

CLIENT THANKS CLSACC FOR ITS LIFE-SAVING SERVICES

We first told you **Liz Anderson's** story in our Spring 2006 newsletter. She was known then as "Linda," a young mother who had come to CLSACC for help – terrified that leaving her abusive husband would result in the loss of her children, death at the hands of her abuser, or her deportation.

Traumatized by years of horrific abuse, Liz faced a complex set of legal issues and a grueling two-year court battle. As part of CLSACC's innovative Interdisciplinary Project, she received coordinated legal and social work support services. With this help, she was able to end her abusive marriage and begin a new life for herself and her children.

Liz told her story again at this year's "Walk to the Hill" on March 15, where she addressed more than 500 attorneys before they met with legislators to urge increased funding for civil legal aid. Speaking to a standing-room only crowd at the State House, Liz gave her powerful account of the life-saving difference CLSACC's services made.

"I was a young girl of 17 living with my family in a small town in Canada when I met an American man I'll call "Tom." He told me he wanted to take me to California and make me a movie star. I had big dreams and I was completely charmed by him, so I went with him. The abuse started almost as soon as we crossed the border.

Once he had me away from my family and friends and in a new country, Tom directed my every move. If I said something wrong, I'd get the back of his hand. I went from bad to worse when he began selling my body to the highest bidder. The physical abuse became routine, but the emotional abuse really affected me. I was isolated, ashamed and afraid.

The abuse continued. Once when I was pregnant Tom threw me down a flight of stairs, breaking my wrist and nose.

After my sons were born, it was even harder to leave because Tom often threatened to take my children and have me deported. I lived in constant fear of losing my children. In the summer of 2002, during a three-day rampage, Tom threw a huge wooden chair at me so hard that it was embedded into the wall. I escaped to a friend's house. When Tom called there and told my children that they would never see me again, I went to the Cambridge police for an emergency restraining order. They gave me the number for CLSACC.

CLSACC had a backlog of cases, but they agreed to take mine. For the first time in 17 years I had the help



CLSACC client Liz Anderson shares her story with more than 500 attorneys at "Walk to the Hill," an annual event at the State House supporting legal aid.

and protection I needed to free myself and my sons from abuse. My attorney, **Ellen Wilbur**, stood by me through two long and exhausting years of divorce, custody and immigration hearings. My counselor, **Claire Donahue**, was there to simply ask me, "Is that you talking or is that him?" She was my lifeline. Many

times I told them that I didn't expect to make it through my divorce. I really thought Tom would kill me first.

But I did make it. My divorce was finalized and thanks to Ellen's advocacy, the judge gave me a permanent restraining order. Since Tom wouldn't agree to anger management counseling, the judge ordered no visitation.

I went back to school and earned my GED, then a paralegal certificate. Today, I am working as a paralegal at the Middlesex District Attorney's office. My sons are doing well, and I feel like a new person. Without legal services I would never have won the freedom that allowed me to hope for the future for me and my children.

So I want to thank CLSACC, and I want to thank all of you for taking the time to come here to support legal aid. It literally saved my life."

CLSACC's **Battered Women and Child Support Advocacy Project** represents mothers like Liz who seek freedom, safety, and stability for themselves and their children. Through the work of volunteer attorneys and graduate level social work interns, the Project secures long-term protection from violence and abuse; safe custody and visitation arrangements; and financial security.

HELP US MEET OUR YEAR-END GOALS

In the coming weeks you will receive our Spring Appeal, asking for your support as we approach the end of our fiscal year, June 30, 2007. Friends donations now account for our second-largest source of funding.

Please take a few moments to respond to our Spring Appeal. You can also make a gift at www.clsacc.org by clicking on the "Donate Now" button.

Thank you for your continued support of our mission.

CLSACC COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES AND COUNSELING CENTER

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Ken Martin

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