



Homeless Advocacy Project

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HAPPENINGS

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SUMMER 2014

To our Loyal Friends and Supporters:

These are exciting times for HAP! Our Annual April Benefit, with your continued support and generosity, raised over \$215,000. Effective May 1, 2014, HAP moved into its new office at 1429 Walnut Street. Our new location represents more than a mailing address change; for the first time in HAP's history, we are no longer a branch on a legal assistance tree. HAP is now fully organizationally and financially independent.



As we enter this new chapter in HAP's history, we recommit to our mission. We continue to be inspired by the dedication of our 350 volunteers, HAP's staff, and our generous donors. Many exciting things are in store for HAP. Recently, HAP became the recipient of a Duffy Fellowship that enabled us to expand our Veteran's Project with the hiring of a much needed second staff attorney. Our SOAR Project, which provides our clients with accelerated access to social security disability benefits and medical care, continues to grow; HAP's program is nationally recognized for its accomplishments. HAP's Children and Families Project and its Adopt-A-Shelter Program are also thriving and providing much needed services to those in need.

Next year, HAP will celebrate its 25th anniversary, a truly remarkable milestone that we will mark with a series of special events and programs. Stay tuned for more information. HAP continues to provide valuable services to the homeless and impoverished members of our community; however, much work remains to be done. If we work together, we can break the cycle of homelessness and minimize and/or eliminate the suffering of so many individuals and families in our community.

Thank you for all you do to support HAP!

Sincerely,

Margaret A. Morris, Esquire

HAP Board President

HAPpy Developments

HAP is thrilled to announce the launch of a new SOAR re-entry project with support from the Samuel S. Fels Fund and Barra Foundation. The SOAR Re-Entry Project is designed to secure SSI disability benefits for seriously mentally ill prison inmates facing imminent discharge as a way to reduce to reduce prison recidivism. The Re-Entry project is an expansion of HAP's nationally recognized SOAR Project through which HAP has successfully secured SSI benefits for over 1,300 homeless men and women, many of whom had previously been denied benefits. HAP is very grateful to be the recipient of a Duffy Fellowship which along with funding from the Gibson E. Holden Foundation enables HAP to expand its celebrated Veterans Project (see inside for details). HAP is also delighted to be the recipient of a grant from the PNC Foundation in support of our Children and Families Project.

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 350 volunteers have helped more than 35,300 homeless people. To date, HAP’s volunteers have provided more than \$50 million worth of free legal services to homeless clients.

Duffy Fellowship Enables HAP to Expand Veterans Project

Homeless Advocacy Project is very grateful to be the recipient of a Duffy Fellowship which enables HAP to expand its celebrated Veterans Project. This fellowship underwrites the salary of a staff attorney to provide homeless veterans with assistance in securing housing, benefits and the services to help them recover from the traumatic effects of combat.

Established in 2012 by attorney Tom Duffy of Duffy + Partners, the Duffy Fellowship was created to assist Philadelphia’s neediest residents by covering the cost of staff attorneys at several of the area’s foremost legal service nonprofit organizations. HAP is the newest recipient. HAP’s Duffy Fellow, Neha Yadav, graduated from Drexel University Law School in 2012, and has been working for the Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania. During her final semester in law school, Ms. Yadav served as an intern with HAP.

HAP’s Veterans Project was started in 2001 and is the first legal services project in Philadelphia designed to address the legal needs of homeless vets such as benefits claims and appeals, pension and compensation matters and remains the only legal service program to engage in outreach to vets who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of becoming homeless. HAP’s holds bi-monthly legal clinics at the Perimeter, a daytime drop-in center for homeless vets and also holds legal clinics at other temporary and transitional housing locations. Since the project’s start, HAP has provided legal help to more than 2,000 veterans.

HAP Attorney Michael Taub has led the Veterans Project since 2003, winning numerous cases that have provided six-figure monetary awards for his veteran clients. In addition to his own caseload, Michael trains private attorneys to handle veterans cases. Taub’s training has become a staple for attorneys and law firms nationwide wishing to provide vets with pro bono legal representation.

“A large number of young veterans returned home from Iraq and Afghanistan disabled by Traumatic Brain Injury, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), sexual assault and other impairments,” said HAP Executive Director Marsha Cohen. “Many of these vets have been discharged with misinformation as to their eligibility for VA and other benefits. We successfully help them secure VA benefits and healthcare and we look forward to helping even more veterans with the addition of a second staff attorney to our Veterans Project.”

HAPpy Outcomes - HAP Volunteer Mike LiPuma Successfully Obtains Petition to Create Birth Certificate for Client

Long-time HAP volunteer and board member Michael LiPuma successfully obtained a Petition to Create a Birth Certificate for his client Audrey, a 67-year old woman, after three years of searching for documentation of her birth.

Establishing documentation of Audrey’s birth was a very difficult task. Pennsylvania Vital Records maintained that they had no record of her birth and the Social Security Administration had two conflicting dates of birth in their records. Over several years, Mike and several Penn Law students collected as much collateral proof of Audrey’s DOB as they could, including school records, medical records and hospital records. Unfortunately, the documentation collected was not sufficient to meet Pennsylvania Vital Records’ standards for issuing a “Delayed Birth Certificate.”

In the summer of 2013, Mike filed in Family Court a Petition to Create a Birth Certificate, asking the court to direct Pennsylvania Vital Records to generate a birth certificate for Audrey. At the September 25th hearing, the Court asked Audrey to testify about why she wanted a birth certificate. Audrey explained that since she never had a birth certificate, she also had never had photo ID. Without ID, she had been unable to access any housing programs and consequently been homeless for many years. More importantly, not having ID meant that for the last 18 years she was unable to visit her son, who is incarcerated and serving a long sentence. Audrey’s testimony clearly moved the entire courtroom. The court reporter wiped tears from her eyes.

Judge Murphy promptly granted the Petition to Create a Birth Certificate and Mike worked diligently with Pennsylvania Vital Records to ensure that the birth certificate was issued as quickly as possible. In December 2013, Audrey was issued a birth certificate, a critical piece of personal documentation which enables her to access services and benefits which were previously unavailable to her. And more importantly, she can now visit her son.

HAP’s Adopt-a-Shelter Program

HAP collaborates with the following law firms, corporate legal departments, and law schools.

- | | |
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| Broad Street Ministry - Drinker Biddle & Reath | Salvation Army’s Red Shield - Dilworth Paxson and Montgomery McCracken |
| Caton Village - Schnader Harrison | SOAR DHS Project - Drexel Law School |
| Covenant House - Duane Morris | St. Francis Inn - Dechert and Temple Law School |
| Eliza Shirley House - Blank Rome; | St. John’s Hospice - Dechert; Klehr Harrison and GSK |
| Lincoln Financial Group and Reger Rizzo | Station House - Cozen O’Connor; |
| Families Forward- Gibbons, Hangley Aronchick and Drexel University | Hogan Lovells and NFI Industries |
| HELP Philadelphia - Villanova University Law School | Stenton Family Manor - DLA Piper and Pep Boys |
| Home for the Brave - Archer & Greiner | Sunday Breakfast Rescue Mission - Ballard Spahr and Comcast |
| House of Passage - Pepper Hamilton | Trevor’s Place Next Door - Obermayer Rebmann |
| Impact Services - Cozen O’Connor & Pepper Hamilton | University City Hospitality Coalition - University of |
| Our Brother’s Place - White & Williams | Pennsylvania Law School and Michael LiPuma, Esq. |
| The Perimeter - Saul Ewing; DLA Piper and Cigna | |
| Project HOME - Reed Smith and Merck | |
| RHDWoodstock Family Center - Morgan Lewis and PECO | |

HAP’s 2014 Annual Benefit!

The Homeless Advocacy Project held its Annual Benefit on April 3, 2014. All proceeds of the silent auction and cocktail party, benefited HAP. The 2014 benefit raised over \$215,000 for HAP.

PRESENTERS: Lincoln Financial Foundation, Morgan Lewis, Blank Rome, Dechert, Robert E. Keith Jr., Merck, PECO

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*A special thanks to **Bill Conkin** and **Marty Coleman** for providing the Benefit’s live music.



Pictured Left to Right: HAP Executive Director Marsha Cohen, HAP Board Member and Fundraising Committee Co-Chair Sara Brandes, HAP Board President Elect Ashely Chan, HAP Board Member Ethan Fogel



Pictured Left to Right: HAP Board Members Madeline Sherry and Kevin Stepanuk



Pictured Left to Right: HAP Executive Director Marsha Cohen, HAP Board Member Tom Duffy, HAP Staff Attorney Neha Yadav, HAP Board President Margie Morris

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