniors Age in Place in Their Own Homes

In July, MFY launched the **Manhattan Legal Aid for Seniors Project** to help Manhattan residents over age 60 keep their housing and independence. MLASP provides assistance on critical issues for the elderly--from housing and public benefits to accessing home care, coping with debt, and making end-of-life decisions.

Defending Adult Home Residents

MFY's **Adult Home Advocacy Project** represented residents of a Queens adult home in a class action suit that was settled when the home's operator agreed to stop withholding residents' small personal needs allowance as a means of behavior control.

Preventing Homelessness

Residents of single room occupancy (SRO) dwellings and psychiatrically disabled people in hospitals are particularly vulnerable to losing their housing. Last year MFY's **SRO Law Project** helped 380 residents remain housed, and the **Mental Health Law Project** intervened to prevent evictions of 200 patients in city hospital psychiatric wards.

Bringing Legal Muscle to Worker Organizing

MFY's **Workplace Justice Project** filed suit against two supermarkets that locked in cleaning workers overnight and worked closely with community based organizations and workers' centers to confront abuses against workers in the garment, transportation and construction industries.

Extending Our Reach through Organizing & Educating

Through our collaboration with the Coalition of Institutionalized Aged & Disabled (CIAD), MFY supports organizing adult home residents' councils to enable residents to advocate for themselves. MFY attorneys work closely with community-based organizations and workers' centers, educating tenants and workers about their rights and teaching grassroots organizers and social service workers how to advocate directly and effectively for clients.

Working for Systemic Change

By initiating major impact litigation, drafting model legislation, providing expert testimony at city and state public hearings, and advocating at all levels of government, MFY presses for policies and programs that address the underlying inequities facing low-income and disabled New Yorkers. In 2005 MFY launched the Patterson, Belknap, Webb & Tyler Fellowship to address consumer rights of low-income New Yorkers.

Pro Bono Partners

Pro bono attorneys make a vital contribution to MFY, serving as counsel or co-counsel on individual or class action cases, serving as guardians ad litem, and conducting case-related research. Volunteer attorneys also help MFY attorneys conduct intake on housing matters, and provide advice and counsel to low-wage workers at bi-monthly employment law clinics. Since January 2004, 100 attorneys have volunteered to represent foster care parents who are finalizing adoptions as part of our Pro Bono Adoption Project.

The following firms have provided pro bono assistance to MFY over the past two years:

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MFY's audited financial statements are available on request.

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Annual Report 2005

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MFY legal aid. It is
absolutely necessary to
have a decent society.
When you have no
money or power, you
really need a place
to go for justice.

—MFY Client

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