

A Message from MFY's Chair



Despite the serious economic challenges of the past year, MFY Legal Services, Inc. has continued to make great strides in expanding access to justice for the city's low-income residents.

Consumer debt, foreclosure and employment cases exploded over the past year, as growing numbers of New Yorkers struggled to stay afloat after losing their jobs or falling victim to financial predators. MFY met the challenge, establishing a new Foreclosure Prevention Project, supporting legislation to protect consumers from unscrupulous debt collectors, and litigating on behalf of workers to collect wages due them.

MFY's housing attorneys scored striking successes, preventing evictions in over 300 litigated housing cases and saving two buildings in lower Manhattan.

MFY secured hundreds of thousands of dollars for clients, including restored public benefits, back wage claims, and unfrozen bank accounts.

A huge victory came in September when a federal judge ordered New York State to end its re-institutionalization of people with mental disabilities in large adult homes—the culmination of years of advocacy by MFY and litigation initiated six years ago.

Your support, generosity and friendship have made these successes possible. We are deeply grateful and urge you to continue your support in the coming year.

Ariana J. Tadler
Board Chair

2009 Highlights

Adult Home Residents Score Major Victory against Segregated Housing

After six years of litigation, a federal judge ruled that New York State's practice of concentrating people with mental disabilities in large adult homes is discriminatory and ordered the state to present a plan to remedy the situation. *Disability Advocates v. Paterson*, a case initiated by MFY's Adult Home Advocacy Project and a coalition of advocacy organizations with pro bono assistance from Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton & Garrison LLP, was a major victory in adult home residents' battle against re-institutionalization.



MFY Saves SRO Housing

Residents celebrated outside 81 Bowery, after MFY thwarted the landlord's attempts to eliminate 30 units of housing. After two years of litigation, a judge ordered the owner to make repairs so

the tenants could return to their homes after spending months in a homeless shelter. MFY's SRO Law Project defends tenants' rights and helps to maintain a crucial stock of low-cost housing for poor New Yorkers.

MFY Wins Back Pay for Low-Wage Workers

Recouping unpaid wages and challenging discrimination in the workplace are key activities of MFY's Workplace Justice Project and Lower Manhattan Justice Project. MFY won a big victory in settling an unpaid wage claim case for a Chinese restaurant waiter, whose employer paid below minimum wage and no overtime over a four-year period. On average, the client worked 60 hours a week. The six-figure settlement was one of the largest settlements for a single worker in MFY's history.



MFY Presses for Greater Protections for Low-Income Consumers

MFY's Consumer Rights Project is playing a leadership role in pressing the City Council and NYS Legislature to rein in abusive debt collectors. The Project was instrumental in winning passage of the Exempt Income Protection Act on the state level as well as a City Council law that expanded the definition of a debt collection agency to cover buyers of consumer debt. Both laws shield low-income New Yorkers from unlawful debt collection practices. MFY's Consumer Rights Project provided free legal assistance to over 1,000 New Yorkers over the past 12 months.

MFY Helps Manhattan Seniors Age in Place with Dignity

Low-income Manhattan seniors face daunting challenges in their efforts to live independently in their own homes. While landlord harassment is commonplace, even relatives attempt to wrest rent-regulated apartments from the elderly. In one such case, a relative misled MFY's client into signing a stipulation to give up the apartment he had lived in for 50 years with his mother, pretending the stipulation was a new lease. When the landlord tried to evict him for failing to comply with the stipulation, MFY went to trial and saved the apartment for him.

Pro Bono Victories

2009 was a banner year for support from the private bar for MFY's clients. Over the past year, the following firms have provided pro bono assistance to MFY clients:

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MFY's audited financial statements are available on request.



MFY LEGAL SERVICES

YEAR-END REPORT

2009

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