

A Message from MFY's Chair



2008 marks MFY Legal Services' 45th anniversary, and in looking back we find a remarkable history of pioneering work on behalf of low-income New Yorkers. MFY has remained steadfast in its mission

to provide individual legal assistance to New Yorkers who cannot afford an attorney while challenging the underlying inequities that create and sustain poverty.

For 45 years, MFY has advised, counseled and represented tens of thousands of New Yorkers in a wide range of practice areas, including housing, public benefits, civil and disability rights, employment, consumer, and family matters. More than any other legal services provider in New York City, MFY has served the most vulnerable among the city's struggling residents, developing large and successful practices for people with mental disabilities, residents of single room occupancy hotels, isolated seniors, and immigrants. From its groundbreaking 1970 Supreme Court decision in *Goldberg v. Kelly* guaranteeing due process, to more recent litigation that helped to reform the adult home industry, MFY has relentlessly pursued justice for its clients, using all legal tools at its disposal.

Your generous support has helped MFY remain a powerful force for justice in a city that too often offers a harsh existence for poor and low-income New Yorkers. We thank you for your past support and urge you to continue your support in the coming year.

Ariana J. Tadler, Board Chair

2008 Highlights

MFY's Expands Scope of Services & Caseload

In January, MFY launched the Lower Manhattan Justice Project to help preserve economic diversity in neighborhoods impacted by 9/11 by increasing legal services in the areas of housing, employment and consumer. In September 2008, we initiated a new foreclosure prevention project to address the growing crisis faced by homeowners with sub-prime mortgages and victims of rescue scams. Overall, MFY's caseload increased by 36%, benefiting some 12,000 people.

MFY Recovers Unpaid Wages

Natalie Elias, pictured with MFY Attorney Carolyn Coffey, recovered \$5,000 in back pay and fees from an employer who had underpaid her. Over the past year, MFY has recovered \$2,000,888 in unpaid wages, benefits, and other awards, a 16% increase over the previous year. Employment cases increased 64% since 2007.



Victories for Adult Home Residents

MFY's Adult Home Advocacy Project scored an important victory for 200 Staten Island adult home residents who had been denied adequate access to telephones. A judge ordered the home to install more phones so that residents can stay in contact with family, friends, and advocates. The Project was also instrumental in convincing federal authorities to issue a final rule extending eligibility for a \$40 coupon to defray the cost of a digital-to-analog television converter box to adult home residents and people who live in nursing homes and other facilities.



Consumer Cases Up 75%

Mr. Zhang, pictured with MFY attorney Anamaria Segura, was one of hundreds of victims of identity theft and unfair debt collection practices who recovered \$3,715 with

MFY's assistance. MFY also provided leadership in a statewide effort to win passage of the Exempt Income Protection Act in the state legislature, which closes a loophole that had allowed the bank accounts of poor, disabled and elderly New Yorkers to be restrained by creditors even when all of the money in the account was exempt from collection.

MFY Saves Affordable Housing in Chinatown

Among the thousands of low-income tenants who benefited from MFY representation in housing matters were 30 low-income Chinatown workers who faced illegal eviction from their lodging house. MFY represented 19 tenants and won a motion for summary judgment, which preserved all of the units, even those of the tenants we did not represent.



Pro Bono Lawyers Help Kin Families

Twenty-three new firms joined MFY's Kinship Caregiver Law Project, which has trained 200 attorneys to handle custody, guardianship and adoption proceedings for grandparents and others raising related children. Over 100 families have been represented in court cases and hundreds of caregivers receive advice and counsel at court-based clinics.

Advocacy

MFY Testifies to Stop Tenant Harassment

MFY attorneys Donna Chiu and Jonathan Burke testified at the NY City Council on tenant harassment. The Council later approved new protections for tenants. MFY regularly testifies on the problems faced by the city's low-income residents.



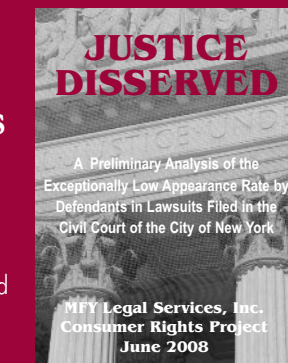
MFY Guides Help Tenants



MFY's new guide helps tenants with pets understand their rights and prevent eviction and loss of emotional support animals. The pet guide is one of 75 guides on a wide range of legal issues of concern to tenants, seniors, workers, consumers and immigrants.

MFY Report Exposes Sham Process Servers

MFY's investigation of process serving in debt collection cases revealed flawed service in over 90% of cases studied, and added fuel to demands for greater oversight by the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs.



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