GREATER BOSTON LEGAL SERVICES

OUR MISSION

Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS) provides free civil (noncriminal) legal assistance to low-income people in Boston and thirty-one cities and towns to help them secure the most basic necessities of life. The assistance GBLS offers ranges from legal advice to full case representation, depending on client need.

Throughout its proud history, GBLS has remained committed to its mission of providing high-quality services to as many poor people as possible. Founded in 1900, it is the oldest and largest legal services program in New England. In 2013, GBLS served over 12,600 people.

To learn more about GBLS’ major areas of work, please visit our website: www.gbls.org.

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SERVICE AREA

Greater Boston Legal Services serves the following cities and towns. Those towns marked with an * are served only by the Elder, Health and Disability Unit.

Acton*      Maynard*
Arlington   Medford
Bedford*     Melrose
Belmont      Milton
Boston       Newton
Boxborough*  North Reading*
Braintree    Norwell
Brookline    Quincy
Burlington*  Randolph
Cambridge    Reading*
Canton       Revere
Carlisle*    Scituate
Chelsea      Somerville
Cohasset     Stoneham
Concord*     Stow*
Everett      Wakefield
Harvard*     Waltham
Hingham      Watertown
Holbrook     Weymouth
Hull         Wilmington*
Lexington*   Winchester
Lincoln*     Winthrop
Malden       Woburn
During 2013, GBLS partnered with our many supporters and Board and Corporation members to help ensure justice and fairness for thousands of low-income members of the communities we serve. Our staff, Fellows, loaned associates, AmeriCorps legal advocates, volunteers, and law student interns helped clients understand and defend their rights and brought about systemic changes that positively impact the lives of thousands of vulnerable Massachusetts residents. This report introduces you to some of those clients, describes some of our innovative partnerships and systemic advocacy successes, and acknowledges with heartfelt thanks the many generous individuals, law firms, agencies, and other partners whose support made all this possible.

Without your help, thousands more of the poorest, most marginalized members of our communities would remain defenseless after suffering injustice.

Thank you very much.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Family Assisted to Remain in Their Home after Unlawful Foreclosure 3
- The GBLS Elder Abuse Prevention Project 4
- Mother, Survivor of Domestic Abuse, Creates New Life with GBLS’ Help 5
- The CORI and Re-Entry Project 6
- 2013 Major Victories 7-8
- 2013 Awards and Honors 10
- 2013 Case and Client Statistics 11
- Financial Statements 12
- Legal Community Donors 13-16
- Annual Fund Individual Donors 17-22
- Matching Gifts of Annual Fund Donors 22
- The Marshall Plan 23-24
  - Emerging Leaders Society 24
- Harmonix Shareholders Gift to GBLS for Endowment 25
- In-Kind Donations 26
- Legacy Society 26
- Commemorative Gifts 27
- We Couldn’t Do it Without You! 28
  - Partners 28
  - Interns’ School Programs 29
  - Blue Cross and Blue Shield Volunteers at Legal Advocacy & Resource Center 30
  - Volunteer Support 31
- Corporation for National & Community Service — AmeriCorps 31
- Board Members 32
- Corporation Members 33
- Staff 34
Buying a home was the second proudest accomplishment of Ms. “Gerard” after having her children. A Haitian immigrant, she worked 70 hours a week to save enough money for a down payment to purchase a Malden duplex for her family with an interest-only, “no doc” loan from IndyMac. Unfortunately, Ms. Gerard did not know that these terms are considered a predatory form of lending since the owner secures no equity in their home.

Ms. Gerard was able to make the monthly mortgage payments by working two jobs with overtime, along with the downstairs unit’s rent and some assistance from her two adult daughters who lived with her. After 5 years in her home, all began to fall apart. A new owner of her company cut all overtime, and shortly thereafter, she was hospitalized a couple of times with heart disease, diabetes, and lung problems. She became permanently disabled, on oxygen 24 hours a day, with her daughters having to help with her care.

The Gerard family then applied for a loan modification based on the adult children’s income. IndyMac recommended that the modification be approved, but the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae), the guarantor of the loan, decided to reject the approval and proceed with foreclosure.

Fannie Mae also has a punitive, “no rent to homeowners after foreclosure” policy which essentially dictates that homeowners must be evicted after foreclosure. Fannie Mae adamantly refused even to consider letting the family rent as a reasonable accommodation of Ms. Gerard’s disabilities.

Through a special project that GBLS and City Life/Vida Urbana (a community organization focused on preventing housing displacement and tenants’ rights) created with the support of the Oak Foundation, GBLS housing attorneys Dick Bauer and Lauren Song were called in to help.

The daughter of a hard-working homeowner who was the victim of predatory lending is pictured above. She said, “…the only reason we still have the house today is because of the assistance we received from Greater Boston Legal Services.”

The two attorneys undertook a two-year legal battle that challenged IndyMac’s predatory practices, targeted especially at communities of color and limited English proficiency, which resulted in the unjust displacement of this family. The Gerards’ case ultimately went to trial where a jury determined that both the mortgage terms and the foreclosure were in violation of Massachusetts law.

As a result of GBLS’ legal victory, the Gerard family can remain in their home and their mortgage loan will be reconsidered for modification. As Ms. Gerard’s daughter said, “…the only reason we still have the house today is because of the assistance we received from Greater Boston Legal Services.”
To address one of the most unacknowledged problems faced by senior citizens, Senior Attorney Betsey Crimmins and Senior Paralegal Maria Mendonça-Costanzo of GBLS’ Elder, Health, and Disability Unit created the Elder Abuse Prevention Project in the Fall of 2013. The project assists some of the thousands of Massachusetts elders who are victims of financial abuse and exploitation from scammers, caregivers, and sadly, even family members.

Betsey’s and Maria’s cases have included adult children transferring their parent’s home to themselves; a caretaker abusing a power of attorney that they coerced the elder to sign; an institutional representative payee taking financial advantage of a disabled elder; and a woman in her nineties who has been the repeated victim of scammers. In addition to assisting individual clients, the project focuses on prevention and raising the profile of this important issue.

The project is partnering with the town of Arlington to create a model community-wide response to preventing elder abuse which, hopefully, will be replicated in other communities.

As the elderly population continues to grow and people live longer, GBLS anticipates that the need for this unique and crucially-important project will also grow.

A client said to his Elder Abuse Prevention Project paralegal, “I prayed this morning that the Lord would give me someone to help me because I do not know what to do, and here you are.”
Mother, a Survivor of Domestic Abuse, Creates New Life with GBLS’ Help

“Kavita” came to the United States from Bangladesh after she, her husband “Jayant”, and their children won Green Cards in the U.S. government visa lottery. She looked forward to a better life in the U.S. for herself and her children since she was subjected to emotional and physical abuse by her husband in Bangladesh that resulted in several hospitalizations.

Things did not change in the U.S. When she got a job at a factory, Jayant made her give him all of her income and later told her she had to quit her job and stay at home. She was prevented from contacting her relatives after Jayant concealed a piece of plastic in the phone jack to prevent the phone from working. She wanted to attend English as a Second Language (ESL) classes but Jayant told her she couldn’t go because she had to care for the children. She then arranged for daycare at her English class and went against Jayant’s will, and he beat her and kicked her out of the house.

Kavita sought refuge in a battered women’s shelter with her three youngest children. Her eldest son, then 16, chose to remain with his father. Jayant then filed for divorce.

The shelter staff referred Kavita to GBLS’ Family Law Unit for representation in her divorce, to help her obtain a custody order, child support, and assistance in developing a safety plan. Attorney Lisa Locher took the case. Court hearings were especially challenging due to Kavita’s limited English and the difficulty of obtaining a Bengali interpreter.

After extended representation by Lisa including a trial, Kavita’s divorce was finalized with favorable terms including receiving child support, and she was also granted sole legal custody of the younger children.

Kavita, now fluent in English, is forging her new life in safety, protected from abuse and pursuing a degree at a community college. None of this would have been possible without GBLS by her side every step of the way, and your support of this critical work that helps Kavita and hundreds of other domestic violence victims every year. Thank you.
People with criminal records and their families are too often trapped in a cycle of poverty, homelessness, and sometimes, hopelessness. In response, GBLS started its CORI & Re-Entry Project. Joblessness, underemployment, and lack of economic opportunity for people with criminal records — including those whose cases were dismissed — or a history of incarceration have created an economic crisis in Boston’s communities of color. People with Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) histories face discrimination and are deprived of jobs, housing, and opportunities for economic mobility. Mass incarceration and CORI have devastating consequences that perpetuate economic disadvantages and racial inequality.

The CORI & Re-Entry Project works to address these problems through individual and systemic legal solutions:

- Legal representation to seal CORI and juvenile records;
- Monthly on-site CORI legal clinics at Roxbury Court and bi-monthly clinics at Dorchester Court;
- Outreach and community legal education at community venues in collaboration with the Union of Minority Neighborhoods, Roxbury Community College, Dorchester Court probation officers, and other groups;
- Monitoring of employer, agency, and court compliance with CORI reform;
- Appeals and administrative and legal advocacy to ensure changes in the law are effectively implemented; and
- Advocacy at local courts to change practices that create barriers to sealing dismissed cases and other non-conviction cases.

The project focuses on the underserved African-American communities in Boston’s poorest neighborhoods: Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan. In 2013, the Project helped individuals with 615 issues stemming from their CORIs. GBLS views it as a matter of fairness to give former defendants with old or favorably-ending cases a second chance to rebuild their lives.

"Olivia" and "Henry" are two of the individuals Project attorneys helped in 2013.

"Olivia" had worked diligently through college at UMass and graduated with honors, only to be turned down for four separate positions due to her CORI that consisted of a single dismissed incident. Olivia had a court hearing to seal it but was unsuccessful. She then turned to the CORI & Re-Entry Project for help. Her Project advocate was successful in obtaining the sealing and Olivia now has work in her field.

"Henry" is an elderly man with previous involvement with the court system when he was much younger. Now in his twilight years with mobility issues, Henry had been trying to find accessible, affordable housing. He is of very limited means and seeking public housing, but was gravely concerned he would not be approved due to his old convictions that had been the basis for his rejection from private housing. The CORI & Re-Entry Project found that his charges were so old, he could seal by mail, sparing him a court hearing and paving the way to be approved for housing.
Far-Reaching Victories Achieved on Behalf of People with Disabilities and Underpaid Workers

Your prior support will have an impact for many years to come. Thank you.

Helping Improve Access to Quality Medical Care and Services for People with Disabilities

Representing the Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL) and several individuals with disabilities, GBLS attorneys Nancy Lorenz, Dan Manning, Alexa Rosenbloom, and Levi Sanders negotiated a comprehensive agreement with Boston Medical Center (BMC) to remove barriers to quality healthcare for patients with disabilities. Barriers included inadequate facilities and equipment, poor patient-provider communication, and lack of training concerning disability culture resulting in inferior medical care for GBLS’ clients.

The hospital has committed to identify and remove architectural barriers; assess the need for, and purchase medical equipment and devices that are accessible for people with disabilities; revise its training programs to include sessions on serving patients with disabilities; modify policies and procedures; develop a system for assessing patients’ needs; meet those needs; and evaluate quality of care.

GBLS and BCIL are working closely with BMC to help the hospital become a national model for accessible care. Alexa Rosenbloom said, “Everyone involved is committed to improving care and services for patients with disabilities and making BMC a truly accessible facility for all patients.”

Landmark Settlement Agreement Improves Access to Benefits for People with Disabilities

In 2007, GBLS filed a federal class action lawsuit on behalf of three individuals with disabilities against the welfare department, the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), for disability discrimination. Harper v. DTA claimed people with disabilities were being inappropriately denied SNAP (Food Stamps) and cash assistance benefits in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, due to DTA not providing reasonable accommodations and its operating practices resulting in many people with disabilities being inappropriately screened out.

GBLS’ Welfare Law Unit attorneys’ extensive advocacy resulted in a federal court approved settlement in August 2013. Their case was built on the unit paralegals’ and attorneys’ years of work representing clients with disabilities who had been harmed by DTA. The agreement will ensure that people with disabilities and their children will have access to critical food and cash assistance benefits they need to survive. Many of the changes mandated in the settlement agreement, such as improving readability and content of all written notices and forms, will benefit all clients, not just those with disabilities.

In a unique effort, GBLS and community partner the Chelsea Collaborative worked with the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) on a lawsuit that resulted in a federal court consent agreement in which 15 exploited low-wage workers were paid $925,000 in back wages, liquidated damages, and compensatory and punitive damages.

GBLS and the Chelsea Collaborative gathered evidence and worked closely with the workers in bringing forward their allegations of abusive treatment, major wage violations, and retaliation by their employer, Boston Hides & Furs Ltd. The workers described their 60-plus hours per week doing the dirty and backbreaking work of processing animal hides for shipping to tanneries, while constantly being subjected to threats, mockery, profanity, and insults. For this, most of the workers received a flat salary of $50 per day — far below the minimum wage — not being paid overtime as required by law. Shortly after the initial visit to the worksite by USDOL investigators, the underpaid workers were fired.

Throughout the litigation of the case, GBLS continued to work closely with USDOL. With GBLS’ support and assistance, USDOL argued that because of the egregious threats and mistreatment, the usual limits on the recovery period should not apply. As a result, the workers ultimately were paid back wages and damages for a time period substantially longer than the law typically allows. The company also had to pay $50,000 in civil money penalties.

USDOL Wage and Hour Division District Director George Rioux and Regional Solicitor of Labor Michael Felsen praised “the cooperation and assistance provided by both the Chelsea Collaborative and Greater Boston Legal Services in reaching this favorable resolution for the workers involved.”
This delegation from Ireland and Northern Ireland visited GBLS as part of a tour organized by the Irish Institute at Boston College to support the peace and reconciliation process on the island of Ireland. The group included lawyers, elected officials, police officials, and representatives of development organizations. GBLS Litigation Director Dan Manning is second from the right, back row. They were primarily interested in GBLS’ economic justice work, as they are dealing at home with the problems of unemployment, exploited workers, and employment discrimination.
Congratulations to Our Staff and Volunteer Attorney!

A selection of 2013 awards and honors

**Hazel Hughes Award for community activism:** Housing Unit Senior Attorney **Dick Bauer** and Senior Attorney **Ellen Shachter** of GBLS’ Cambridge office (CASLS) were honored by the Somerville Community Corporation (SCC) for their roles on the Somerville Community Preservation Act campaign. The Act was voted into law with close to a 75% approval rate and imposes a property tax surcharge to be used for affordable housing, open space, and historic preservation.

**Public Service Peace-Building Award:** Family Law Unit Senior Attorney **Manisha Bhatt** was honored in October 2013 by the Domestic Violence Task Force (DVTF) of Community Action Programs, Inter-City, Inc. (CAPIC) in Chelsea. Manisha was recognized for demonstrating “outstanding work in educating, supporting and preventing domestic violence” and she was chosen among many nominations because of her “ongoing commitment to raising awareness of this important issue and ensuring all survivors are treated with compassion.” Attorney **Bhatt** was also named by Governor Deval Patrick to the Judicial Nominating Commission.

**2013 John Phillip Sousa Award:** Senior Attorney **Deborah Filler** of GBLS’ Cambridge office was selected by Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services to receive the award due to her “tremendous and energetic work as an advocate for older adults in the two cities and across the Commonwealth.”

**Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly 2013 Top Women of Law:** Employment Law Unit Lead Attorney **Monica Halas** was named an honoree in August 2013. The award recognizes “women who have made great professional strides and demonstrated outstanding accomplishments in private practice, the corporate arena and social advocacy.”

**“Keepers of the Garden” community service award:** GBLS Employment Law Unit Lead Attorney **Pauline Quirion** was honored by the Boston Housing Authority’s Warren Gardens Resident Association at their “Unity Day” celebration in November 2013, for her work heading GBLS’ CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) & Re-Entry Project.

**2013-14 Women’s Leadership Initiative:** Boston University Civil Litigation Program Clinical Instructor and Employment Law Unit Attorney **Sherley Rodriguez** and volunteer attorney and former Equal Justice Works Fellow at GBLS **Natacha Thomas** were selected by the Women’s Bar Association to participate in the Initiative. This is a competitive program that provides mentoring and leadership development for women attorneys in Massachusetts who have been identified as rising stars in the profession. Their selection demonstrates their proven talent and promise as leaders.

**Chelsea Collaborative Social Justice Award:** Greater Boston Legal Services was honored in December 2013 at the Collaborative’s anniversary celebration. When it announced the award, the Collaborative stated, “Greater Boston Legal Services has been a key partner of the Chelsea Collaborative and together, we have worked successfully to achieve economic, social and environmental justice for so many in our community. In reflecting on our 25 years of organizing work and the tremendous partner GBLS has been in so many areas, we would like to acknowledge GBLS as a whole....”

**Community Partner of the Year:** Greater Boston Legal Services was honored by Year Up in July 2013 due to its “outstanding leadership in this community, helping guide young men and women from Year Up to reach their full potential and succeed. GBLS helps them navigate the challenging systems they encounter, as they try to bring stability to their own lives, as well as the lives of their families.” Year Up is a program that provides urban young adults with the skills, experience, and support to reach their potential through professional careers and higher education.
DID YOU KNOW?

In 2013, GBLS assisted over 12,600 clients.

CASE TYPES

- Employment 10%
- Family 12%
- Health & Disability 13%
- Housing 33%
- Income Maintenance 7%
- Immigration 14%
- Miscellaneous 11%

AGE

- 0-17 3%
- 18-59 77%
- 60+ 20%

RACE

- African-American 30%
- Asian/Pacific Islander 9%
- Hispanic 30%
- Other 9%
- White 22%

GENDER

- Female 69%
- Male 31%
## FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

### INCOME

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<td>Cy Pres Awards</td>
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<td>Foundations/Corporations</td>
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<td>Volunteer Services</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL INCOME</strong></td>
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### EXPENSES

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<td>Occupancy</td>
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<td>Equipment and Supplies</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENSES</strong></td>
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<td><strong>5,417,771</strong></td>
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THANK YOU! LEGAL COMMUNITY DONORS

The legal community demonstrates a special commitment to GBLS and its mission of ensuring access to justice regardless of income. Every year individual attorneys, law firms, and corporate law departments show the extent to which they respect and value the legal assistance GBLS provides to impoverished residents of greater Boston. Their support is provided in a variety of ways.

LAWYERS FUND DRIVE

Leadership League  
($800 or more per Boston attorney)

Choate, Hall & Stewart  
Collora, LLP  
Goodwin Procter  
Hemenway & Barnes  
Ropes & Gray  
Skadden  
Sugarman and Sugarman, P.C.  
WilmerHale

Pacesetter League  
($650-$799 per Boston attorney)

Bingham McCutchen LLP  
Davids & Cohen, P.C.  
Englander, Leggett, & Chicoine, P.C.  
Meehan, Boyle, Black & Bogdanow, P.C.  
Nixon Peabody LLP  
Sullivan & Worcester LLP  
Sunstein Kann Murphy & Timbers LLP

Reginald Heber Smith League  
($500-$649 per Boston attorney)

Allen & Hollander, LLP  
Brown Rudnick Berlack Israels, LLP  
Dechert LLP  
Foley Hoag LLP  
Gargiulo Rudnick  
Kimball Brousseau

President’s League  
($350-$499 per Boston attorney)

Davis, Malmen & D’Agostine, P.C  
Edwards Wildman Palmer  
Fish & Richardson, P.C.  
Klein Hornig LLP  
Nutter, McClennen & Fish, LLP  
Robinson & Cole LLP

Supporter League  
($200-$349 per Boston attorney)

DLA Piper LLP (US)  
Krodkis & Bluestein LLP  
Landay, Leblang & Stern  
Messing, Rudavsky & Weliky  
Mintz Levin  
Morse, Barnes-Brown & Pendleton  
Murtha Cullina, LLP  
Sugarman, Rogers, Barshak & Cohen, P.C.

Friends League  
(up to $199 per Boston attorney)

Adler, Cohen, Harvey, Wakeman & Quekquezian LLP  
Bernkopf Goodman LLP  
Boyle, Shaughnessy & Campo, P.C.  
Burns & Levinson LLP  
Casner & Edwards, LLP  
Cesari & McKenna

Cetrulo LLP  
Conn, Kavanaugh, Rosenthal, Peisch & Ford, LLP  
Cooley LLP  
Cooley Manion Jones LLP  
Day Pitney LLP  
Faber Daeufer Itrato & Cabot PC  
Finnegan  
Healy, Fiske, Richmond & Matthews  
Holland & Knight LLP  
Janet E. Bostwick, P.C.  
K&L Gates LLP  
Kotin, Crabtree & Strong, LLP  
Lathrop & Gage LLP  
Lawson & Weitzen  
Lee Rivers & Corr  
Morrison Mahoney LLP  
O’Malley and Harvey  
Peabody & Arnold LLP  
Pierce, Davis & Perntano  
Proskauer Rose LLP  
Rackemann, Sawyer & Brewster  
Ruberto, Israel & Weiner  
Sally & Fitch  
Segal, Roitman  
Seyfarth Shaw  
Shaevel & Krems, LLP  
Sheehan, Phinney, Bass & Green PA  
Smith Lee Nebenzahl LLP  
Verrill Dana LLP  
Wolf Greenfield
CORPORATE LEGAL DEPARTMENTS

Analog Devices
Arbella Insurance Group Charitable Foundation
Bain & Company, Inc.
Biogen Idec
Boston Scientific Corporation
Citizens Bank
Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.
Eastern Bank
Eaton Vance Management
EMD Serono, Inc.

Fidelity Investments
InterSystems
LPL Financial
MFS Investment Management
Millipore
Pioneer Investment Management USA Inc.
Putnam Investments
Reit Management
Santander Bank
State Street Foundation, Inc.

LAW FIRM FELLOWSHIPS

In addition to their 2013 Lawyers Fund Drive contribution, the following firms provided funding to support the salaries of GBLS attorneys.

Goodwin Procter
Ropes & Gray

Skadden
WilmerHale

DEFERRED/LOANED ASSOCIATE FELLOWSHIPS

In addition to their 2013 Lawyers Fund Drive contribution, the following firms provided law firm associates to work full time at GBLS.

Bingham McCutchen
Ropes & Gray
MATCHING GIFTS – ASSOCIATES’ DRIVE

Donations were matched by the firms or by individual partners.

Anderson Krieger LLP  
Burns & Levinson LLP  
Choate, Hall & Stewart  
Cooley LLP  
Davis, Malm & D’Agostine, P.C.  
DLA Piper  
Donnelly, Conroy & Gelhaar  
Edwards Wildman Palmer  
Finnegan  
Fish & Richardson  
Foley Hoag LLP  
Hemenway & Barnes  
Holland & Knight  
K&L Gates LLP  
Krokidas & Bluestein LLP  
Lando & Anastasi  
McCarter & English  
Nutter, McClennen & Fish, LLP  
Peabody & Arnold LLP  
Prince Lobel Tye LLP  
Sherin and Lodgen LLP  
Skadden  
Sugarman, Rogers, Barshak & Cohen, P.C.  
Sullivan & Worcester LLP  
Sunstein Kann Murphy & Timbers LLP  
WilmerHale  
Wolf Greenfield

“**It was a pleasure to work with GBLS these years and help grow the donations from Goulston. You and your colleagues at GBLS do truly wonderful and life-saving and altering work.**”

— Christian Regnier, Goulston & Storrs Associate and recently-retired Associates Drive captain

2013 CY PRES* AND OTHER SIMILAR AWARDS

We wish to acknowledge and thank the following law firms who facilitated the award of class action lawsuit residuals to GBLS.

Scott Adams, Attorney at Law  
Berman DeValerio  
Lichten & Liss-Riordan, P.C.  
Seyfarth Shaw  
Shapiro Haber & Urmy LLP

* Cy Pres awards are residual funds arising from damages awarded in successful class action cases, that are unclaimed or cannot be distributed to all the class members or beneficiaries who were the intended recipients.
The In-House Attorney Drive for GBLS, now in its 4th year, is thriving. The amount raised has doubled with 126 counsel and compliance attorneys as well as other staff at 19 companies contributing to the effort so far. (The drive was not yet finished at the time of printing.)

We are especially grateful to the steering committee and team leaders who make this drive happen, some of whom are pictured here. (Members of the steering committee are indicated in bold.) From left to right: Edward Thomas (Re:Sources USA, a Publicis Groupe Company), Sarah Gill (LPL Financial), Kathy Henry (Plymouth Rock Assurance), Michael Cappucci (Harvard Management Co.), Martha Mazzone (Fidelity Investments), Anne Trinque (GMO), John Hitt (Fidelity Investments), Rebecca Radford (Loomis Sayles), and John Norberg (Wellington Management).

Not pictured are: Diane Fernandes (Bain & Co.), Gregory Pickard (Brown Brothers Harriman), Leigh-Ann Durant (EMD Serono), Jay Powers (Citizens Bank), Sean Geary (Global Partners), John Perullo (Hae- monetics), Paul Gallagher (John Hancock), Jennifer Carpenter and Peggy Ho (LPL Financial), Christopher Bohane (MFS), Scott Friedman (Old Mutual), and Linda Podheiser (Pioneer Investments).
ANNUAL FUND DONORS

We would like to extend a special thank you to the individuals highlighted in red for not only their donations, but for their fundraising leadership in the Associates Drive, Corporate Counsel Drive, and Emerging Leaders Campaign.

$50,000 and above
David & Cynthia Phelan
Daniel E. Rothenberg
Anonymous (2)

$25,000 - $49,999
Scott Adams
Stephanie L. Brown
Foundation
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2013 ANNUAL REPORT
Greater Boston Legal Services has received more than $2.6 million to create an endowment from 72 donors who won a large settlement after resolving a major civil case recently against Viacom International.

The Harmonix stockholders experienced first-hand the benefit of being represented by competent counsel in the complex process of seeking justice and securing their rights against an opponent with substantially greater resources. Creating the endowment is their way of making a lasting gift to assist GBLS in helping those who are at a significant disadvantage because they cannot afford a lawyer in non-criminal cases.

The stockholders group from Cambridge-based Harmonix is endowing the Harmonix Stockholders Community Fellowship to work with GBLS’ community partners and clients in neighborhood settings.

“As endowments are meant to last forever, making a gift of this type enables GBLS to plan for its future,” said Jacquelynne J. Bowman, Executive Director of GBLS. “Thanks to the Harmonix stockholders, this gift will allow us to train the next generation of public interest lawyers and continue to provide much-needed services.”

A portion of the original gift will also be used to create and support a position for a senior attorney who will conduct major litigation on behalf of low-income persons in consumer-related matters such as truth-in-lending issues, payday loans and other usurious practices that can trap them in poverty.

“We are very grateful to the Harmonix stockholders for choosing GBLS as the recipient of this gift,” said Melissa Tearney, President of the GBLS Board of Directors. “The number of people who need and qualify for free civil legal services has been expanding while traditional sources of funding have been shrinking. We have much work to do to obtain unrestricted operating funds to support our program overall. However, by increasing our endowment, the Harmonix stockholders’ gift achieves a measure of sustainability for the future. I think it is a credit to the Harmonix stockholders that they want to ensure fairness for all in the justice system.”

Bernie Bonn, an attorney and GBLS board member, said that he hopes that the gift by the Harmonix stockholders will prompt others outside the legal profession to give to GBLS. “You don’t have to be a lawyer to appreciate and support the work that GBLS does,” Bonn said. “It’s a matter of fairness. Providing experienced counsel in civil matters for indigent clients is the best way to level the playing field and to protect the vulnerable.”

““It’s a matter of fairness. Providing experienced counsel in civil matters for indigent clients is the best way to level the playing field and to protect the vulnerable.”
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Yale University

This 12-year-old, far right, has severe chronic asthma and needs medication to stave off asthma attacks. Even short aggressive treatments with corticosteroids did not provide her with extended symptom-free periods. Despite this, her Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits were cut because the Social Security Administration claimed her health had improved. Her mother, far left, filed for reconsideration of the decision but was denied. She came to GBLS for assistance on how to present her daughter’s case at an Administrative Law Judge hearing. She was referred to GBLS’ Children’s Disability Project (CDP). Harvard Law intern Maureen Slack, center, took the case on her very first day with CDP and prepared for the hearing. Maureen’s review of the medical records showed that the child’s asthma is pervasive, chronic, severe, and disabling. Maureen, supervised by CDP’s director, Taramattie Doucette, argued to the judge that the child continued to meet the criteria for benefits and the judge reinstated them. Thanks to Maureen’s advocacy, the young girl has been able to resume her critical medical care.
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Massachusetts Volunteers Help Callers Seeking Legal Assistance

Many days, there are more people calling GBLS’ intake line than we are able to answer. Sixteen members of the law department at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Massachusetts (BCBSMA) answered GBLS’ call for help. Twice a month, they volunteer to take calls from people who otherwise might be on hold for hours and then learn that they have to call back another day. The volunteers ascertain eligibility and then refer clients to GBLS and its regional partners or to a member of the Legal Advocacy & Resource Center (LARC) for brief advice and referral.

Stephanie Lovell, BCBSMA Senior Vice President and General Counsel, says, “The BCBSMA Law Department’s partnership with GBLS and LARC has provided a unique opportunity for our lawyers and other legal professionals to assist an underserved segment of our community. The program has strengthened our department’s understanding of the daunting legal challenges faced by those with limited resources as well as our respect for the legal professionals who assist those clients on a regular basis.”

GBLS is looking for more volunteers for the pro bono intake project. When asked if they had any advice for others considering volunteering, the BCBSMA group agreed: “Just do it. I didn’t know how rewarding it would be.” If your corporate law department or law firm would like more information, please contact Anna Marie Ventura at 617-603-1565.

Ensure fairness for all in the justice system.
Go to www.gbls.org and click on “Donate Now!”
VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

The following individuals, in addition to many law students, volunteered substantial commitments of time in 2013 to GBLS and its clients. Their service, as reported in the Financial Statements, was valued at $7,240,878. We are also very grateful to the many pro bono attorneys, too numerous to list here, who handled GBLS cases at their firms.

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34