



The Chicago Bar Foundation: Your Foundation at Work in 2009

As the charitable arm of the CBA, The Chicago Bar Foundation (CBF) brings our legal community together around a cause that is uniquely important to us as lawyers and legal professionals: working to ensure that everyone in the Chicago area has access to justice, particularly the low-income and disadvantaged Chicagoans who are in most critical need of the protections of our civil legal system.

Thanks to the generous financial support of thousands of lawyers and other legal professionals, more than 150 law firms and corporations, and many other dedicated supporters, in 2009 the CBF awarded more than \$2 million in grants and played a lead role in a number of important access to justice projects and initiatives.

As we close out another very successful year at the CBF, we face a much different and much more challenging environment than we have seen in a long time, maybe ever. Yet it is also a time when the importance of our mission and the need for our work are more critical than ever, and a time when there are several opportunities to make systemic improvements that would be very difficult to accomplish in normal times but could significantly improve access to justice in our community for years to come. While our legal community faces its own very real challenges, our profession's leadership role in this cause has never been more important than it is now.

The Importance of the CBF's Mission

Even with all of our past successes, there are only about 300 legal aid attorneys to serve the more than 1 million low-income residents of the Chicago area who qualify for their services due to a long-term underinvestment in our pro bono and legal aid system. As a result, even before the current economic downturn, the majority of low-income and disadvantaged Chicagoans were unable to obtain legal assistance that is often critical to their safety and independence and were left to try to solve complex legal problems on their own because there is simply not enough capacity to serve them. That justice gap has only grown over the past year as the recession has set in.

As we finish our FY 2009, Chicago's already overburdened pro bono and legal aid system is facing rising demands for help from increasingly desperate people in need, while almost all of the major sources of funding for this work are declining or under severe stress. And this is happening at the same time as Chicago's legal community is facing a very challenging climate as well, trying to find its collective bearings in a time of rapid change and great uncertainty.

The CBF's Role in the Bar and the Community

While everyone in the legal community—lawyers and legal professionals, judges, law firms, corporations and other organizations—has the ability to make a real difference in this cause as individuals, the CBF remains the one place that Chicago's legal community can come together around this issue to collectively make a powerful impact that no one person or organization could make acting alone. The CBF's position at the intersection of the key institutional stakeholders in our justice system (the bar, the courts, pro bono and legal aid organizations, law firms, corporations, government, and the philanthropic community), along with the "bully pulpit" of our CBA charter, gives us a unique platform from which to

effectively tackle these issues on a “macro” level and a heightened responsibility to use that platform as a force for good when times are tough as they are now.

Through grants, advocacy and other programs, the CBF takes a system-wide approach to improving access to justice and focuses on objectives we can best achieve by coming together as a community. More specifically, the CBF:

- Advances the work of our community’s pro bono and legal aid organizations;
- Enables dedicated lawyers to pursue careers in legal aid and helps pro bono attorneys to most effectively supplement their efforts; and
- Makes the courts and legal system more user-friendly and accessible for all.

Highlights of the CBF’s FY 09 (*June 1, 2008 – May 31, 2009*)

Engaging Our Legal Community in this Cause

- In a very challenging climate, the 3rd Annual *Investing in Justice Campaign* raised almost \$1 million under the tremendous leadership of this year’s Chair, Jeff Stone of McDermott Will & Emery. More than 2,000 individuals made contributions and many new firms participated this year.
- The CBF again received a number of significant *cy pres* awards that provided critical support for a range of innovative access to justice initiatives.
- We had a very successful 4th annual CBA/CBF Pro Bono Week that was the most well-attended yet and was one of the major inspirations for the first national pro bono celebration in October 2009 (which will coincide with the 5th annual CBA/CBF Pro Bono Week).
- The CBF co-hosted another very successful CBA/CBF Pro Bono and Public Service Awards Luncheon and held our 12th Annual CBF Fall Benefit, the 9th Annual Fat Tuesday Challenge (co-hosted with the Association of Legal Administrators), and several other successful CBF Young Professionals Board events that highlighted the legal community’s strong commitment to equal access to justice, raised significant funds, and engaged many more people in the cause.

Continuing to Build the Capacity of Our Community’s Pro Bono and Legal Aid System

- The CBF awarded more than \$2 million in grants to our community’s pro bono and legal aid organizations and related initiatives. These grants enabled tens of thousands of low-income and disadvantaged Chicagoans to get critical legal advice and assistance and strengthened our community’s pro bono and legal aid system for the longer term.
- We again partnered with The Chicago Community Trust and its Chicago Area Foundation for Legal Services (CAFLS) on an innovative joint grantmaking initiative to improve access to justice and took on a greater leadership role in the larger philanthropic community.
- The CBF worked with the ABA and other organizations from throughout the country in a successful advocacy effort to meaningfully increase federal legal aid funding through the Legal Services Corporation.

Investing in the Attorneys Dedicating Their Careers to Legal Aid

- The CBF made it possible for almost 20 dedicated attorneys and law students to pursue careers in legal aid through the CBF’s Sun-Times Fellowship, the Anderson Fellowship, the Moses and the Marovitz Public Interest Law Scholarships, and the CBF’s annual sponsorship of two Equal Justice Works public interest law fellowships.
- We launched the CBF Legal Aid Academy, an innovative new pro bono program through which law firms, legal aid organizations, academic institutions, consultants and other professionals are collaborating to help meet the core training and professional development needs of our community’s legal aid attorneys and staff. The Academy draws upon pro bono resources to provide high quality training and professional development for legal aid attorneys and helps Chicago’s legal aid organizations conserve funds in a time of limited budgets.

- The CBF also made additional progress in improving training and professional development opportunities for those in legal aid through our continued partnership with the CBA on free CLE memberships for more than 300 legal aid lawyers working at our grantee organizations, our co-sponsorship of a statewide conference for legal aid lawyers and staff, and other programs for leaders and staff of our community's legal aid organizations.
- We led a coalition of interested organizations to pass a bill that, subject to future appropriation, creates a framework for a state loan repayment assistance program for attorneys pursuing careers in legal aid and public service.

Maximizing Pro Bono Impact

- The CBF Pro Bono Support Program helped scores of individual lawyers and a number of law firms and corporations most effectively get involved in pro bono work by providing information, resources and assistance to match them with opportunities that are an appropriate fit for their interests, skills and availability.
- In addition to developing the CBF Legal Aid Academy noted above, the CBF continued to promote other types of pro bono support for legal aid organization on issues such as advocacy, marketing, finance and administration through the Law Firm Leadership Circle and related efforts.
- The CBF worked with PILI and several national partners to develop a coordinated response to the unprecedented interest from law firms seeking to place attorneys in longer-term pro bono commitments at legal aid and other public service organizations. These efforts included convening relevant stakeholders, developing best practices, and creating specialized resources and trainings in order to maximize the opportunities for these longer-term pro bono volunteers to effectively help low-income and disadvantaged clients and address community needs.

Making the Courts and Legal System More User-Friendly and Accessible for Those in Need

- With matching funding from the County, we partnered with the Circuit Court to launch an expanded and improved Advice Desk for the Circuit Court's Municipal Division that is staffed by CARPLS and the Chicago Legal Clinic. In its first year, the desk provided brief legal advice and assistance to thousands of pro se litigants facing landlord/tenant and consumer cases.
- We also continued our leadership and support for nine additional advice desks in the state and federal courts and in the City's Department of Administrative Hearings as well as several innovative court-based pro bono projects.
- The CBF Young Professionals Board partnered with the CBA Young Lawyers Section, the Circuit Court and Illinois Legal Aid Online to produce online videos and associated resources to educate and assist litigants in the Circuit Court's *pro se* court.

A Solid Platform for the Future

Over the past ten years, the CBF's work has had a tremendous impact in the community as we have increased the amount of our annual grants and fundraising tenfold, been a leader in a number of groundbreaking access to justice initiatives, and built up a solid infrastructure to continue to build on these successes in the future. In addition to the broad and multifaceted impact of our work during this time, we now are seen as a local and national leader on these issues in the legal community, the "access to justice community," and the larger philanthropic community.

Still, we have a long way to go to achieve our vision of equal access to justice for all Chicagoans. We are well positioned to help our community be as effective as possible during the challenging year ahead, and to come out stronger for the future as well. For more information about the CBF and how you can get involved, please visit www.chicagobarfoundation.org or call us at (312) 554-1204.