



## **The Chicago Bar Foundation: Your Foundation at Work in 2010**

As the charitable arm of the CBA, The Chicago Bar Foundation (CBF) mobilizes our legal community together around a cause that is uniquely important to us as a profession: 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 the legal system.

In 2010 the CBF awarded more than \$2.5 million in grants and played a lead role in a number of important access to justice projects and initiatives. All of this was made possible thanks to the generous support of thousands of lawyers and other legal professionals, more than 150 law firms and corporations, and many other dedicated partners. Highlights of our work over the past year and the longer-term systemic impact of our work follow below.

### **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, law schools, 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 in challenging times.

Through grants, advocacy, pro bono and partnerships, 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 legal 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 10 (June 1, 2009 – May 31, 2010)**

#### ***Strengthening Our Community's Pro Bono and Legal Aid System***

- The CBF awarded more than \$2.5 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, strengthened our community's pro bono and legal aid system, and made other longer-term systemic improvements in access to justice.

- 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, partnered with the Trust and other foundations on other access to justice initiatives, and took on a greater leadership role in the larger philanthropic community through the Donors Forum and other initiatives.
- The CBF partnered with Cook County to fund several innovative court-based initiatives and 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.
- The CBF sponsored a series of convenings and trainings for the staff leadership of the CBF's grantee organizations on common issues such as management, evaluation, fundraising, pro bono and effective board practices.

### ***Investing in the Attorneys Dedicating Their Careers to Legal Aid***

- The CBF made it possible for 25 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 sponsorship of Equal Justice Works public interest law fellowships.
- We continued to develop and expand the CBF Legal Aid Academy, an innovative 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, which otherwise is rarely available to Chicago's legal aid organizations 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 staffing and support for the CBA Legal Aid Committee; and other programs for leaders and staff of our community's legal aid organizations.
- We worked with a coalition of interested organizations to obtain the first funding for two new federal loan forgiveness programs for attorneys pursuing careers in legal aid and public service.

### ***Maximizing Pro Bono Impact***

- The CBF played a lead role in developing several innovative and entrepreneurial new pro bono projects this year, including pro bono programs in connection with the Circuit Court's new mortgage foreclosure mediation program, the "Thunderdome" project for newer unemployed and underemployed lawyers, the SSI Overpayment project, and a program to assist families with relatives in mental health court.
- The CBF completed a major update to our comprehensive Pro Bono Opportunities Guide. This popular resource, along with the CBF Pro Bono Support Program and CBA/CBF Pro Bono Week, 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, training and assistance to connect them with opportunities that are an appropriate fit for their interests, skills and availability.
- We continued to develop the CBF Legal Aid Academy (see above) and to promote other types of "non-traditional" pro bono support for legal aid organizations on issues such as advocacy, marketing, finance and administration through the Law Firm Leadership Circle and related efforts.

- Building on our successful efforts last year, the CBF continued to work with PILI and several national partners to provide support for our grantee organizations and the dozens of lawyers working at these organizations after being deferred or placed on a longer-term leave by their law firms. These efforts included playing a leadership role in developing both a national and local orientation and training, providing ongoing support locally, and working with other local and national stakeholders to assess the viability of a longer-term pro bono placement model for law firms to consider institutionalizing in the future.

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

- The CBF played a lead role in the development and launch of the groundbreaking new Circuit Court of Cook County Foreclosure Mediation Program. The new Program will give the growing number of people facing foreclosure much greater access to free housing counseling and legal assistance, and in appropriate matters, access to free mediation to help homeowners reach the best resolution for their particular cases.
- We continued our leadership and support for ten 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, and continued to play a leadership role in coordinating the work of these various initiatives.
- The CBF developed a comprehensive resolution with the CBA for our overall efforts to help the growing number of self-represented litigants in the courts, and took initial steps on three important goals of that resolution: generating a detailed proposal to the Circuit Court to create a high-level Pro Se Administrator position in the Court; developing a template for a pilot "Justice Corps" program for students to assist self-represented litigants in the courts; and working with the Cook County Law Library to develop a plan to expand their pro se assistance efforts.
- The CBF Young Professionals Board partnered with the CBA Young Lawyers Section, the ABA Young Lawyers Division, the Center for Disability and Elder Law and Illinois Legal Aid Online to produce online videos and associated resources to educate the public and pro bono attorneys about estate planning issues for lower-income seniors

### ***Mobilizing Our Legal Community around this Cause***

- The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual *Investing in Justice Campaign* raised a new record of more than \$1.1 million under the exemplary leadership of this year's Chair, Chuck Douglas of Sidley Austin LLP. A total of 80 firms, corporations and other organizations participated in the Campaign (a 50% increase over last year) and more than 2,500 individuals made contributions, both new records.
- The CBF again received a number of significant *cy pres* awards that provided critical support for a range of innovative access to justice initiatives in the courts.
- We had a very successful and well-attended 5<sup>th</sup> annual CBA/CBF Pro Bono Week that was one of the major inspirations for the first national pro bono celebration held the same week in October 2009; co-hosted another very successful CBA/CBF Pro Bono and Public Service Awards Luncheon; and held our 13<sup>th</sup> Annual CBF Fall Benefit, 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Fat Tuesday Challenge (co-hosted with the Association of Legal Administrators), and several other successful CBF Young Professionals Board events. These events highlighted the legal community's strong commitment to pro bono and equal access to justice, raised significant funds, and engaged many more people in this cause.
- Through the reinvigorated CBF Lincoln Circle and the further progress of the CBF Life Fellows program, the CBF continued to engage lawyers and legal professionals to make significant longer-term financial commitments to support the CBF's systemic efforts.

## **The CBF's Longer-Term Systemic Impact**

While our accomplishments over the past year are noteworthy and helped many thousands of people in need get critical legal help, it is the longer-term systemic impact of the CBF's access to justice efforts that represents our defining niche. Working with our many dedicated partners, the CBF's leadership and consistently strong support has been critical in bringing about the following long-term systemic improvements in access to justice over the past ten years:

- Our community's court system is much more accessible for self-represented litigants thanks to a growing network of legal advice desks in the federal and state courts that serve more than 35,000 people each year, and the user-friendly online legal resources that are increasingly available on [www.IllinoisLegalAid.org](http://www.IllinoisLegalAid.org), Illinois Legal Aid Online's website for the public that now receives more than 1 million visits a year.
- Chicago's pro bono and legal aid organizations are stronger, with greater and more diverse sources of funding (through federal, state and local government; the legal community; *cy pres* awards; and other foundations), a better coordinated delivery system, and more resources available to support and advance their work.
- Dedicated lawyers are better able to pursue and remain in careers in legal aid thanks to improved legal aid salaries, significant new loan repayment assistance programs and expanded training and professional development opportunities.
- Lawyers interested in pro bono have significantly increased and more varied pro bono opportunities available to them and have much better resources to help them most effectively get involved.
- Chicago's legal community is more engaged and more comprehensively involved in this work--the engine for all of the other advances noted above--with individuals, law firms, corporate legal departments and other entities contributing much more financially towards this cause; doing more pro bono work in a greater variety of ways; and more effectively using their influence in making the case for equal access to justice in the courts and in government at all levels.

## **Looking Ahead—A Solid Platform for the Future, and Much More Work to Do**

As we close out another very successful year at the CBF, we face an improved but still challenging environment as our community and our profession work to recover from an economic downturn of historic proportions. Chicago's already overburdened pro bono and legal aid system continues to face 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. As a result, even with all of the impact we have made in recent years, our profession's leadership role in access to justice efforts--and the CBF's role in mobilizing our legal community around this cause--remain more important than ever right now.

While we still have a long way to go to achieve our vision of equal access to justice for all Chicagoans, we have built up a solid infrastructure to continue to build on our recent success and are well positioned to help our community be as effective as possible in moving this agenda forward. More information about the CBF and our work, and how people can get involved, is available at [www.chicagobarfoundation.org](http://www.chicagobarfoundation.org) or by calling us at (312) 554-1204.