

# CLSACC NEWS FOR OUR FRIENDS

COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES AND COUNSELING CENTER, INC.

FALL 2005

## CLSACC's INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECT



Lynn Barenberg and Allison Joyce

For thirty-five years, CLSACC's clients have benefited from our unique, interdisciplinary approach to providing legal and counseling services.

The involvement of social workers/mental health professionals in legal cases not only improves outcomes but offers real, long term benefits. As the number of legal clients with emotional issues that interfere with their ability to make effective decisions increased, CLSACC recognized that it was essential to create a formal interdisciplinary model for the agency.

In its 2004 Monitoring Report, the **Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation** commented that "this model could and should be replicated by other legal services programs." Last year, with funding from the **Sun Hill Foundation**, CLSACC hired Claire Donohue, a joint law/

social work student from Boston College, to do case and client research, and work with the staff to develop protocols for attorney consultation and social work support for clients.

Beginning this fall, **Lynn Barenberg, LICSW** (staff social worker at Boston College Legal Assistance Bureau (BCLAB) and lecturer at **Boston College Law School**) will spend one day a week at CLSACC as the Interdisciplinary Project Coordinator. Lynn has 28 years of social work experience in psychiatric social work, special education, legal services, and medical / law student training. She has presented at numerous regional and national conferences, with a special focus on training legal advocates how to better understand, and work more effectively with, clients with psychiatric impairments.

On loan from BC Law School, Lynn will use her expertise as an active contributor to the discourse of interdisciplinary practice to help move our Interdisciplinary Model into its final stage of development. **Allison Joyce**, a student at BC School of Social Work, will join Lynn as this year's Interdisciplinary Project Intern.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENTS HELP IMMIGRANTS OBTAIN LEGAL STATUS

Initiated in 2003 CLSACC's Psychological Evaluation Project trains volunteer clinicians in CLSACC's Counseling Program to perform psychological assessments for low income immigrant victims of persecution and torture seeking asylum in the U.S., as well as battered immigrant women seeking legal status under the Violence Against Women Act. In addition to legal representation, psychological assessments documenting the effects of torture and violence dramatically increase their chances of winning their cases. Furthermore, these assessments can identify unmet needs, leading to treatment and alleviation of problems associated with violence and abuse. These assessments, a specialized form of evaluation, which can take up to 30 hours each and cost between \$500 and \$800, are provided by CLSACC for free or at a low cost.

To meet the growing demand for such evaluations and the need for related social and mental health services for these clients, CLSACC was awarded funding by **The Clowes Fund** to hire a one day per week project coordinator to perform evaluations, supervise volunteer clinicians performing evaluations, and coordinate related social services. In August 2005, **Isabeall Logan, Ph.D.** was hired as the Psychological Evaluation Project Coordinator. Isabeall has been trained by and performed evaluations for Doctors of the World and is a member of the Asylum Network of Physicians for Human Rights.

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## FROM OUR INTERDISCIPLINARY CASE FILES:

Suzanne and John were married for nine years and had two sons. After the birth of their first son, Mark, John began to regularly abuse Suzanne. He punched and kicked her, and told her she was worthless; often in front of Mark. John was charged and eventually convicted of domestic assault, and required to enroll in a batterer's intervention program. The abuse, however, did not stop. Mark began exhibiting self destructive and violent behaviors, which often appear in children who have witnessed family violence. He would ransack his room, hit his mother and even tried to push his baby brother Robert onto train tracks. Suzanne tried to get help for Mark, but John stopped her. When Suzanne finally found the courage to take the children and leave John, he refused to pay court ordered support.

Suzanne began to suffer from the constant stress of trying to survive and was diagnosed with severe depression. She attempted suicide, and her sons were placed in John's custody. When John refused to let her see her sons, and threatened to move with the boys to California, Suzanne came to CLSACC for help. CLSACC represented Suzanne in divorce proceedings and CLSACC's interdisciplinary social worker supported and counseled Suzanne throughout the litigation process, helping her build self-esteem, find a counselor for Robert, and maintain an accurate log of John's abusive tactics and attempts to sabotage visitation. With CLSACC's help Suzanne obtained a new restraining order against John, and a parenting plan that allows Robert to live with her part time, and grants her shared legal custody. Suzanne is planning to get help for Mark, who has modeled himself after his father.

Suzanne's recovery and ability to rebuild her life, and that of her children's lives, has been celebrated by battered women service providers throughout the community, who had previously worked with Suzanne. CLSACC was able to make a difference by providing comprehensive legal and social services and by coordinating these services to best support Suzanne.

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CLSACC's Family Law volunteer  
**Andrew P. Cornell**  
was chosen as the recipient of the  
Boston Bar Association's  
**2005 Thurgood Marshall Award.**

The Thurgood Marshall Award recognizes the contributions of a member of the bar in private practice who has demonstrated an exemplary commitment to representing low-income clients on a pro bono basis.

The award was presented at the Boston Bar Association's Annual Meeting on September 29, 2005 at the Marriot Copley Place.

### COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES AND COUNSELING CENTER

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