

SERVICES

INCLUDE:

- Individual representation
- Information
- Referral
- Advice through telephone and helpline
- Community legal education
- Support for those clients who will be taking responsibility for handling some or all aspects of their own problem
- Call 1-877-9-LEGAL-0
10 am ~ Noon, and
2 PM ~ 4 PM M-F

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Appeal for Justice

WINTER 2006

Unmet Legal Needs

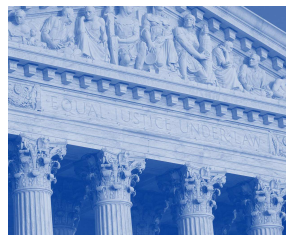
Clients in civil legal aid represent the diversity that is North Penn Legal Services' 20-counties — encompassing all races, ethnic groups and ages, ranging from veterans to urban low-wage workers and the elderly.

Our attorneys and paralegals handle more than 9,000 cases each year, helping people in Northeast Pennsylvania living at or below the poverty level. For a family of four that means existing on \$25,000 a year.

In 2005, we closed 9,100 cases providing timely advice and brief service to 56% of our clients. We provided representation in 3,470 court and administrative hearings.

North Penn Legal Services secured more than \$2.5 million

in quantifiable benefits to help low-income clients meet basic needs.



Unfortunately, NPLS is currently meeting only 4.6 % of the legal needs of low-income people in Northeastern PA.

Most low- and moderate-income people feel shut out from the legal system. They do not turn to the courts for solutions because they believe the system will not help them.

Civil legal aid ensures justice for all Americans, regardless of their income. Many people would otherwise not be able to afford access to the courts to resolve their legal troubles.

If you need legal assistance and cannot afford to pay an attorney, start with a phone call to **1-877-9-LEGAL-0**, 10 AM - NOON, and 2 PM - 4 PM Monday through Friday.

For more information or self-help, visit our website at www.northpennlegal.org.

Counties served: Bradford, Carbon, Clinton, Columbia, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Lycoming, Monroe, Montour, Northampton, Northumberland, Snyder, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Pike, Tioga, Union, Wayne, Wyoming

Support Our Cause

North Penn Legal Services is a private not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing free legal aid services on civil cases to low-income families, individuals, and groups and equal access to justice for all in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

We rely on the generosity of our supporters in order to meet the annual operating budget and continue to provide valuable services to our community.

There are 195,086 low-income people who need free civil legal assistance in our service area.

Currently, 24 staff attorneys and 16 paralegals are available to help this sector of the population.

To make a donation, visit our website at www.northpennlegal.org or call **610-317-5314**, if you have questions about supporting NPLS.



Victoria A. Coyle,
Executive Director

The staff at North Penn Legal Services will miss Joe and his zealous efforts to advocate for low-income people who have a right to fair legal representation.



Executive Director's Message

Insuring that a family moving from welfare to work gets all available benefits and programs; preventing an eviction through early legal intervention; securing a protection from abuse order; gaining access to needed health care at a critical time—This is what the staff at North Penn Legal Services strives to achieve each and every day for low-income families.

I am proud to report that the outcomes for clients who receive services from NPLS in-

clude self-sufficiency, living violence-free, and obtaining viable housing and public benefits.

As you know, we cannot do this work alone. We need volunteers, donors, and other collaborators to fulfill our mission—*helping low-income families meet their civil legal needs.*

There are many ways to support NPLS in the county in which you practice to reduce the number of people (18,000) who were turned away in 2005.

- Accept at least 3 pro bono

cases within your practice area annually

- Volunteer to advise clients in a structured clinic setting
- Donate your arbitration fees to NPLS
- Make a financial contribution to NPLS

We've included a **return envelope inside this newsletter** for you to make your commitment to NPLS today.

I hope we can count on you to help families with their civil legal needs.

NPLS Remembers Attorney Joe Galletti

From the Desk of the D.A.
By Susquehanna County District Attorney Jason Legg

Joe was an attorney—a good attorney. You might say that a good attorney is an oxymoron, but, if you do, then you did not know Joe. When I say 'good' attorney, I refer not only to his skills in this legal profession, but in the manner in which he conducted himself as a gentleman at all times.

In my view, you cannot be a good attorney in the absence of good character. Joe received his law degree in the State of Florida, and practiced law in Key West for several decades. After retiring in Florida, he wanted to live in the Endless Mountains—trading in the sun and the surf for a cabin in the mountains (and the snow).

When he moved to this location, he resumed the practice of law with North Penn Legal Services. As a result, Joe found himself thrust into a myriad of tasks representing those without the financial means to legally protect their interests.

Joe did not have the luxury of selecting his clients—or even the types of that he would handle. In this regard, Joe's 'retirement' was unlike the typical senior attorney who remains active but carefully selects the clients and types of cases in which he wants to get involved.

Joe was in the legal 'trenches'—and I

believe that is exactly where he wanted to be. All too often, the general public judges attorneys by the style of their suit, the model of their car, or the size of their home. Success is measured with dollar signs—the bigger the bankroll, the greater the success, and the better the attorney.

For this reason, there is a tendency in the public to assume that a legal aid attorney or a public defender is less of an attorney than one hired privately. This assumption is not only erroneous—but it is disrespectful to those attorneys that commit themselves to public service.

This is not to say that there are not private attorneys who are more skilled than public defenders; but the converse applies, there are public defenders that are more skilled than private attorneys.

You should not judge a book by its cover—or the clothes he wears or the car she drives. While success may certainly result in the acquisition of material wealth, the measure of a man's character requires consideration of more than a man's finances.

Joe was a family man—a loving husband and a terrific father. On his casket, there was a framed copy of the song 'Amazing Grace', and we were told that Joe had placed it in a prominent location in his home so that he saw it every morning when he got up. This small, framed object

sitting upon the large coffin was a tremendous sign of faith and thanksgiving.

Silently, it spoke loudly of the character of a good man. Joe may not have selected his clients, but he represented them with skill and ardor. I know because I fought against Joe in some of those legal 'trenches'.

While I believe that some of his clients did not truly appreciate him, Joe never failed to represent each client effectively and fairly. In many ways, Joe not only represented these disadvantaged folks—but he gave them a gift. At a time in their lives when there appeared to be no hope, when the entirety of a powerful legal system was closing in upon them, Joe strode forth to take their hand and help them through a difficult legal process.

His clients did not always make his job easy—but he always did it well. Through his counsel, Joe was able to give them hope—and, in such dire circumstances, hope is a precious gift.

Joe earned my respect and admiration over the few years that I knew him, and the legal community here in Susquehanna County has lost a good attorney, and our community in general has lost a good man. For those of us who knew Joe, we were blessed, and I am sure that God's Blessings will be poured upon Joe and his family in this difficult time.

Goodbye Joe.

Will YOU be on the NPLS Honor Roll?



North Penn Legal Services is proud to announce opportunities for private attorneys practicing in Lehigh, Monroe, and Northampton counties to donate their time, talent, and financial resources to clients in need of civil legal assistance.

Pro bono opportunities are available in Lehigh, Northampton, and Monroe Counties.

There are 3 ways attorneys can get their name on the NPLS Honor Roll in May. First, sign-up with Robin at our Bethlehem Office at **610-317-5316** to accept a pro bono case (s) or volunteer at The Caring Place in Allentown, PA for 2 hours. Second, donate the equivalent of 1 hour of your time by calling NPLS's Director of Development & Communications at **610-317-5314**. Finally, donate

your arbitration fees to NPLS.

North Penn's Executive Director will read the "Honor Roll" of attorneys who accepted pro bono cases, volunteered at The Caring Place, made a financial contribution of 1 hour of their time or donated arbitration fees to NPLS at the Lehigh County Bar Association Dinner on May 1, 2007. NPLS will host a recognition breakfast for attorneys in Northampton County on May 1 from 7:30 AM to 9:00 AM at the Best Western in Bethlehem, PA.

Meet the staff at North Penn Legal Services to get-to-know your local legal services program.



Java for Justice

Did you ever want the opportunity to learn more about your local legal services organization?

The staff at North Penn Legal Services invites you to join us for Java for Justice. In one hour you will hear from staff about their caseload, practice areas, and how you can help low-income individuals with their civil legal needs.

This is your opportunity to find out what North Penn Legal Services does everyday.

Our Wilkes-Barre Office will hold Java for Justice on Friday, December 8 from 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM. For more info. or to RSVP call **570-825-8567**.

Our Bethlehem Office will conduct a **1-credit C.L.E.** on February 14 at the Bar Association of Lehigh County. The topic is how

to deal with ethical concerns in working with low-income and mentally-ill clients. For information, register with the Bar Association at 610-433-6401 or call Lori Molloy, Managing Attorney in our Bethlehem Office for information at **610-317-5306**. *(The Bar Association provides lunch, and staff will be available after the C.L.E. to meet participants)*

We look forward to seeing you!

NPLS Attorneys Win LRAP Awards

North Penn Legal Services Attorneys, Kellie L. Rahl (Bethlehem Office) and Jennifer Heverly (Williamsport Office) are recipients of the Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP) Awards from PENN STATE *The Dickinson School of Law*.

Criteria's for the LRAP Award

includes working for a non-profit and demonstrating a commitment to public interest. If Kellie and Jennifer remain attorneys at North Penn Legal Services for 5 years, their student loans will be forgiven 100%.

Congratulations, Kellie and Jennifer!



Members of the Luzerne County Bar Association and NPLS staff attended a C.L.E. training on September 20 at the Ramada Inn in Wilkes-Barre, PA.

Participants from the Luzerne County private bar who attended: Jane Aciri, Brad Kurlancheek, Michael Butera, and Colleen Metroka. Also in attendance were Attorneys Gabe LaBella and Deborah Gordon of the Education Law Center, in Philadelphia, PA, and Laurel Fedak, Esq., a North Penn board member from the Allentown area.

New on the HORIZON...

HEMAP Program

Are you in danger of losing your home through foreclosure? The HEMAP program can help you save your house. HEMAP is a program that provides financial assistance to qualified Pennsylvania homeowners who are in danger of losing their houses through foreclosure.

The HEMAP Help Center offers free step-by-step guidance through the entire HEMAP application, including expert feedback on your Cir-

cumstances Description - the most important part of your HEMAP application. For more information visit www.hemap.org.

Governor Rendell Expands Heating Assistance

More Pennsylvania families will be able to stay warm this winter as Governor Edward G. Rendell announced an expansion in eligibility for Pennsylvania's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which opened on

Nov. 6. At the Governor's direction, income eligibility for the 2006-07 LIHEAP season was expanded from 135 percent to 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines.

Applications for LIHEAP are available at County Assistance Offices, local utility companies and community service agencies, such as Area Agencies on Aging or Community Action Agencies. Families can also apply for LIHEAP cash grants online at

www.compass.state.pa.us.



Important information for CLIENTS.

Employment Law Project Begins

The new Employment Law Project provides assistance to individuals in a variety of cases that arise from the employment context. Garry Wamser, Managing Attorney at our Bloomsburg Office will be directing the Employment Law Project.

Where possible, we provide advice, referral, and/or assistance in the following cases:

- language discrimination
- job preservation cases (FMLA, etc.)
- barriers to employment (criminal record expungement, occupational license problems, unfounded abuse allegations, etc.)

- wage cases (failure to issue last paycheck, FLSA, etc.)
- drivers' license appeals if crucial to employment
- consultation on at-will employment, severance, and covenant-not-compete questions

We are developing an outreach plan designed to train other NPLS staff on how to identify some of these Employment Law issues, and how to screen these issues. As a result, local offices will handle a greater variety of Employment Law issues, as opposed to just unemployment compensation.

To receive assistance in-person, call **1-877-9-LEGAL-0**. You must qual-

ify for services based on your income.

For self-help information about employment visit the NPLS website at www.northpennlegal.org

Once you log onto our website, click on self-help. After you select employment, you will be re-directed to palawhelp.org. Topics such as job discrimination, family leave, unemployment compensation, and wages are explained.

If you are a private attorney, you can help by taking cases on a pro bono basis. For more information, call Garry Wamser, Managing Attorney in our Bloomsburg Office at 570-784-8760.



The Employment Law Project will help individuals become self-sufficient.

For more information about the NPLS Employment Project, call 1-877-9-LEGAL-0.

Client Board Service—Is it right for YOU?



Board members play a critical role in moving any non-profit organization forward. At

North Penn Legal Services, we have openings for current and former clients to serve as board members.

It is vital to NPLS that clients have a voice on our board to ensure quality services are provided to those in need.

Call Vicki Coyle at 610-317-5308 if you are interested in serving as a board member.

area.

The main responsibilities of board members include promoting the NPLS mission and purpose, planning

and evaluating the organization's work, and establishing policies to guide that work. Client board members can expect to meet 4 times per year during their 3 year term. Additional meetings are scheduled on an as needed basis. Board meetings are convened throughout the NPLS service

area.

All board members are ambassadors on behalf of NPLS helping to make our community in Northeastern, PA a better place to live and work.

Interested individuals may call Vicki Coyle, NPLS Executive Director at **610-317-5308**. You can reach her during office hours between 9AM and 5PM.

Local Wal-Mart Stores have contributed \$1,000 to NPLS so far this year.

THANK YOU to our Recent Supporters!

Penn Security Bank & Trust Sponsors CLE Training

Our sincerest thanks to Penn Security Bank & Trust for sponsoring our CLE training held on September 20 at the Ramada Inn in Wilkes-Barre, PA. Their sponsorship of \$2,000 helped defray food and beverage costs.

Wal-Mart Stores Award Community Grants to local NPLS Offices

The Bloomsburg Office received a community grant in the amount of \$350 from Wal-Mart Store #1794. Our Bethlehem Office was awarded a grant in the amount of \$500 from Wal-Mart Store #2145. Wal-Mart Store #1945 in Mansfield presented our Mansfield Office with a \$150 community grant. We appreciated Wal-Mart's

generosity and commitment to the community.

Businesses Donate Gift Certificates For Employee Recognition Program

- **Cooper's Seafood** in Scranton, PA—\$20 gift certificate
- **Center Valley Club** in Center Valley, PA—2 player golf fees, valued at \$96
- **Grotto Pizza** in Harveys Lake, PA—gift certificates for 1 large pizza with 1 topping, valued at \$20
- **Nardoizzi's Pizza** in Stroudsburg, PA—2 gift certificates for large pizzas, valued at \$20
- **Civic Theatre** in Allentown, PA—2 tickets to a performance, valued at \$56
- **Dutch Wonderland**—2 passes for the 2007 season,

valued at \$60.

We'd like to thank the following individuals who made contributions after July 1, 2006.

- Salvatore Belcastro
- Barbara Cole
- Susan Mensch
- Victor F. Sawicki
- David and Robin Witmer

Your help makes our work possible!

A special thank you to our volunteers from the **Greater Allentown Chapter 38 Telecom Pioneers** who helped prepare our 2005-06 Annual Report mailing on November 9.

SUCCESS STORIES...Justice for the Elderly and Mentally Ill

Marie is 70 years old. Divorced after 40 years, she owned her house and car free and clear, both in good condition. She survived on Social Security of \$550 per month.

An unscrupulous car dealer convinced her to trade in her car on a new/used car with payments of \$498 a month—well beyond Marie's financial abilities. When Marie showed the car to a friend he convinced her to call that same night and beg for the return of her car. The dealer assured her he would make it right, but the next day refused to return her car and sold her another car with half the monthly payment. Marie experienced a mechanical breakdown with the vehicle and the car was repossessed.

Marie arrived at our Bloomsburg

Office stating that she was contacted by a collector for \$5,000 still owed on the repossessed car. An NPLS attorney sued the car dealer for Unfair and Deceptive Practices. On the eve of the trial they settled, paying off the repossessed car debt and paying Marie \$2,000 toward a new car.



John lived with his parents on a farm that had been in the family for generations. He has for a number of years suffered from depression, anxiety, with some psychotic features. He was, however,

able to maintain a grounds keeping job at a cemetery. The local government decided to confiscate the farm through eminent domain in order to build a school. The legal battle was prolonged and bitter.

After the family was forced to move off the land, John slid into a severe depression. Despite being hospitalized and practically catatonic, John was denied disability at the initial level, probably due to lack of medical evidence. Our attorneys in the Scranton Office were able to gather the necessary evidence to show at the appellate hearing that John was unable to maintain a job. He was able to receive assistance to live and medical benefits to continue treating his mental illnesses.

** Names changed to protect confidentiality.*



65 E. Elizabeth Avenue, Suite 800
Bethlehem, PA 18018

Helping low-income families meet
their civil legal needs

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



For more information about
NORTH PENN
LEGAL
SERVICES
www.northpennlegal.org