

Our Mission

In the fall of 1990, a group of concerned members of the Philadelphia bar and the homeless services community created HAP to address the unmet legal needs of the city’s homeless population. HAP was founded in the belief that homeless people have unique and complex legal problems that often are not adequately addressed by traditional providers of legal services to indigent and low-income individuals. Homeless individuals often lead transient, unstable lives, and are often debilitated by mental illness, substance abuse, and inadequate education. They frequently lack an understanding of their legal rights and the ability to make effective use of the network of advocacy and service organizations that is available to assist them. Living in crisis, often without income or resources, homeless persons are less likely, and less able, than other indigent clients to make use of Center City-based legal services programs.

To ensure that homeless people had access to legal services, HAP’s founders created an organization designed to deliver legal services directly to them in the places where they live and eat. Since its inception, HAP has conducted legal clinics in shelters and soup kitchens throughout Philadelphia. By recruiting and training volunteer attorneys, legal assistants and law students to staff these clinics, HAP is able to leverage its resources to provide free legal counseling and representation to a population not adequately served by other legal services programs. HAP is the only legal services organization in Philadelphia that conducts such direct outreach to the homeless population.

HAP collaborates with shelter providers, homeless advocates, community service providers and the legal community to provide homeless clients with legal representation and to connect them with other social services. HAP currently holds legal clinics at twenty-five homeless shelters and soup kitchens. Since HAP’s first legal clinic in December 1990, HAP’s 300 volunteers have helped more than 19,400 homeless people. To date, HAP’s volunteers have provided more than \$23 million worth of free legal services to homeless clients.

Children and Families Project Success Story

Linda was living in a single women’s shelter when she realized someone was using her personal information to obtain credit. She requested a copy of her credit report and found several entries that she did not recognize. Many of the accounts were delinquent and had been transferred to collection agencies, leaving Linda with a negative credit rating. Poor credit was keeping her from qualifying for housing programs.

With the assistance of HAP attorney Laura Kolb, Linda took the necessary steps to prevent further fraud and rehabilitate her credit. A fraud alert was added to Linda’s credit report to warn potential credit grantors that she may have been a victim of identity theft. Updated copies of her credit reports were obtained and reviewed thoroughly for suspicious activity and other potential discrepancies. Questionable items were noted and dispute letters were sent to the national credit reporting agencies. These agencies are then mandated to investigate the disputed accounts. An ID Theft Affidavit was prepared and sent to each of the companies where accounts were opened fraudulently.

During the next several months, Linda and her HAP attorney met regularly to follow up and confirm that the credit investigations were proceeding as required. Due to strict privacy regulations, credit reporting agency staff are prohibited from speaking with attorneys. This holds true even if the client gives the attorney authorization or if the client is present. In addition, calls made via the speaker phone feature are not allowed. Therefore, all related phone calls were made by Linda from the HAP office, with her attorney present to offer support as needed. This proved to be an empowering experience for Linda, who became very adept at contacting credit agency workers, explaining what she needed and getting them to move her case along.

The disputed items were removed from Linda’s credit report. The most recent report was error free. The remaining open accounts had relatively small balances. Linda was planning to make arrangements to pay them off. She was able to secure permanent, subsidized housing in Mount Airy and is currently enrolled at Community College of Philadelphia, where she is working on a social work degree.

Veterans Project Success Story

Mel B served in the United States Marine Corps during the Vietnam War. While in Vietnam, he was thrown from a jeep, seriously injuring his head, shoulder, and both of his knees. Upon returning to the United States, he could barely walk and had trouble lifting his left arm.

After years of physical therapy, Mr. B’s shoulder and knees improved to the point of his being able to work. He managed restaurants and worked in retail stores stocking shelves. During these years, he had pain in both knees, but he worked nonetheless, refusing what he considered to be “handouts from the VA.”

By the time he turned 60, however, the pain in Mr. B’s knees became unbearable, and he finally gave in to knee replacement surgery on the left side. Unfortunately, the knee did not improve after the surgery, and a 2nd knee replacement was necessary. To this day, he walks with a severe limp and a cane, and the knee buckles on a regular basis. His doctors now tell him that there is nothing more they can do for the knee: the pain is here to stay, and he will always require a cane and be forced to limp.

When HAP first met Mr. B, he was living under a bridge in Philadelphia. He had given up his job because he started falling at work, and was waiting for his knee replacement surgery. Reluctantly, he agreed to apply for VA compensation. At first, he was awarded only \$300/month, but HAP appealed the decision and it was increased to \$2,600/month while he recovered from the surgery (1 year), and \$650/month thereafter, which VA considers partial disability.

Although Mr. B was pleased with \$650/month, he agreed with HAP that he could no longer work because of his knees. All of his jobs since Vietnam required constant standing and some heavy lifting, and he knew he couldn’t do either any more. So, Mr. B agreed to appeal VA’s partial disability determination and claim total disability. In support of the claim, HAP obtained a medical opinion from Mr. B’s treating doctor, who considered Mr. B unemployable. HAP then briefed the case and argued before a VA Decision Review Officer. In early 2009, Mr. B won his claim and VA awarded him a total disability rating. As a result of the award, Mr. B received \$15,000 in back benefits, and he now receives nearly \$2,700/month, tax free.

Within days of receiving the decision, Mr. B moved into a newly renovated 1 bedroom apartment in Philadelphia. He also opened a savings account and bought new clothes and special shoes that help with his walking. He recently told a HAP lawyer that he has never lived in such a nice apartment, and he is forever grateful for how we have changed his life.

HAP Raises More than \$190,000 at April Benefit!

The Homeless Advocacy Project held its annual April Benefit on April 2, 2009, sponsored by Morgan Lewis along with Dechert LLP and PECO. This year’s benefit raised more than \$190,000 for the Homeless Advocacy Project (HAP). Thank you to the HAP 2009 Benefit Planning Committee Co-Chairs Susan Meier and Marnie Simon, and committee members Andrea Bloch, Marsha Cohen, Susan Baren-Pearson, Sara Brandes, Chris Fallon, Jr., Jack Foltz, Margie Morris, Jeff Palazzese, Madeline Sherry, Carol Nelson Shepherd, E. Blaine Stanley, Thomas Wamser, for helping HAP surpass its goal in this difficult economic time. HAP would also like to thank the following sponsors of the event.

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Pictures from left to right, standing: Blaine Stanley with ACE, HAP’s Board President; Marsha Cohen, HAP’s Executive Director, and Madeline Sherry of Gibbons PC and HAP Board Member; bottom row left to right is Margie Morris of Reger Rizzo and HAP Board Member; Andrea Bloch, HAP’s Development Director and Caren Pocino of Morgan Lewis.

Adopt-a-Shelter List

Through HAP’s Adopt-a-Shelter project, a firm or corporate legal department agrees to staff a HAP legal clinic. HAP collaborates with the following law firms, corporate departments, and law schools through this program.

<p>Caton Village – Schnader LLP Covenant House – Duane Morris LLP Eliza Shirley House – Reger Rizzo & Darnell and Blank Rome LLP HELP Philadelphia – Villanova University Law School Kirkbride – Hangley Aronchick and Gibbons P.C. Mercy Hospice – Dechert LLP and Dilworth Paxson LLP Our Brother’s Place – White and Williams LLP The Perimeter – Saul Ewing LLP Project H.O.M.E. – Merck and Reed Smith LLP RHD Ridge – Cozen O’Connor and Hogan & Hartson LLP</p>	<p>Red Shield – Montgomery McCracken LLP and Klehr Harrison LLP St. Barnabus Mission – Drexel Law School St. Francis Inn – Dechert LLP and Pepper Hamilton LLP St. John’s Hospice – Pepper Hamilton LLP and Dechert LLP Stenton Family Manor – DLA Piper and The Pep Boys Sunday Breakfast Association – Ballard Spahr LLP and Sun Company Trevor’s Place Next Door – Obermayer Rebmann LLP University City Hospitality Coalition (UCHC) – University of Pennsylvania Law School Woodstock Family Center – Morgan Lewis LLP and Exelon Corporation</p>
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I would like to make a donation of: \$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1,000 \$ _____

Enclosed is a check made out to “HAP”

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Card Number: _____ Expiration Date: _____ (MM/YY) _____

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I would like to make monthly donations of \$ _____ every: 1 month 3 months 6 months

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PLEASE CUT OUT THIS FORM AND MAIL IT TO:
42 South 15th Street, 4th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102
You may also donate online at
www.homelessadvocacyproject.org
THANK YOU!

The official registration and financial information of the Homeless Advocacy Project may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

HOW YOU CAN HELP HAP...

HAP needs your help to serve the thousands of homeless men, women and children who make Philadelphia their home.

There are many opportunities for lawyers, paralegals, law students and others with a variety of backgrounds to assist HAP. You can:

- Become a legal clinic volunteer. Spend a few hours meeting with a client and assist that client with his or her legal problem.
- Volunteer for the Children and Families Project and assist homeless parents with education, family law and disability matters.
- Volunteer for the Veteran’s Project and assist homeless veterans with obtaining veteran’s benefits and compensation.
- Make a monetary contribution and/or assist with fundraising efforts.

To help make a difference, please call us at 215-523-9595, or complete and return the form on the next page.



Homeless Advocacy Project

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HAPPENINGS

SUMMER 2009

HAPPENINGS

Staff HAPpennings

Morgen Smith recently joined HAP as a staff attorney after having volunteered extensively with HAP as a law student. Morgen graduated from the University of Pennsylvania Law School in 2006, where she was a Levy Scholar in Law and Public Policy and served on the leadership board of the Journal of Law and Social Change. She received her B.A. in Foreign Affairs and Spanish from the University of Virginia in 2001. After graduating from law school, Morgen clerked for the Honorable Harvey Bartle III, Chief Judge of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. Prior to attending law school, Morgen worked with inner-city youth in Baltimore for two years through a full-time volunteer program.



Max Steklenev joined HAP as a Paralegal in January of 2009. Max's primary focus is working with homeless individuals as part of the SOAR project. In addition, Max also provides general assistance to HAP's staff attorneys on all matters. Max served as an Immigration Paralegal from 2001 to 2008 at the Philadelphia Law Firm of Gallagher Malloy and Georges. Max assisted attorneys in complex immigration matters, providing assistance to clients worldwide. Max received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in English and German Literature from Adyge State University in Russia. He received his Paralegal Certificate from Villanova University. Max is proficient in English, Russian and German.

Letter from the Executive Director - June 2009

It has been a tumultuous year for Philadelphia's homeless population and the city's homeless advocates. With homelessness on the rise, HAP helped a record 2,189 clients in 2009, providing advice and referrals for 924 clients and extended legal representation for 1,265 others at 174 legal clinics held in homeless shelters, soup kitchens and overnight cafes located throughout Philadelphia.

In May 2008, HAP joined other homeless advocates across the city in applauding the new administration's \$8 million initiative to battle homelessness in Philadelphia. Specifically, Mayor Nutter announced the creation of 700 new housing opportunities for chronically homeless individuals living on the streets and for families languishing in shelter. Last week, on the one year anniversary of this initiative, Mayor Nutter called a press conference to celebrate the progress on these goals and to pledge the administration's commitment to the program for a second year.

Despite the city's genuine progress in placing homeless individuals and families into new housing, homeless advocates have had to fight tirelessly in the last year to maintain the city's existing shelter bed stock and homeless services budget in the face of unprecedented city budget deficits. Successful in preserving shelter beds, we nevertheless failed to prevent the city from cutting case management and other critical services in many of the homeless shelters where HAP holds its legal clinics. HAP's clients, who rely heavily on such supports, are finding it increasingly more difficult to access services and care.

Even with rising demand for its services and increased fundraising pressure, HAP has much to be grateful for. HAP's 2009 Annual April Benefit raised a record \$190,000 for the agency with over 75 law firms and corporations contributing, many facing financial worries of their own. In the past six months, HAP added a staff attorney, a legal fellow and two paralegals to help with HAP's growing SOAR Project. In the summer 2007, HAP piloted SOAR to help homeless Philadelphians to access federal disability benefits (SSI/SSDI) on a rapid basis. HAP's SOAR Project with Philadelphia's Office of Supportive Housing (OSH) has become such a national success - with over 120 applicants gaining access to SSI with an average claim processing time of only thirty days - that in March 2009, Pennsylvania's Department of Public Welfare (DPW) contracted with HAP. Under the DPW contract, HAP will expand the SOAR program to include disabled homeless parents receiving welfare benefits who have had contact with the shelter system. Since the first of these claims were filed in May 2009, eleven mothers have gained access to SSI benefits with an average processing time of only nineteen days.

In spite of the ups and downs of the past year, HAP remains optimistic that the opportunities and outlook for its clients will improve. In 2010, \$21 million in federal stimulus dollars from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Homelessness Prevention and Rapid re-Housing program will begin to pour into Philadelphia to help the city divert, reroute and re-house the thousands who enter the homeless shelter system each year. HAP awaits the city's plans for distributing these critically important dollars. This coming year also marks an important milestone for HAP, as we celebrate our 20th Anniversary. Please mark your calendars and plan to join us on the evening of April 8, 2010, as HAP celebrates two decades of hard work and extraordinary success in helping over 20,000 homeless men, women and children in Philadelphia.

Marsha I. Cohen, Esq.
Executive Director



Pictured: Marsha Cohen, HAP Executive Director with HAP President Blaine Stanley and former Board President Tom Wamser.