



Ka Leo Kaulike

Newsletter

Spring 2009



LEGAL AID
SOCIETY OF HAWAII

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New Interim Executive Director

After nearly 3 years at The Legal Aid Society of Hawaii, Chuck Greenfield submitted his resignation from his position as Executive Director. On January 15th, Deputy Director, Nalani Fujimori, became Interim Executive Director.

In addition to overseeing the Legal Aid's nine state-wide offices, Greenfield was instrumental in helping convince the Hawaii Supreme Court and state banks to agree to interest rate comparability for Interest on Lawyer Trust Fund Accounts (IOLTA). He was also responsible for helping to develop Hawaii's ten step community-wide action plan to increase access to justice for Hawaii's growing number of families, individuals, and seniors living in poverty.

Greenfield also helped initiate and lead innovative fundraising efforts for Legal Aid. The Legal Aid Justice Campaign resulted in over \$600,000 in pledges during the first year of a three-year campaign. Nineteen of Hawaii's twenty-five largest law firms joined the fundraising campaign in the first year.

Tough Times Ahead

In 2008, Hawaii saw a record high unemployment rate; a projected near billion dollar state deficit; home foreclosures rise 230% to an estimated 1647 foreclosure filings in 2008; and lower tourism numbers than during the September 11th 2001 tragedy.

Currently, Legal Aid is bracing for an increase in the demand for services while reluctantly adjusting to the possibility of a severe cut in much needed services.

Each year, Legal Aid's intake hotline responds to an average of 17,000 calls per year, 74 calls per day, of which over 8,000 individuals and families receive immediate service, counsel, or full representation.

Last year, as the economy started to freeze, Legal Aid saw a 900% increase in mortgage foreclosure calls per month between January 2008 and January 2009. This number sharply rose again to over 400% of the new increases between June 2008 and January 2009.

Despite this growing need, Legal Aid saved the state nearly \$1 million in taxpayer dollars this past fiscal year; earning clients more than \$2 million in necessary federal benefits, bringing money into the state to help the poor.

Legal Aid is the only legal services provider with offices on every island, helping Hawaii's low-income community receive access to civil legal assistance. The services we provide are a critical necessity for the greater public and can often mean the differ-



Left to right: Brenda Johnson, Hon. Daniel Foley, Chuck Greenfield, and Board President George Zweibel

"It is with a great deal of sadness that I leave my position," said Greenfield. "I have been fortunate to work with a talented, dedicated and resourceful staff and Board of Directors. It has been my pleasure to help develop community partnerships in a combined effort to help bring justice to low-income families and individuals. My experience in Hawaii has truly been wonderful." Legal Aid thanks Chuck and wishes him well. ♦♦♦

Legal Aid saw a 900% increase in mortgage foreclosure calls per month between January 2008 and January 2009.

ence between homelessness and well-being, child custody and the loss of one's children, being caught in a loan scam and surviving them, needed medical care and atrophy, and at times, literally, life and death.

In light of these hard economic times and the increase in the demand for services, our staff compensates for budget losses by maintaining an effort 100% beyond their standard requirement, playing their part in sharing the burden that every American has been called to endure. Unfortunately, this same burden is always worse for our clients, and without community, state, and federal funding support, Legal Aid will be forced to cut back the integral services we provide our poverty population at a time when they will need them the most.

We are sharing our story to the public with all transparency in hopes that public support will carry us through these tough times ahead.

In this Newsletter, you will read about recent accomplishments in delivering justice to the people as well as opportunities for ways in which you can help our mission to provide access to justice for Hawaii's low- to middle-income communities. ♦♦♦

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Interim Executive Director

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Legal Aid is Hawaii's oldest and largest non-profit law firm dedicated to assisting the low- to moderate-income community. Our mission is to achieve fairness and justice for Hawaii's people through quality legal representation, advocacy, advice, community partnerships, education and outreach.

Established in 1950, Legal Aid has 9 offices statewide, and over 80 attorneys, paralegals, and administrative staff all dedicated to achieving Legal Aid's vision of "Building a Just Society."

www.legalaidhawaii.org

Foreclosure Advice Available

Legal Aid's Homeownership Counseling Project (HCP), funded by Neighborhood Works, provides people with information and services, regardless of income and assets eligibility. HCP provides distressed homeowners with information regarding their rights and responsibilities in the default and foreclosure process and available options in saving their home or mitigating their loss. HCP counselors assist clients in developing a budget and working on action plans to provide guidance to homeowners in distress. In some cases HCP counselors will help draft communications and negotiate with a client's lender or servicer in order to facilitate the process. **Quick Fact:** Since July 1st 2008, Legal Aid responded to 315 foreclosure related issues and that number is steadily increasing.

New Fair Housing Website



Legal Aid's Fair Housing Enforcement Program has just launched a new website completely focused on Fair Housing issues. The goal of the website is to educate individuals with disabilities, family members, service providers and landlords about fair housing rights, particularly when it comes to renting a home. The website provides a resource for people to understand their individual rights, file a discrimination complaint, and to educate about Fair Housing Laws. This site also provides access to brochures, forms, up to date news.

www.fairhousinghawaii.com

The Pro Bono Corner PARTNERSHIP IN PRO BONO Legal Training Seminars

The Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i is excited to offer its pro bono attorneys a series of trainings on areas of law that our clients are in most need of assistance. Each training is conducted by an attorney experienced in the particular area and who will be available to any pro bono attorney who needs assistance upon taking a pro bono case with Legal Aid.

The trainings are offered free of charge to those who take a pro bono case with Legal Aid. Continuing Legal Education credits will also be available for select states. TRAININGS HAVE STARTED AND WILL CONTINUE THROUGH THE END OF THE YEAR ON VARIOUS TOPICS. CALL OR EMAIL NOW TO RESERVE YOUR SEAT!

PLACE: Legal Aid Society of Hawaii
924 Bethel Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

TIME: Noon to 1:00 PM
*unless otherwise noted

RSVP DATE: Two days prior to training date

CONTACT: Clara Javier at 527-8005 or email: cljavie@lashaw.org

Please bring your own lunch. Drinks will be provided. Workshop dates and times are subject to change. Please visit www.legalaidhawaii.org to confirm upcoming seminars or download a training schedule at: www.legalaidhawaii.org/Probono_TRAINING_09.pdf

Eviction Defense: Covers court process in landlord-tenant eviction and counterclaims for those facing eviction.

General Assistance Denials: Covers the basic eligibility for General Assistance (GA). Will cover GA terminations and denials and provide advocacy training for administrative hearings.

Divorce: Covers the basics of divorce law in Hawai'i and the basics of Family Court rules and how to prepare for hearings or trials.

Paternity: Definition of paternity and the role of the state in the paternity action. Will also cover Family Court procedures and how to prepare for hearings or trial.

Child Support: Will review the Child Support Guidelines and the worksheet used to calculate support. Will also cover the basics of Family Court rules and how to prepare for court.

Power of Attorneys/Advanced Health Care Directives: Covers incapacity planning issues and completion of power of attorneys for financial decisions and advance health care directives.

Guardian Ad Litem (GAL): A day long training to attorneys interested in doing pro bono GAL work. At the conclusion of the training, anyone who is interested can apply with us to get a pro bono GAL case. Supervision provided.

Adoptions/Guardianships: Covers basic court process adoption and guardianship of a minor.

Adult Guardianships: Covers the basics on Adult Guardianship of an Incapacitated Person.

Legal Aid Receives Cy Pres

The Legal Aid Society of Hawaii has received a Cy Pres Award from local law firms keeping our need for funding in mind. \$24,140 was contributed thanks to PERKIN & FARIA and BICKERTON LEE DANG & SULLIVAN. Legal Aid is grateful to these firms for their dedication to us in providing access to justice for Hawaii's less fortunate.

As generous as these gifts are, Legal Aid still has a far way to go to maintain its annual budget needed to continue to help Hawaii's poor and elderly. We're grateful to generous firms like PERKIN & FARIA and BICKERTON LEE DANG & SULLIVAN, for thinking of us when deliberating Cy Pres.

Our Kalihi Presence

Four years ago, as a first year student at the William S. Richardson School of Law, Brengyei Katosang had dreams of helping the less fortunate. Now, as a lawyer and Legal Aid's first Fellow from William S. Richardson School of Law, she's realized that sometimes the toughest



Brengyei Katosang

battles are simply informing people that they have rights in the fight to improve their circumstances. The Kalihi Outreach Project focuses on reaching out and having a continued presence in the public housing community.

Every Tuesday from 11:00am to 4:00pm, Katosang is at 2219 N. School Street, next door to Sunny's Mart outside of Kuhio Park Terrace. Available for appointments or walk-ins, Katosang extends Legal Aid's reach to the people of Kalihi. This is just one of the many ways in which Legal Aid has been making its services more accessible and convenient for those who need them the most.

Going Green!

In an effort to cut costs and be more environmentally friendly, Legal Aid will be printing less newsletters and emailing more. You may download a copy of our seasonal newsletter from our website at any time. www.legalaidhawaii.org.

Please sign up for our mailing list, from our website, or send us an email so we can keep you in the loop about our services and events.

info@lashaw.org
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Search for "legal aid hawaii" in Facebook

Protecting Seniors on Maui

“JANE” (REAL NAME WITHHELD)

Jane is an elderly, disabled client suffering from depression and severe obsessive/compulsive disorder. Her illness caused her to become estranged from her family, who live on Oahu. Nevertheless, Jane's mother wanted to make sure that Jane would always have a place to live, so in 1990 she bought her a modest condo on Maui. Because Jane



Artwork by Michelle Bassler

was receiving SSDI benefits, the family mistakenly thought that the condo could not be held in her name. So, the condo was held in Jane's mother's trust. Jane's brother arranged for their mother to amend her trust and name him as the trustee and, after the mother's death, transferred the condo out of their mother's trust and into his own trust.

Jane went from being threatened with eviction and homelessness to owning a condo worth \$250,000.

As a result of Jane's illness, people stereotype her as “this nutty old lady,” and she sometimes got complaints from her neighbors, to the condo association, about making too much noise or letting her dogs run around unleashed-- accusations which she had denied.

Her brother, as the new owner of the condo, received the complaints and fines from the condo association and hired a large law firm to evict his sister. Legal Aid agreed to represent Jane on the eviction defense taking the position that she is the true owner of the condo. Legal Aid threatened to sue Jane's brother over the title to the property and recruited a private attorney with land title dispute experience to co-counsel with Legal Aid staff attorneys. Jane's Brother relented and the case was settled. The title to the condo was finally and rightfully transferred to Jane. Within the span of 6 weeks, Jane went from being threatened with eviction and homelessness to owning a condo worth \$250,000.

“LISA” (REAL NAME WITHHELD)

Lisa is a woman in her 60s who is home-bound with severe back injuries that she suffered in a fall. She owns a house with a little cottage on the grounds which she rented out to supplement her income. Her tenant was an alcoholic handyman who hadn't paid a dime of rent in two years. Because of her condition, Lisa never demanded what was owed her. She was too intimidated by him. She endured this situation until she called Legal Aid's Maui Office.

Because Lisa is confined to her home, Legal Aid staff drove out to her residence for a home visit. Shortly thereafter, Legal Aid sent her tenant a notice to demand payment for overdue and current rent, enlisting the help of the sheriff to serve the letter. The tenant contacted Legal Aid saying that he will voluntarily move out and also signed a promissory note for the back rent; promising to make monthly payments.

Legal Aid also made referrals for Jane so that social workers can check up on her on a regular basis and her former tenant is still making his monthly payments.

Call for Volunteers!

Tired of just talking about civil rights? Want to get involved in something more than a parade? The Legal Aid's Fair Housing Enforcement Program (FHEP) is dedicated to the enforcement of federal and state fair housing laws.

In Hawai'i, it is against the law for a housing provider to discriminate in the sale, rental, insurance, or financing of housing on the basis of a person's race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, familial status, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity/ expression, disability, or infection with HIV.

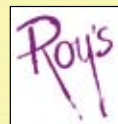
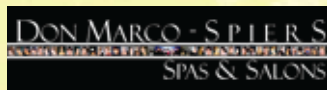
For victims of illegal housing discrimination, there are rights and remedies available under both federal and state fair housing laws. Testing has been accepted by courts at every level of the justice system as a valid and credible method of investigating discrimination.

Volunteers must be at least 18 years of age with no felony convictions, must not be employed in the real estate industry, and must complete a two hour training. Upon completion of each assignment, volunteers will receive a \$35.00 stipend plus mileage reimbursement. Volunteers of all ages, genders, races, religions, sexual orientation, and disabilities are needed statewide. If you or anyone you know would like more information about volunteering to become a fair housing tester in your spare time, please contact:

Ruth Jones

Housing Investigation Coordinator
808-527-8017
rujones@lashaw.org

Legal Aid would like to send a *big mahalo* to our in-kind supporters in the local business community



Be a Part of Justice! Be a Part of Change!



You can help us continue our services to Hawaii's people and ensure access to justice for all. Please consider making a donation so that we can maintain our ability to service Hawaii's poor and elderly.

To donate, please fill out the **Pledge Form** as a part of the **LEGAL AID JUSTICE CAMPAIGN** on the back of this Newsletter and mail it back to us with your tax-deductible donation. Mahalo!

To make a secure online donation,
visit: www.legalaidhawaii.org

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visit: www.legalaidhawaii.org

LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF HAWAII

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George J. Zweifel, Esq.
President, Board of Directors

Nalani Fujimori, Esq.
Interim Executive Director

Legal Aid Justice Campaign Pledge Form

Thank you for your support of this important campaign! Your gift will help ensure that the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii will be able to continue to address its mission of achieving fairness and justice for Hawaii's people through quality representation, advocacy, community partnerships, education and outreach. Mahalo nui loa!

Name/Organization _____

Address _____

City State Zip _____

E-mail _____

PLEDGE AMOUNT AND METHOD OF PAYMENT

SINGLE DONATION: My firm/I pledge to give the following amount by June 30th, 2009:

\$ _____ . OR

3-YEAR PLEDGE: My firm/I pledge to give the following amount by **June 30 of each year**

for the next 3 years: \$ _____.

I/We would like to make payment of our pledge as follows:

Check enclosed for \$ _____

Please charge \$ _____ to my Visa MasterCard (Check one)

Card holder name: _____

Card Number _____ Exp. date: _____

Authorized Signature _____

Please send me a reminder of my pledge at least 15 days before June 30th, 2009.

If you do not wish Legal Aid to recognize your contributions in its various program publications and in its Annual Report, please check the following box:

If sending a check, please make payable to Legal Aid Society of Hawaii, or LASH. Legal Aid Society of Hawaii is a charitable organization under IRS Section 501(c). All gifts to Legal Aid Society of Hawaii are tax deductible to the full extent provided by the law. Contributions will be used to fund activities permitted by LSC Law & Regulation.



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"There's no better way to thank
God for your sight than by
giving a helping hand to
someone in the dark."
~ Helen Keller

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