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Executive Director Report

Kimberly Rodgers

2008 marked a year of much needed new technology systems for Community Law Program. With funding from The Florida Bar Foundation, we received a new web-based case management program called Legal Server, which now allows us to more efficiently and effectively maintain and track client records, program services, and statistical information required by our many funders. We also received funding from The Florida Bar Foundation to purchase new computers and a new server, which has enhanced back-up and off-site access capabilities. We also received funding to upgrade our website. Prospective clients can now contact us directly from our site, and members of the public can now donate to our organization through our site. We are still in the process of adjusting to and realizing the full potential of these new technological improvements. From a program delivery standpoint, we are light years ahead of where we were just a year ago!

As our economy began to take a downturn resulting in rising unemployment, rising consumer debt, rising loss of residential homes due to foreclosure, and rising domestic violence and strife, our legal clinics and our ability to match clients in extraordinary need with willing and skilled volunteer attorneys has never been more critical.

This past year, with the extraordinary help of my dedicated staff, we recruited more new volunteer attorneys to help our clients than we have in a number of years. Among the new attorneys recruited this past year were the entire firm of Abbey Adams and attorneys with experience in residential foreclosure. We also joined and/or began partnerships with new community groups that provide valuable services to our client populations, such as the Pinellas County Wealth Building Coalition and Project Pro\$per, a local non-profit organization that provides loans to working immigrants.

We also continued to provide services to critically vulnerable and/or underserved populations through our on-going collaborations. In collaboration with the Sixth Judicial Circuit Guardian ad Litem Program, we made significant first-steps towards ensuring that foster kids who receive social security benefits while in foster care will receive the legally required notice of these benefits so that they can elect to have some of these funds conserved or used in ways that will give them a leg-up when they age out of the foster care system. In collaboration with Ken Burke, Clerk of the Circuit Court and the Sixth Judicial Circuit in operation of the Self Help Center, we scheduled 2,659 attorney appointments for self-represented litigants in need of procedural and/or legal information or help completing court-approved forms.

America was founded on the ideals of liberty and justice for all.

In a democratic society, legal representation helps ensure access to justice! Today, the mechanisms necessary to resolve disputes in our legal system have become exceedingly costly. Many individuals cannot afford the legal representation they need.

Nearly 110,000 people in Pinellas County (12% of our population) live below the poverty level. Of this percentage, the vast majority are women and children (28.9% of households headed by single women are poor). Working 40 hours a week at minimum wage in 2008, you could earn \$1,176 a month. The average rent for a single parent and 2 children was \$870, based upon 2008 HUD Market Statistics in Pinellas County. That leaves these families with \$302 a month to pay for food, childcare, transportation, and healthcare.

Imagine having to make these kinds of choices:

- Feeding your children or hiring an attorney to help collect child support from a parent who abandoned the family years ago
- Keeping a roof over your children's heads or hiring an attorney to help you and your children escape an abusive relationship
- Scraping up money to help you and your children relocate because your once affordable housing complex is converting to condominiums or hiring an attorney to help you get an extension on your lease agreement

Any kind of legal dispute can be catastrophic for these families!

Community Law Program's Legal Assistance Program helps clients "help themselves" and can make the difference between:

- Losing their homes or staying to fight unlawful evictions or foreclosures
- Remaining in abusive relationships or breaking free because they are no longer intimidated by the process of filing for divorce

Community Law Program provides the poor and working poor with equal access to legal assistance. Programs include:

- **General Clinic and Self Help Program** – CLP operated 22 free legal advice and self help clinics per month to advise clients about their legal rights and helped them complete forms so they could represent themselves
- **Legal Representation Program** – CLP provided full representation to clients with additional challenges and special needs
- **Information and Referral** – CLP gave clients procedural information and referrals to other valuable community resources
- **Community Counsel Program** – CLP matched qualified nonprofit organizations needing legal assistance with volunteer business attorneys
- **Transitioning Dependent Youth Project** – CLP provided free legal assistance to foster kids aged 13 -19
- **Community Education Programs** – CLP educated the general public and community groups about their legal rights and responsibilities through live presentations and written materials

Community Law Program Objectives

- Expand access to the legal system and provide quality representation to those economically less fortunate through the use of advice clinics, outreach, individual representation, and other programs
- Educate members of the public regarding their legal rights and responsibilities and continue to develop public awareness of the program
- Assist the courts, bar associations, and other agencies to improve the delivery of legal services and access to the court system, especially for low-income individuals
- Establish a consistent funding base to provide for long-range planning and to ensure future assistance to low-income individuals
- Maintain a well-functioning organization that has the capacity to respond to the legal needs of low-income individuals in Southern Pinellas County

Philanthropic support from individuals plays a critical role in making these services possible. The need for legal "self help" services is increasing rapidly at the same time that Federal Funding is shrinking.

Your philanthropic gifts today are helping to make "justice for all" a reality tomorrow!

Program Report

In 2008, Community Law Program provided free legal assistance to 1,232 low-income individuals, families, and nonprofit organizations through closed cases utilizing a combination of legal advice clinics and individual representation. We provided legal information and referrals to other community resources to an additional 1,998 individuals. We also gave presentations about legal rights and responsibilities to client groups totaling 274 individual participants. All of these services were provided on a modest cash budget of a little over \$352,000, a staff of 6, and a panel of 134 volunteer attorneys, who collectively donated 2,448.45 hours for a total in-kind contribution of \$428,479.



The hallmark of Community Law Program's service delivery has always been and continued to be in 2008 its General Clinic Program whereby income-eligible clients attend subject specific legal advice and self help clinics where they receive free one-on-one, in-person legal assistance from volunteer attorneys. These clinics assist clients with a variety of civil legal matters, including, but not limited to, family law, consumer rights and bankruptcy, tenant's rights, residential foreclosures and other housing law matters, probate, guardianships, and wills and advance directives. During 2008, Community Law Program operated 22 clinic sessions per month in locations readily accessible to vulnerable and underserved client populations, such as at senior citizen housing complexes and day centers, inner city community centers, and at CASA, Inc.. Many of the clients seen during these clinics were referred to other volunteer attorneys for full representation. In 2008, we also employed 3 dedicated staff attorneys to oversee 3 specialized projects that: (1) provided direct representation to survivors of domestic violence in

collaboration with other services received by these survivors at CASA, Inc.; (2) assisted teenagers in the foster care system with legal issues arising as they prepare to age out of the foster care system and transition into adulthood; and (3) matched nonprofit organizations and community coalitions that serve the poor with volunteer business attorneys to receive assistance with incorporating, applying for tax exempt status, and other related transactional legal services.

Here are just a couple of examples of the nearly 3,500 clients helped by Community Law Program in 2008:

Case 1:

A young woman with bipolar disorder and a small child was in an abusive marriage. The young woman left her husband and fled to a local domestic violence shelter with her son. Although she filed for a domestic violence injunction, the case was dismissed, because she did not have corroborating evidence of the abuse, and her husband was represented by counsel. The young woman sought our assistance with a divorce wherein the husband sought a timesharing schedule wherein he would be the primary residential parent using her mental disability as justification. Mom ultimately prevailed, is receiving child support to help her care for her son, has completed her education, and is now employed as a nurse's assistant.

Case 2:

A young boy age 13 was confined in a Department of Juvenile Justice commitment program due to behavioral problems in school. His behavioral problems, however, were due to an untreated emotional disability. His biological parents' parental rights were terminated in '99; then his adoptive parents' parental rights were later terminated due to neglect. He received special education services in school due to his disability, but no services were being offered during his commitment. With the assistance of our attorney ad litem, this young man received tutoring services during his commitment, and we helped get him transferred to a more appropriate residential treatment setting.

Many Thanks to our 2008 Volunteers

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and staff, we would like to extend a very special “thank you” to the 134 attorneys who collectively donated 2,448.45 hours for a total in-kind contribution of \$428,479 in pro bono legal

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Many Thanks to our 2008 Donors

Philanthropic support plays a critical role in ensuring that clients have “equal access to justice.” On behalf of the nearly 3,500 clients served in 2008, we thank the many charitable law firms, organizations, and individuals whose financial gifts provide significant program support.

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Financial Report

Community Law Program, Inc. Statement of Activities

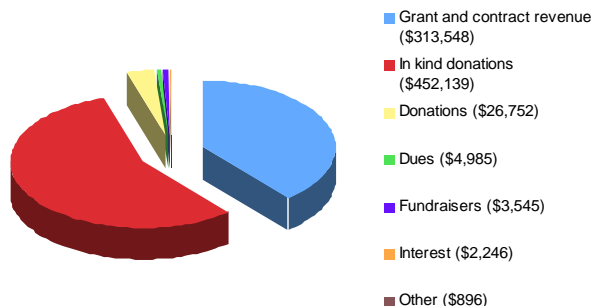
Year Ended December 31, 2008 With Comparative Totals for 2007

	2008	2007
Revenue and other support:		
Grant and contract revenue	\$ 313,548	\$ 253,006
In kind donations*	452,139	407,505
Donations	26,752	21,915
Dues	4,985	3,920
Fundraisers	3,545	3,215
Interest	2,246	3,573
Other	896	—
Net assets released from restriction - Expiration of time/use restrictions	305	—
Total revenue and other support	804,416	693,134

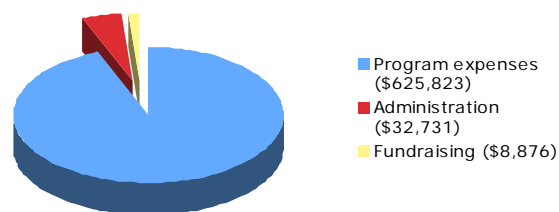
* In kind revenue consists of pro bono attorney fees of \$428,479 and rent of \$23,660

	2008	2007
Expenses:		
Program expenses	\$ 735,927	\$ 628,823
Supporting services:		
Administration	37,918	32,371
Fundraising	13,024	8,876
Total supporting services	50,942	41,607
Total expenses	786,869	667,430
Change in net assets	17,537	25,703
Net assets at beginning of year	81,691	56,317
Prior period adjustment	—	—
Net assets at end of year	\$ 99,253	\$ 82,021

2008 REVENUE (Total \$804,416)



2008 EXPENSES (Total \$786,869)



From the Independent Auditors' Report completed by Fontana C.P.A.s, P.A. The complete Audit Report is available upon request by calling Community Law Program at (727) 582-7480.

Special thanks to the following funders who helped to make our programs possible in 2008:

Florida Bar Foundation – Legal Assistance to the Poor & Children's Legal Services Programs
 Florida Department of Community Affairs (Florida Bar Foundation sub-grant)
 Legal Services Corporation (Bay Area Legal Services sub-grant)
 Pinellas County (Gulfcoast Legal Services, Inc. sub-grant)
 Pinellas County & City of St. Petersburg Social Action Funding
 Guardian ad Litem Program
 Ken Burke, Pinellas County Clerk of the Circuit Court
 St. Petersburg Bar Foundation

For more information on Community Law Program, please call Kimberly Rodgers at (727) 582-7480 or email: kr Rodgers@lawprogram.org.

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