ACCESS TO JUSTICE DAY MARCH 13, 2012

On March 13, 2012 JAG will present the fourth annual Access to Justice Day at the Statehouse. Please join us in the Hall of Flags between the hours of 8 am and 3 pm to share your appreciation of the work of Maine’s legal aid providers.

As in the past, we will provide legislators with valuable resources to aid their constituents, as well as information regarding how providing access to justice benefits Maine’s businesses and the greater Maine community and economy.

The 2012 Access to Justice Symposium, Changing Maine: Serving the Legal Needs of Maine’s Growing Aging and Immigrant Populations, held at the Sable Oaks Marriott in South Portland in conjunction with the MSBA Winter Bar Meeting was a success.

Feedback has been excellent for both the Wednesday panel event and the access to justice breakout sessions at the Winter Bar Meeting. The keynote address by Judge Fern Fisher, Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for New York City Courts, Chair of the New York State Access to Justice Commission, and a recognized expert in the delivery of justice to a diverse population presented creative and ground-breaking solutions to access to justice barriers.

Particular thanks to MSBA President Anne-Marie Storey, the extraordinary staff at the MSBA and the 2012 Access to Justice Planning Committee who donated untold hours to making this event a reality and a success.

Your comments and suggestions for future symposia are welcome at: cwilshusen@mbf.org.
The Katahdin Counsel Recognition Program was created by the Maine Supreme Judicial Court in response to a proposal of the Justice Action Group, Maine’s access to justice commission, in order to focus the public’s attention on the critical role that pro bono publico plays in maintaining a vibrant civil justice system. The goals of the program are twofold: first, to annually recognize and honor the pro bono work of Maine’s lawyers, and second, to encourage more lawyers to provide such services for Maine’s low-income and elderly residents in order to help address the growing unmet legal need.

Maine lawyers are among the most generous in the nation in donating their time to pro bono representation for people who cannot afford an attorney and in donating money to support Maine’s legal aid providers. Sadly, in the face of Maine’s current economy, the need continues to rise while the resources, such as IOLTA, continue to decrease.

A Commission has been established by the Maine Supreme Judicial Court to oversee the program and ensure that it is responsive to the needs of the Maine Bar.

Commission on the Katahdin Counsel Recognition Program

Ralph I. Lancaster, Jr., Chair
Thomas A. Berry
Virginia E. Davis
David J. Fletcher
Nan Heald
Kerry Clark Jordan.
Barbara L. Raimondi
Charles W. Smith.
Juliet Holmes-Smith
now on at the Portland Public Library in April.

Justice for All: The Faces of Legal Aid in Maine

By Cailen Lewis

We spend much of our time trying to illustrate the stories of Mainers in need of legal aid. We talk about seniors who may lose their homes, young mothers fighting for their children’s education, and immigrants trying to reunite with their families. People throughout our state face difficulties trying to access the rights they deserve every day, and yet they are often invisible to the general public. This March in the Atrium of the Cultural Building in the State House Complex, Augusta, we are shining a light on those people with Martha Mickles’ photography exhibit: “Justice for All: The Faces of Legal Aid in Maine” supported by the Maine Bar Foundation. This exhibit chronicles the people in need of civil legal help in Maine as well as those providing it.

Justice for all: The Faces of Legal Aid in Maine

By Cailen Lewis

We spend much of our time trying to illustrate the stories of Mainers in need of legal aid. We talk about seniors who may lose their homes, young mothers fighting for their children’s education, and immigrants trying to reunite with their families. People throughout our state face difficulties trying to access the rights they deserve every day, and yet they are often invisible to the general public. This March in the Atrium of the Cultural Building in the State House Complex, Augusta, we are shining a light on those people with Martha Mickles’ photography exhibit: “Justice for All: The Faces of Legal Aid in Maine” supported by the Maine Bar Foundation. This exhibit chronicles the people in need of civil legal help in Maine as well as those providing it.

Justice for All: The Faces of Legal Aid in Maine

By Cailen Lewis

We spend much of our time trying to illustrate the stories of Mainers in need of legal aid. We talk about seniors who may lose their homes, young mothers fighting for their children’s education, and immigrants trying to reunite with their families. People throughout our state face difficulties trying to access the rights they deserve every day, and yet they are often invisible to the general public. This March in the Atrium of the Cultural Building in the State House Complex, Augusta, we are shining a light on those people with Martha Mickles’ photography exhibit: “Justice for All: The Faces of Legal Aid in Maine” supported by the Maine Bar Foundation. This exhibit chronicles the people in need of civil legal help in Maine as well as those providing it.
PRIVATE SECTOR OUTREACH

Several prominent Maine business leaders have joined with Maine’s legal services community to create a task force to build awareness of the need of the business community to become more actively involved in providing access to justice in Maine.

The Justice Action Group’s Task Force on Outreach to Maine’s Private Sector will examine how Maine’s legal services programs and pro bono initiatives affect Maine’s private sector and the Maine economy. It will then develop communication strategies and other steps needed to promote an effective relationship between the equal access to justice community and the private sector.

Supreme Court Justice Jon D. Levy, chair of JAG, described the initiative, “this is an effort to bring together a group of distinguished Maine citizens to fully examine and develop the connection between a vibrant civil justice system and the interests of Maine’s private sector.”

The Task Force will be co-chaired by the Hon. John H. Rich III, the U.S. Magistrate Judge in Portland, and Kevin Gildart, former Vice-President of Human Resources for Bath Iron Works. They will be joined by: Miles F. Archer, Esq.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE COORDINATOR

Hanna Sanders, Esq. was recently named as the Access to Justice Coordinator for the State of Maine Judicial Branch. As a former senior staff attorney with Legal Services for the Elderly, Hanna provided advocacy on behalf of Maine’s vulnerable elders, with a special interest in financial exploitation and abuse. Hanna was inspired to attend law school after navigating the court system as a pro se litigant, and graduated from the University of Maine School of Law in 2005. In her prior life, Hanna worked as an archeologist in Central America, as project and accounts manager for the housing industry, and with various non-profit and corporate institutions. Hanna is the author of several publications, including the lead article in the Maine Law Review Symposium edition “Accessing Justice in Hard Times.” Her penchant for social justice is longstanding, and she is committed to empowering Maine’s most vulnerable populations.

NAN HEALD NAMED BY WHITEHOUSE AS CHAMPION FOR CHANGE

This Fall, Pine Tree Legal Assistance Executive Director Nan Heald was named a Champion of Change by the Whitehouse. At ceremonies in Washington, DC, the Whitehouse stated that “these Champions of Change are assisting people in need by dedicating their professional lives to closing the justice gap in America.”

To watch a video of the full event at the Whitehouse go to:
http://www.whitehouse.gov/champions/previous/legal-leaders
The Justice Action Group is a coalition of individuals and organizations established in 1995 to provide leadership and coordination in planning for the provision of civil legal aid to low-income and elderly Mainers.

The Campaign for Justice welcomes new Campaign Coordinator, Cathy Coffman.

Cathy has over twenty-five years of experience working for and consulting with nonprofits. She has held positions across the spectrum of nonprofit advancement and management. Her fund-raising positions have included being in charge of annual, major, capital and planned giving, and her communications positions have ranged from lead public relations officer to publications editor. For nine years, she served as both director of advancement and chief financial officer at Thornton Academy in Saco, Maine.

Cathy is working with Campaign Chair Charlie Dingman and CFJ Steering Committee Chair Jim Munch, to establish new and creative ways to increase funding for the legal aid providers.

JAG Intern Taylor Kilgore

JAG has been fortunate this year to have the services of Maine Law Class of 2013, Taylor Kilgore. Taylor has shown extraordinary energy and commitment to access to justice issues and has generously given her time to multiple JAG initiatives including the 2012 Access to Justice Symposium and the Katahdin Counsel Recognition Program. She is also Maine Law’s ABA Representative, on the MAPIL Event and Fundraising Committee and a CASA Guardian ad litem. JAG is grateful to Taylor for sharing her time and talents with us.

Cathy Coffman
Campaign Coordinator