



The Chicago Bar Foundation: Your Foundation at Work in 2012

(July 18, 2012)

As the charitable arm of the CBA, The Chicago Bar Foundation (CBF) mobilizes our legal community around a cause that is distinctly 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.

The CBF pursues a two-pronged strategy as we work to ensure equal access to justice in our community: investing in what we know works (i.e., the many outstanding people and organizations who anchor our community's pro bono and legal aid system), and at the same time investing in innovative projects and initiatives that make longer-term systemic improvements in access to justice.

In 2012 the CBF awarded a new record of more than \$4 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 200 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 where 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 this cause on a systemic level.

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 the legal community working together. More specifically, the CBF works to:

- Mobilize the legal community to use their time, money and influence to advance this cause;
- Strengthen our community's pro bono and legal aid organizations;
- Enable dedicated lawyers to pursue careers in legal aid;
- Maximize opportunities for pro bono lawyers to most effectively supplement the work of their legal aid and public service counterparts; and
- Make the courts and legal system more user-friendly and accessible for those in need.

Many thousands of people in need are helped by the CBF's efforts, including women and children victimized by domestic violence; veterans being denied the benefits our country

promised them; people facing wrongful eviction from their homes due to predatory lending and other consumer fraud; and many other low-income and disadvantaged people in our community who face legal problems that often impact their safety and independence.

Highlights of the CBF's FY 12 (June 1, 2011 – May 31, 2012)

- ❖ As further detailed later in this report, the CBF had one of its most impactful years ever, highlighted by a new record of more than \$4 million in grants. Over the past ten years, the CBF has awarded nearly \$20 million in grants to pro bono and legal aid organizations in the Chicago area.
- ❖ The CBF continued to play a lead role in developing, supporting and nurturing a network of innovative court-based advice desks and pro bono projects that now serve more than 60,000 people each year, highlighted by the Circuit Court of Cook County's Mortgage Foreclosure Mediation Program.
- ❖ The 6th Annual *Investing in Justice Campaign* set new records across the board, raising more than \$1.55 million for our community's pro bono and legal aid system. Since its inception six years ago, the Campaign has raised more than \$6.75 million for this cause, 100% of which has gone directly towards grants to dozens of pro bono and legal aid organizations serving the Chicago area.

Mobilizing Our Legal Community around this Cause

The CBF's core work in mobilizing Chicago's legal community around the cause of access to justice—which makes all of our other work possible—yielded significant progress on a number of key fronts.

- The 6th Annual *Investing in Justice Campaign* raised a new record of more than \$1.55 million under the exemplary leadership of this year's Chair, Emily Nicklin of Kirkland & Ellis. A total of 118 firms, corporations and other law-related organizations participated in the Campaign and more than 3,600 individuals made contributions, both new records. The CBF used 100% of the funds raised in the Campaign for grants to 40 pro bono and legal aid organizations serving the Chicago area.
- 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, with 20 different awards over the course of the year contributing more than \$1.3 million towards the CBF's efforts. Over \$1.5 million more in *cy pres* awards went directly to several pro bono and legal aid organizations serving the Chicago area.
- The 7th annual CBA/CBF Pro Bono Week again was well-attended and successful and the CBA/CBF Pro Bono and Public Service Awards Luncheon set new records. In addition, the CBF held our 15th Annual CBF Fall Benefit, 12th Annual Fat Tuesday Challenge, and the now annual Young Professionals Board *Casino Legale* event. 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.
- The CBF formally launched the Corporate and Partner Leadership Circles to join the already existing CBF Law Firm Leadership Circle and hosted the first joint meeting of the three Leadership Circles. Each of the Leadership Circles embodies a commitment to best practices on access to justice issues.

Strengthening Our Community's Pro Bono and Legal Aid Organizations

- The CBF awarded a new record of more than \$4 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 possible other longer-term systemic improvements in access to justice.

- The CBF's record grant funding primarily was made possible by the success of the Investing in Justice Campaign and the ongoing support from *cy pres* awards to the CBF, both of which were critical in leveraging significantly more funding from our partnerships with The Chicago Community Trust and Cook County as well as additional funding from the City of Chicago and other local foundations from outside the legal community.
- The CBF partnered with the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation on a new report documenting the positive economic impact of funding for legal aid and continued to take a leadership role in advocacy efforts for government funding and support for legal aid at the federal, state and local levels.
- The CBF hosted several trainings for the staff leadership of the CBF's grantee organizations on common issues such as management, fundraising, pro bono and evaluation, all of which received enthusiastically positive reviews from participants.

Investing in the Attorneys Dedicating Their Careers to Legal Aid

- The CBF made it possible for 30 dedicated attorneys and law students to pursue careers in legal aid through the CBF's Sun-Times Fellowship, the Anderson Fellowship, and the Moses and Marovitz Scholarships, and also funded several public interest internships for law students through PILI.
- The CBF partnered with the Lawyers Trust Fund to plan and sponsor a comprehensive two-day legal aid conference in the Fall of 2011 for more than 500 legal aid lawyers and advocates from throughout the state.
- We continued to expand training and professional development opportunities for legal aid lawyers through the CBF Legal Aid Academy. The Academy is 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 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 350 legal aid lawyers working at our grantee organizations; our staffing and support for the CBA Legal Aid Committee; and facilitating access to other programs for leaders and staff of our community's legal aid organizations.

Maximizing Pro Bono Impact

- The CBF began laying the groundwork for an innovative new program (provisionally called the CBF Postgraduate Academy) for new law school graduates that will help these new lawyers launch their careers, expand services for low-income people in need, and improve service for people of modest means.
- The CBF worked with various stakeholders to develop a pro bono "checklist" and associated manual for legal aid organizations and other entities that run pro bono programs, and the final version is expected to be released in the early Fall of 2012. The CBF also launched a regular convening of staff from legal aid organizations working on pro bono programs to share best practices and tackle collective challenges.
- The CBF's 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 CBF Leadership Circles and related efforts.

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

- The CBF made significant progress on efforts to have central help centers for people without lawyers in the Circuit Court of Cook County. Partnering with the Circuit Court, the Cook County Law Library, legal aid organizations and other stakeholders, the CBF commissioned a report from a team of IIT Institute of Design graduate students that set forth a vision for what these resource centers could look like. The CBF also worked with a number of national partners to commission a report on the future role of law libraries in access to justice efforts, worked with a number of partners to help launch a web-based help center in the 6th Municipal District in Markham, Illinois, and worked with the Circuit Court to improve and expand the resources available on the court’s website as the site is redesigned.
- The CBF continued our leadership and support for 10 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, highlighted by the CBF’s continued leadership role in the Circuit Court of Cook County’s Mortgage Foreclosure Mediation Program. These various initiatives collectively are now serving more than 60,000 people a year.
- The CBF continued to develop and expand the Illinois JusticeCorps Program for students to assist people without lawyers in the courts, with about 100 law school, community college and other students assisting the Court and the Court’s various partners to help unrepresented people in the Mortgage Foreclosure Mediation Program and other court-based programs.
- The CBF Young Professionals Board partnered with the CBA Young Lawyers Section (YLS) to update the popular “Where to Go for Legal Help” brochure and other educational programs, and worked with the YLS and Illinois Legal Aid Online to produce online videos and associated resources for veterans and members of the military and their families.

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 12 years:

- ❖ Chicago’s legal community is more engaged and more comprehensively involved in this work, 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.
- ❖ Our community’s court system is much more accessible for people without lawyers thanks to a growing network of legal advice desks in the federal and state courts that serve more

than 60,000 people each year, and the user-friendly online legal resources that are increasingly available on 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.

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 improving but still challenging environment. While the legal community continues to step up its support for this cause, Chicago's already overburdened pro bono and legal aid system continues to face rising demands for help from increasingly desperate people in need, while other major sources of funding for this work--particularly government--still 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 successes 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 or by calling us at (312) 554-1204.