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NEWS

Fall

2011

With Donors' Support, Children's Disability Project Obtains Benefits for Diabetic Child

"Crystal" is a beautiful nine-year-old girl who suffers from severe, uncontrolled, and debilitating juvenile diabetes mellitus for which she receives specialized medical care at Boston's Joslin Diabetes Center. Her blood sugar is chronically high and she receives insulin injections throughout the day. Her life is filled with hospital visits, medication, and constant monitoring of her blood sugar level. She is developmentally delayed and requires specialized instruction to make effective progress in school.

After she was denied twice for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, Crystal's mother called GBLS seeking legal assistance. GBLS' Children's Disability Project (CDP) was able to take her case thanks to the support of generous donors. The case was particularly challenging because the Social Security Administration (SSA) medical expert did not have a complete record when he reviewed it. At the hearing before the Administrative Law Judge, Crystal's mother and her CDP attorney provided the full extent of her medical problems, explaining the disabling toll diabetes takes on the young girl. Crystal's mother presented compelling testimony about how diabetes affects her daughter's everyday life, specifically explaining how diabetes limits Crystal's ability to play with other children.

With CDP's help, Crystal was awarded full SSI benefits. Crystal's mother received permission from the SSA to use some of Crystal's retroactive benefits to pay for a Joslin Clinic summer



GBLS' Children's Disability Project obtained Supplemental Security Income benefits for the young client at right (pictured with her baby niece), after she was twice denied benefits. The client suffers from severe juvenile diabetes.

Photo by Donna Southwell

camp program, where she can meet other children like her and learn how to face the challenges of living with diabetes. Without the support of our donors, Crystal and hundreds of other Massachusetts children with disabilities would not have a chance at a better quality of life.

When no one else can help, GBLS provides free assistance on civil (noncriminal) legal matters to poor people living in Greater Boston who need help obtaining food, income, shelter, and safety.

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Thank You and Good-Bye, Bob Sable!

Bob Sable retired this July after leading the organization for 20 years, through periods of growth and stability as well as great challenges and tough decisions necessitated by major funding losses from Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA). He advocated for the poor as a legal aid attorney for 43 years, tirelessly helping low-income individuals and groups obtain justice and escape from poverty.

Julia Huston, Foley Hoag Partner, recently came to the end of her three-year term as GBLS' Board President. Reflecting on Bob's retirement, she stated, "It has been a real privilege to work with Bob in the service of GBLS and its clients. Bob is a true believer in the rights of the poor. Through good times and bad, Bob's dedication never wavered and GBLS has remained strong as a result. He is one of my heroes."

Lonnie Powers, Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC)



Bob Sable retired after 20 years as Executive Director.
Photo by Linda Lank

Executive Director, has known and worked with Bob for 28 years. He described Bob as "a Man of Substance.

A man [he is] proud to call a colleague and friend."

At his farewell party in July, Bob stated, "Thank you all for the privilege of working for this wonderful organization. I retire confident that you will have the patience for the struggle and that with your work, support, and partnership and with Jacqui Bowman's leadership, GBLS will do even more to achieve justice for all and the end of poverty in this country."

Thanks to Bob's leadership, dedication to our clients, staff, and volunteers, and partnering with the Board, legal community, and many supporters to continue GBLS' critical work, GBLS is well prepared for the challenges and continued successes that lie ahead. We wish him relaxation (if he slows down long enough), much enjoyment, and many new adventures with his wife Sloan, his family, and friends.

GBLS Helps Passage of New Law Providing Greater Protections from Debt Collectors for Low-Income Consumers

Starting over four years ago, GBLS attorneys Dan Bartley, Wynn Gerhard, and Alex Mitchell-Munevar along with the National Consumer Law Center, Massachusetts Law Reform, and other groups began working to pass legislation to increase protections for low-income debtors. GBLS began pursuing these efforts due to the increasing numbers of elder clients, many living in subsidized housing, who were contacting GBLS for help because they were being harassed by debt collectors and had no resources to pay off their debts. In many cases their only income was Social Security or

Supplemental Security Income. They were fearful of answering the phone due to the harassment, and some even feared going to debtors' prison.

GBLS' efforts included investigating the impact on low-income debtors of the property exemption law then on the books; drafting and filing proposed legislation; and meeting with legislators to obtain support. Attorney Mitchell-Munevar added a section to the bill focusing on protections for elders and the disabled. The bill, filed by Senator Pat Jehlen, passed in December 2010.

Governor Patrick signed it into law in January 2011. It became effective April 7, 2011.

Among other protections, the new law makes exempt from collection or seizure more of the assets low-income consumers need to survive, than the previous law did. These protected assets include: 85%, or 50 times the minimum amount of weekly wages (up from \$125); automobiles worth \$7,500 wholesale, and for disabled or elderly consumers, worth \$15,000 (up from \$700); \$2,500 in rent money (up from \$200); \$500 for utility payments (up from \$75); \$2,500 in a bank account (five times the previous level); up to \$15,000 in value household furniture; and a stove, refrigerator, and hot water heater.

Another new important protection relates to when a creditor files a collection action in court. If the elderly or disabled debtor defaults, the case will be automatically dismissed if the court determines that the defendant has only income and assets that are exempt under the new law.

Oak Foundation Award Will Help GBLS Keep Foreclosed Homeowners In Their Homes

Many thanks to the Oak Foundation that in May 2011 awarded GBLS \$600,000 over a three-year period, as part of a larger grant which includes community organization City Life/Vida Urbana and the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau. The grant will support GBLS' partnership with those organizations and with the nonprofit bank Boston Community Capital to represent families who were victims of unscrupulous lenders and whose homes have been foreclosed. The project arranges for homeowners to buy back their homes on reasonable terms.

Jacquelynne Bowman Chosen as Next Leader of GBLS

After a six-month national search, in June Jacquelynne (Jacqui) Bowman was chosen by GBLS' Board to succeed Executive Director Bob Sable. Ms. Bowman had served as Deputy Director since 2000, following three years as Associate Director. During Bob Sable's seven-month medical leave in 2009-2010, she served as Acting Executive Director. She has been a key player on the senior management team, overseeing program operations and assisting in setting and defining the organization's strategic direction.

Upon accepting the position of Executive Director, Jacqui Bowman stated, "I am delighted to be offered the opportunity to lead GBLS to its next level of achievement. It is a premier organization with outstanding and committed advocates,

and that it is, is a real tribute to Bob Sable, who has been an excellent tutor, leader and mentor. It is a great honor to be able to follow him, although a bit daunting as he has set the bar fairly high!"

Bob Sable stated, "I could not be more pleased that the Board has chosen Jacqui Bowman to be the new Executive Director. I have worked with Jacqui in different capacities for 20 years. She has committed her career to legal services for the poor. Jacqui is a nationally-recognized expert in domestic violence law. She is a great manager and a passionate spokesperson for the rights of the poor. There is no one better qualified to become the new leader of GBLS and to move the organization to achieve even greater advances for our clients."



Jacquelynne Bowman succeeded Bob Sable as Executive Director at the end of July 2011.

Photo by Sonia Marquez

Boston Foundation Grant To Assist Young Offenders

GBLS is grateful for a \$75,000 Boston Foundation grant for the Young Offender CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) Initiative. This unique project, staffed by Employment Law Unit Lead Attorney Pauline Quirion, helps minority youth and adults from Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan overcome CORI-related barriers to gainful employment, housing, and other opportunities to achieve economic stability. In assisting these clients, GBLS partners with the Legal Advocacy Resource Center, the Harvard Criminal Justice Institute, law students, bar advocates, the Committee for Public Counsel Services, and the Women's Bar Foundation.

GBLS is the only program with a large-scale practice of CORI clients and is the only not-for-profit that accepts referrals of clients for motions to reconsider denial of a sealing petition and appeals. GBLS is unique in addressing institutional practices in the trial court system related to the process for sealing of non-conviction cases by judges. GBLS also handles and advises clients and agencies in fleeing felon cases, immigration, and housing matters involving collateral consequences of criminal records.

GBLS Helps to Institute More Safeguards for Massachusetts Homeowners in Foreclosure

GBLS attorneys along with a private attorney represented client Antonio Ibanez in *U.S. Bank v. Ibanez*, a Land Court case challenging the right of lenders to foreclose without having the proper assignment of the mortgage prior to foreclosure. On January 7, 2011, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) ruled against foreclosing lenders and those who purchased foreclosed properties in Massachusetts. The SJC upheld a lower court's decision that the two banks involved in the Ibanez case did not hold proper title to the property and therefore did not have standing to foreclose. The Court's ruling has broad implications nationally. GBLS' goal in working on the Ibanez case was to create more safeguards for homeowners in the foreclosure process and ensure compliance with Massachusetts foreclosure law.

Thank You, Law Firm Associates, For Raising over \$318,000 for GBLS!

During this year's Associates Drive, over a thousand associates at Boston law firms contributed more than \$318,000 to help support GBLS' representation of victims of domestic violence. This is the highest amount ever raised in an Associates Drive, and over \$32,000 more than in 2010!

According to Zoe Cronin, GBLS' Director of Annual Giving and a housing attorney, "The drive's success is due directly to the tireless work of the Associates Drive captains at each of the firms. They really put their hearts and souls into supporting justice for our clients and low-income people in Boston."

This year four attorneys who were loaned or deferred associates at GBLS in 2010, Radhika Bhattacharya and Rosalie Fazio (Goodwin Procter) and Maggie Rosenberg and Dan Routh (Ropes & Gray), played a critical role in these efforts. Radhika Bhattacharya stated, "It was my pleasure and honor to do something to help GBLS."

GBLS is very grateful for the hard work and generosity of everyone who participated in the Associates Drive. Thank you!

Congratulations to Our Staff and Volunteer Attorney!

Massachusetts Bar Association Legal Services Award: Litigation Director **Daniel Manning** was honored for his leadership and contributing to the “provision of low-income legal services beyond his required job responsibilities.”

Massachusetts Bar Association Pro Bono Publico Award: Immigration Law Unit volunteer attorney **Eleanor Newhoff** was honored for “being instrumental in developing, implementing and supporting *pro bono* programs for the MBA, a local bar association, law firm or agency.”

Centro Presente Special Recognition: Employment Law Unit Senior Attorney **Audrey Richardson** was honored for collaborating with Centro Presente on their Workers Rights Campaigns and providing legal advice to workers, and also for empowering workers to take a proactive role in their own campaigns. The organization is dedicated to the self-determination and self-sufficiency of Massachusetts’ Latin American immigrant community.

Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC) Honor: Executive Director **Bob Sable** was honored by MLAC at their Annual Meeting in recognition of four decades of fighting for the rights of the poor.

Women’s Bar Association Pro Bono Award: Housing Law Unit Senior Attorney **Barbara Zimbel** was honored for her volunteer work with women prisoners at Massachusetts Correctional Institution: Framingham, the state’s prison for women.

Please make a donation today, it’s just a click away.

You can help ensure access to justice for low-income people in Boston without leaving your computer! Make a donation online to help support our services to clients. Visit us at www.gbls.org, and click on **DONATE**.



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