



GREATER BOSTON
LEGAL SERVICES

... and justice for all

2014 Annual Report



A Year of Change, Challenges, and Success

The past year has been one of change, challenges, and success. As you will see highlighted in this report, we have more than weathered the changes and challenges presented because of the commitment of our staff, the dedication of our board, and with the support of donors and our funders. Thank you.

We said “Goodbye” to our long-term Associate Director for Development and Finance, when Jack Ward retired after 31 years at GBLS. We welcomed a new Director of Finance, Joanne Sanders and a new Chief Development Officer, Peter Jones. The economic picture continues to impact funding from our largest single funder, the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation, and as a result we also said farewell to nine staff members who accepted a voluntary layoff package.

2014 was also a year of considerable accomplishments! While representing our clients is our highest priority (we handled over 13,000 matters), we also led the way on several policy issues critical to removing barriers keeping people in poverty. The efforts of GBLS attorneys and community partners led to the successful passage of some new laws, including one that improves access to unemployment insurance and another that expands rights to parental leave. GBLS staff was also instrumental in securing passage of the earned sick time ballot initiative. Although GBLS cannot serve all those who seek or need our help, we constantly strive for ways to leverage our resources to impact more people who seek justice. In this report you will see a snapshot of who we are and the work we do on behalf of our clients as well as profiles of members of the GBLS network including staff, volunteers, and donors.

The generosity of the greater Boston legal community and a growing base of the business community make much of our work possible. Thank you for your past and continuing support which allows us to focus on our mission to help change lives by ensuring justice and fairness in our legal system and removing barriers that keep people in poverty.



PHOTO: LINDA LANK

Jacquelynne J. Bowman,
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jacquelynne J. Bowman".



PHOTO: CHOATE, HALL AND STEWART LLP

Melissa Bayer Tearney,
President of the Board

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melissa Bayer Tearney".

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 2014, GBLS served more than 11,450 people.

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

Service Area

Acton*
Arlington
Bedford*
Belmont
Boston
Boxborough*
Braintree
Brookline
Burlington*
Cambridge
Canton
Carlisle*
Chelsea
Cohasset
Concord*
Everett

Harvard*
Hingham
Holbrook
Hull
Lexington*
Lincoln*
Malden
Maynard*

Medford
Melrose
Milton
Newton
North Reading*
Norwell
Quincy
Randolph

Reading*
Revere
Scituate
Somerville
Stoneham
Stow*
Wakefield
Waltham

Watertown
Weymouth
Wilmington*
Winchester
Winthrop
Woburn

** Served only by the
Elder, Health and
Disability Unit*



Employment

GBLS' advocacy on behalf of low-income workers includes cases involving: Wrongful denial of unemployment benefits; violations of wage laws (such as nonpayment of overtime) resulting in wage theft; and tax controversies related to employment income or problems receiving the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), through the Low-Income Taxpayer Assistance Project. GBLS also advocates for changes to laws, policies, and regulations negatively affecting low-wage workers, working closely with — and representing — many different community-based organizations, and partnering with a wide range of worker and immigrant rights advocacy organizations, government agencies, unions, members of the private bar, and law schools.

Impact advocacy in 2014 included:

- Through the efforts of GBLS attorneys and other bill supporters, Governor Patrick signed into law An Act Restoring the Minimum Wage and Providing Unemployment Insurance Reforms. It is the highest minimum wage law in the country, will benefit over 600,000 low-wage earners, and also improves access to unemployment insurance (UI) and offers protections against retaliation for participating in the unemployment system including testifying at an unemployment hearing;
- GBLS' and its partners' efforts led to the passage of the Massachusetts Domestic Workers Bill of Rights. This is a huge victory for Massachusetts domestic workers, who are now afforded basic labor protections;
- GBLS represented the Coalition for Social Justice in its successful campaign, with other leaders of Raise Up Massachusetts, to secure job-protected sick time for almost one million workers in Massachusetts. The law, with the support of 60% of the voters, is the most progressive statewide sick time law in the nation and will take effect on July 1, 2015. It guarantees every worker in Massachusetts access to the benefit of earned sick time, and prohibits employer retaliation against workers who take time off due to illness; and
- Following GBLS' successful lawsuit *Luciano v. Malmberg* that was initially settled in 2010 and through continued GBLS advocacy, the Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) entered into a subsequent landmark settlement agreement that provides Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking claimants for unemployment benefits with full phone access in their own language; claimants whose primary language is Chinese, Vietnamese, Khmer, or Haitian Creole will be directed to appropriate DUA staff. Any Limited English Proficient (LEP) claimants not properly served by DUA will have good cause for missing any deadline set by the DUA.



PHOTO: ELIZABETH TOULAN

Massachusetts domestic workers along with GBLS Lead Attorney Monica Halas, Brazilian Immigrant Center Executive Director Natalicia Tracy, and other members of the Massachusetts Coalition for Domestic Workers after the Bill of Rights signing at the State House.

GBLS Helps Mother of Six to Obtain Needed Job Training Benefits To Better Support her Family

“We cannot thank you enough for the time you devoted on our case and... making it possible for me to return to school to allow me to find a secure job to help pay for my children’s education.”



After GBLS assisted her to obtain job training benefits, mother of six “Sally”, pictured with her husband, returned to school then found a secure job to support her family.

“Sally” and her husband “Jason” have six children. Jason had gotten injured and was unable to work, then Sally was laid off. While searching for a new job, Sally realized that in order to find a better-paying job to support her family she needed to focus on job training. She applied for extended unemployment benefits (UI) to participate in full-time training under Massachusetts’ Training Opportunities Program (Section 30) that allows unemployment workers taking part in an approved job training program to collect UI benefits without having to look for work. The program also gives workers up to 26 weeks of extended UI benefits if they have not completed training when their regular UI benefits end. Sally’s request for extended UI benefits was denied on the grounds that she had applied too late, i.e., beyond a 15-week application period. She then turned to GBLS for help.

At the appeal, although Sally’s GBLS attorney provided a memorandum of law demonstrating why Sally’s application should be considered timely, the hearing officer ignored the law and denied the appeal. Rather than go through a lengthy appeal process, Sally’s attorney sought a reconsideration of the decision from the Director of the Department of Unemployment Assistance. The Director’s General Counsel not only agreed that the case had been wrongly decided under the Department’s regulations, but changed its policy for all other claimants by tolling the application period for an additional 15 weeks after the end of federal extended benefits.

Sally sent heartfelt notes to her attorney, writing in part, “We cannot thank you enough for the time you devoted on our case and... making it possible for me to return to school to allow me to find a secure job to help pay for my children’s education. Your dedication and inspiration gave me more than you can ever imagine.” In May 2015, Sally opened her own business.

Family

GBLS provides legal assistance to low-income victims/survivors of domestic violence (DV) to ensure that their rights and their safety are protected and to restore them and their children to an economically-sustainable life free of abuse. Victims of DV are often burdened with barriers like mental health problems stemming from a history of abuse and limited English speaking skills, that make it difficult for them to advocate effectively on their own behalf. GBLS provides individual representation in divorce and paternity actions and to obtain child support, custody, visitation, and restraining orders; legal counseling to victims who seek to relocate due to family violence and legal technical assistance to the agencies that provide services to these victims; and on-site advocacy at two probate and family courts to assist victims with abuse prevention orders and emergency matters.

To facilitate outreach, provide direct access to legal services to DV victims, and collaborate in abuse prevention and intervention efforts, GBLS has a number of relationships with area courts, major Boston hospitals and community health centers, and community-based service providers including shelters.

GBLS also addresses broader legal and public policy issues that perpetuate domestic violence and obstruct the road towards physical and emotional well-being and economic independence for survivors.

Impact advocacy in 2014 included:

- Significant success in shaping major legislation to strengthen DV legislation that as originally drafted increased protections in the criminal justice arena but was devoid of provisions that would assist victims/survivors in the civil arena. GBLS and fellow DV advocates impressed upon legislators that civil legal services for DV victims are critical, and drafted many amendments included in the final bill, e.g., a requirement for in-depth training for personnel of all court departments to include topics critical to understanding the dynamics of domestic abuse;
- Met with the Chief Justice of the Probate and Family Court to discuss issues of concern to GBLS clients and possible solutions which led to the Chief taking immediate steps to implement GBLS' suggestions;
- Participated as part of a coalition of civil legal aid organizations and bar associations in the strategizing and development of an amicus brief which led to the Supreme Judicial Court ruling that parents in a guardianship of a minor matter have a civil right to counsel;
- Monitored and defended against legislation which would make joint legal custody of children a presumption in child custody cases, which would be dangerous for GBLS' clients and could subject them and their children to further abuse; and
- Participated in the Family Law Section (FLS) of the Boston Bar Association to provide a voice for low-income DV victims in shaping state policy on family law issues. This involves analysis of probate court standing orders, legislation, and other issues germane to GBLS clients; drafting comments on the same; presenting the issue to the FLS; and advocating on behalf of our clients for GBLS' position.

Domestic Violence Survivor and Mom Obtains Sole Custody and Permission to Move Near Family Thanks to GBLS' Representation



PHOTO: BLANCA RUIZ

Family Law Unit Senior Attorney Abbe Hershberg's representation resulted in a domestic violence survivor obtaining sole custody of her children and the court granting her permission to move close to her family in another state, away from her abuser.

"Thanks to you I have legal and physical custody of my children and will be moving...soon to reunite with my family and I can go back to college and complete what I started."

"Sarah" is a young mother of three daughters and a survivor of years of domestic abuse. Her oldest daughter was five and her twins, born after Sarah went into premature labor after their father assaulted her, were two years old at the time she contacted GBLS for help. Sarah was not able to work nor go to school because she had no support systems to help her care for the children. Her financial situation was unstable as the father did not pay regular child support despite a court order. The father had been granted supervised visits with the children but never visited them.

Family Law Unit Senior Attorney Abbe Hershberg represented Sarah in Suffolk Probate and Family Court on Sarah's requests for sole custody and to be granted permission to move to another state where her family lives, to improve the quality of her and her children's lives. Sarah wanted to go to college and her mother would be able to provide childcare. Attorney Hershberg also represented Sarah on child support contempt actions. She also helped Sarah extend her Abuse Prevention Order for one year in the District Court.

The father filed papers contesting the case in the Family Court for over a year. When the case was finally scheduled for trial, he did not show up. Sarah courageously testified about the domestic violence and her reasons for wanting to move. The court granted her sole custody and permission to move.

Sarah says, "Thank you Abbe for all your help. Thanks to you I have legal and physical custody of my children and will be moving...soon to reunite with my

family and I can go back to college and complete what I started. I will be forever grateful. I think it will be great for people to read about how helpful Greater Boston Legal Services can be and also for abused women who are

currently experiencing a similar situation to the one I was in can get the strength and courage to say enough and get help."

Health and Disability

GBLS provides legal assistance to low-income individuals of all ages with disabilities and other health challenges to promote access to and retention of quality, affordable, accessible healthcare and coverage, disability benefits, Medicare/Medicaid, Social Security, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) income. GBLS also represents vulnerable clients in nursing home eviction cases. *The School to Prison Pipeline Intervention Project*, created in fall 2014, represents Boston-area children facing life challenges, ensuring that they are receiving the trauma-informed treatment they need so they can learn and stay in school.

Community partnerships are a mainstay of our health and disability work. They enable us to expand our systemic advocacy efforts.

Impact advocacy in 2014 included:

- Worked with fellow Coalition to Reform Eldercare (CORE) advocates, e.g., Massachusetts Advocates for Nursing Home Reform, to improve nursing home residents' quality of life and care. Advocacy on behalf of residents for measures in the FY 2015 state budget was very successful: maintained the crucial Monthly Personal Needs Allowance; maintained and expanded the protections to hold the bed for a nursing home resident who needs to be hospitalized; established new informed consent protections for administration of antipsychotic medications to residents; and established a public hearing process and more accountability when nursing homes propose to obtain or transfer a license to operate a nursing home;
- Caused MassHealth to reconsider ending premium assistance support for Medicare beneficiaries;
- Monthly meetings with MassHealth to advance and protect program eligibility and services for low-income people including the homeless, non-English proficient individuals, low-income workers, and their families, during the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, plagued by a failed computer system unable to make program eligibility determinations. Advocated for solutions to increased delays in processing applications and eligibility reviews and increased instances of gaps in coverage; to ensure that eligibility determinations are accurate and provide most comprehensive coverage; that program rules are fair and comply with due process; and systemic barriers to coverage are removed;
- Worked with fellow elder mental health advocates towards inclusion of the federally-funded Geriatric Mental Health "Balancing Incentive Plan" proposal in the FY 2016 state budget that would create a statewide system of home-based mental health outreach and treatment services for elders with mental health conditions;
- Worked with the Probate and Family Court and other advocates to ensure full implementation of the landmark Guardianship Reform law, passed in 2009, that dramatically improved due process protections for the disabled and elderly;
- Participated in strategy meetings of the special legislative Elder Economic Security Commission charged with making policy recommendations to improve the economic security of Massachusetts elders. Contributed to the Commission's October 2014 report that included a recommendation to enhance mental health services for elders;
- In collaboration with the Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL), monitored the implementation of the settlement to improve access for people with disabilities to quality healthcare at two major Boston hospitals;

- Representing BCIL, worked with the Disability Advocates Advancing Our Healthcare Rights Coalition to monitor the implementation of One Care, an integrated care delivery model created by MassHealth for members between 21 to 65 with both Medicare and MassHealth, and advocate for improvements; and
- Monitored the implementation of GBLS' Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority class action settlement to ensure access to public transportation for people with disabilities.

Helping a Disabled Elder Transition from a Nursing Home Back into His Community



PHOTO: TRENE WILLIAMS

With GBLS' representation, this disabled elder was able to get out of a nursing home and into public housing after winning the appeal of his denial for admission.

A disabled man, "Jerry", was a tenant in good standing until about two years ago when he had a medical need that required him to go into a nursing home. When his health improved, he was eager to leave the nursing home. He was eligible for assistance through a new program called Money Follows the Person, to help him transition back into the community. He is a young elder, only 62 now, and he has long ties to his community.

The hardest part about getting out of a nursing home is first finding housing. He applied to the Chelsea Housing Authority, applying for homeless and medical priorities, and was denied admission. He was stuck in the nursing home, where he did not need to or want to be, and it was costing the state money.

Jerry's social worker from Chelsea Revere Winthrop Elder Services, also a Money Follows the Person staffer, called GBLS to ask for help with Jerry's situation. Senior Attorney Wynn Gerhard worked with Jerry and his social worker to develop his case, to show that he had done a diligent housing search, that he was not at fault in losing his housing, and that he met

"The hardest part about getting out of a nursing home is first finding housing."

the medical criteria for priority admission to the housing authority. The client was very hopeful about getting out of the nursing home and his hopes were justified as, represented by attorney Gerhard at the appeal hearing, he won: the Chelsea Housing Authority overturned their earlier decision and Jerry's priorities were placed on the wait list. In April 2015 he had his interview with the housing authority, on his way to leaving the nursing home and going back to his home community.

Housing

In our housing advocacy, GBLS prioritizes cases which enable families to obtain or retain affordable housing. These cases include eviction defense cases, especially those involving public and subsidized housing; helping tenants and former owners of foreclosed properties pursue affordable purchasing options; advocating for domestic violence victims to protect their housing options; assisting homeless families to gain admission into or to retain Emergency Assistance-funded shelter and helping them obtain permanent, affordable housing. We also expand capacity by helping tenant associations understand housing policies, change unfair policies, and preserve affordable units at risk of being lost to market rates.

GBLS leverages its resources by partnering and collaborating with a wide range of advocacy groups involved in affordable housing initiatives.

Representation of individual clients gives our attorneys and paralegals great insight into the systemic problems which produce housing shortages and instability for low-income people. GBLS uses this knowledge to advocate for changes to agency rules and regulations at the local, state, and national levels, and to push for legislative action and reform at the state level.

Impact advocacy in 2014 included:

- Assisted in obtaining approximately 200 new Section 8 vouchers for tenants of Mass Pike Towers, a 200-unit affordable housing development in Boston's Chinatown, and other low-income Boston tenants;
- Tenant outreach, education, and organizing, community organizing to advocate for more affordable housing and community development priorities, working with the Chinese Progressive Association, and legal research regarding approaches and options to preserve at-risk affordable housing units in Chinatown;
- Played either a direct or supporting role for local tenant attorneys elsewhere in Massachusetts, in efforts to apply a model that GBLS helped pioneer for the preservation of housing affordability;
- Provided strategy backup and case examples for a significant and successful lawsuit by Massachusetts Law Reform Institute challenging an unfair shelter rules system in motels; and
- Conducted extensive advocacy around the draconian requirement that families must actually be staying in a place "unfit for human habitation" to be eligible for emergency shelter.

Teamwork Solves a Housing Crisis for a Disabled Elder Faced with Eviction

“Martina” is the 83-year-old matriarch of a large family, with close to 40 grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She suffered a stroke and has physical and cognitive disabilities. She faced eviction from her subsidized apartment after building management claimed that Martina had unauthorized people living with her and that she was not keeping her apartment “in clean condition and sanitary manner”, and sent her a Notice to Quit (NTQ).

One of Martina’s daughters, “Odile”, contacted GBLS for help. She explained that her cousin, Martina’s niece, lives with Martina and is on the lease. Martina’s children and grandchildren also visit to help take care of her and be sure she is not left on her own, leading to management wrongly assuming they were unauthorized occupants. Odile also reported issues with the condition of the apartment that needed to be attended to, such as putting in a bathroom railing for her mother’s safety, and management not making timely repairs. For example, Martina had a broken refrigerator for two years that was finally replaced the week before Martina received the NTQ.

GBLS Senior Attorney Jeff Purcell took Martina’s case for full representation. He met with Anne Marie C. from the Tenancy Preservation Project and obtained cleaning and other services to address the apartment’s condition. Working with Martina’s daughter Odile (a nurse) as an ally, attorney Purcell negotiated an agreement at Boston Housing Court, saving Martina from eviction. A very grateful Odile sent an e-mail to attorney Purcell and Anne Marie C. that stated, “There are no words to describe how thankful I am for the awesome work each of you did with my Mom’s case. I am delighted that we have come to an agreement (not a judgment)...and I accredited all of that to your great and diligent work. Thank you so much for all that both of you did. Together you make an excellent team.”



PHOTO: LINDA LANK

Senior Attorney Jeff Purcell saved an elder client with disabilities from eviction, and with help from the Tenancy Preservation Project obtained needed services to address the condition of her apartment.

“There are no words to describe how thankful I am for the awesome work each of you did with my Mom’s case.”

Immigration

GBLS provides legal representation and advocates on behalf of low-income immigrants. We prioritize cases of immigrants who are seeking permanent refuge and safe haven, individuals subjected to domestic violence (DV), and unaccompanied children. We represent clients and cases before the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the U.S. Department of Justice, and federal courts. Our goal is to enable our clients to become documented, and ultimately to attain permanent legal status in the U.S.

GBLS coordinates its immigration work with local, national, and international immigrant rights, civil rights and human rights networks. We provide immigrant communities and service providers with advice, counsel, brief services, and updated information concerning rights and remedies available under the Immigration and Nationality Act.

We seek to uphold the human rights of clients as elaborated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In this spirit, we advocate for law reform and systemic changes to secure and expand the right to asylum, withholding of removal and relief under the Convention Against Torture, as well as to secure protection for unaccompanied children and immigrant survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Impact advocacy in 2014 included:

- Obtained a positive U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit asylum decision that explicitly addresses racist military policies against the indigenous people of Guatemala. This case presented important issues before the court about the harm inflicted upon Mayans by the Guatemalan government which engaged in genocide and persecution based upon ethnicity. The court found that evidence of harm inflicted in childhood, but which has lasting effects, and harm based on race and ethnicity are all indicators of persecution and as such can lay a

foundation for asylum. The decision will have a direct impact on all asylum claims made by Mayans from Guatemala whose cases are within the jurisdiction of the First Circuit, potentially hundreds of people, and will have strong persuasive value in cases throughout the country;

- Winning a major victory in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit on behalf of a man who was targeted by a Central American gang for his activities organizing to combat gang activity in his community. The court recognized that such targeting was persecution based on political opinion and could constitute a basis for asylum, and remanded the case to the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) for further factual findings;
- Participated in the preparation of an amicus brief on behalf of the American Immigration Lawyers Association which led to a landmark decision of the BIA recognizing domestic violence as a basis for asylum;
- Coordinated efforts with immigrant groups and service providers to conduct systemic outreach and to develop a plan for service to immigrants who will be potentially eligible to apply for an expanded program of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and Deferred Action for Parent Accountability (DAPA);
- Participated in coordinated efforts toward the passage of state legislation to provide the necessary legal findings necessary for unaccompanied minors up to the age of 21, the federal limit, to apply for immigration status, up from the current state 18 age limit;
- Engaged in systemic advocacy on behalf of immigrant DV survivors; and
- Conducted ongoing systemic advocacy to broaden avenues of relief to women and unaccompanied minors seeking asylum protection.

Youth Abandoned by Parents Secures Stable Home with Immigration Attorney's Help



PHOTO: LINDA LANK

Júnior, right, was abandoned by his parents as a young teenager and was on the verge of homelessness when GBLS and others at his school stepped in to help. With Attorney Anne Mackin's help Oswaldo Martinez, left, became Júnior's legal guardian and Júnior was granted permanent resident status as a "special immigrant juvenile."

Firmino Gonçalves Nascimento Júnior, now 20, found his way to GBLS through the help of his English Language Learner counselor, "Nadia", at school. Abandoned by both parents, he had found himself on his own in the U.S. and on the verge of homelessness.

Firmino, who goes by the name Júnior, was born in Brazil. His parents split up when he was about ten and his mother moved to the U.S. His father found a new partner and outside of school Júnior spent most of his time at home alone. Júnior was in regular phone contact with his mother and longed to be with her. His father finally agreed and, at age thirteen, Júnior was put on a plane alone to live with his mother and her new partner in the U.S. When Júnior was in high school, his mother and step-father returned to Brazil, giving him \$100 and leaving him to live with a church pastor. For the next couple of years, Júnior moved from place to place, unable to find a stable situation.

Júnior was brought to GBLS immigration Attorney Anne Mackin's attention after he had been taken in by a local police officer, Oswaldo "Ozzy" Martinez, whom he had met through his high school soccer coach. Attorney Mackin filed a petition for the officer to become Júnior's guardian and obtained a court order stating that Júnior had been abandoned and neglected by both parents, that reunification with his parents was not viable, and that it was in his best interest to remain under the care of his guardian in the United States. Based on the court's assessment, Júnior was granted permanent resident status as a "special immigrant juvenile."

"With GBLS' help, his immigration status became permanent and he finally has a stable home where he is valued and supported."

Júnior still lives with his guardian Ozzy. He is working and saving money for college and hopes to study criminal justice or a trade. With GBLS' help, his immigration status became permanent and he finally has a stable home where he is valued and supported.

Welfare

GBLS' welfare work seeks to create economic stability for its clients by ensuring access to financial assistance, nutritional benefits, child care, and related benefits such as child care and education and training programs administered by the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), Massachusetts' welfare agency. We seek to ensure that our clients are provided with due process, including adequate notice of decisions, and timely decisions on requests for assistance and timely receipt of benefits. Many of our clients with a longer-term need for assistance have multiple, severe barriers to employment, including trauma, abuse, disabling health conditions, domestic violence, lower educational attainment, and limited English proficiency.

GBLS also works with organizations that serve our client population, providing information and training on public benefits and engaging in systems for direct referral of cases from Boston homeless family shelter providers and education and training providers.

Our representation of individual clients gives us a unique understanding of the workings of the welfare system and the realities of our clients' lives, which we use to reduce systemic barriers to public benefits by advocating for changes in state laws and in state and federal policy and practice.

Impact advocacy in 2014 included:

- Successful efforts with Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI) to stop DTA's discriminatory practices regarding photo IDs of immigrant recipients;
- Efforts that led to DTA's Division of Hearings addressing systemic problems with timely notices of hearings to clients and their advocates; and DTA's Recipient Services office improving advocates' access to clients' computerized records;
- Monitored the implementation of *Harper v. Department of Transitional Assistance*, GBLS' class action suit brought to improve DTA's practices and ensure that clients are not deprived of DTA benefits and services as a result of disability, and are screened for and provided reasonable accommodations where needed. GBLS met quarterly with DTA, conducted outreach to community stakeholders, developed tools to enable providers to secure accommodations for their clients with disabilities; and reviewed new DTA policies and/or practices to analyze the impact on clients with disabilities;
- With MLRI and the Welfare Advocacy Coalition, drafted comprehensive comments on proposed regulations to implement the 2014 welfare reform law. The proposed regulations are significantly more harmful to families than required and in some cases allowed by the new law;
- Assisted the Massachusetts Language Access Coalition in designing a survey regarding language access at DTA and did outreach to encourage nonprofit organizations to complete the survey;
- Raised with DTA the problems for Limited English Proficient clients with the new Interactive Voice Response system which increasingly is the only phone number clients can use to call DTA; and
- Launched a collaboration with DEAF, Inc., regarding egregious failures by DTA to accommodate deaf clients.

GBLS Team Assists Vulnerable Family with Cash Assistance and Other Critical Needs

“It’s hard enough to raise children in deep poverty, but when you add complex disability and the sheer number of systems involved in her family’s life, it becomes a house of cards.”

“Vera” is a mother of three, including one child with disabilities, “Soledad.” A community agency referred her to GBLS when she was in eviction proceedings and had no income with which to pay the rent. Because of her immigration status, she was still waiting for work authorization. The children’s father was not paying child support. A housing attorney quickly referred Vera to the Welfare Law Unit in hope of helping Vera to obtain cash assistance to save her housing. The demands of caring for Soledad made it hard for Vera to meet her other children’s needs, so she sent her oldest child to live with the child’s father and visited with her on weekends.

Welfare rules being extremely difficult, that child was the only person in the family eligible for Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC), despite the fact that all of Vera’s children are U.S. citizens.

Senior Attorney Sarah Levy took Vera’s case and determined that because Vera is the caretaker for her disabled daughter, the family was eligible for Emergency Aid to Elders, Disabled, and Children (EAEDC). That income was extremely low — just \$303 per month — but it was enough to preserve Vera’s housing and have some income left over to pay for basic necessities. WLU’s social work intern Cassie M. then also assisted Vera through the lengthy process to apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for Soledad, and got a local business to donate a stroller for Soledad’s three-year-old brother, something Vera could never have afforded to buy herself. Meanwhile, because Soledad’s health needs are complex, another attorney at GBLS was consulted to make sure Soledad was receiving all the medical services for which she qualified and gave Vera advice about her child’s special education rights.

Attorney Levy says, “I have so much respect for Vera. She works so hard for her family every day. It’s hard enough to raise children in deep poverty, but when you add complex disability and the sheer number of systems involved in her family’s life, it becomes a house of cards. I’m glad we could secure her legal rights to build a little more stability. Last week, I learned that Vera finally got her work authorization. I’m thrilled that we can now work together to look for training and job opportunities.”



PHOTO: LAUREN SHRYNE

GBLS attorneys and social work intern Cassie (right) helped “Vera” (left) obtain cash assistance to pay her family’s rent after Vera’s children’s father failed to pay child support, helped her apply for SSI for her disabled daughter “Soledad”, and verified that Soledad was receiving all the medical services for which she qualified. Cassie also got a local business to donate a stroller for Soledad’s little brother.

Awards & Achievements

Congratulation to our Staff, Fellow, and Board Member!

Boston Bar Association (BBA) Council:

Executive Director **Jacquelynne Bowman** was elected to serve as a member of the BBA's governing Council for the 2014-2015 program year starting on September 1, 2014.

Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee (MHLAC): Senior Attorney **Deb Filler** of GBLS' Cambridge and Somerville office was appointed to serve on the MHLAC by the Supreme Judicial Court. Her term is from July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2018.

Public Interest Leader, Boston Bar Association (BBA): Welfare Law Unit attorney **Lizbeth Ginsburg** was selected for the 2014-2015 class of BBA Public Interest Leaders. She specializes in public benefits law, focusing on the rights of clients with disabilities.

2014 Lelia J. Robinson Award Women's Bar Association: Employment Law Unit Lead Attorney **Monica Halas** was a recipient of this award that recognizes women who have "captured the spirit of pioneering in the legal profession and have made a difference in the community."

Outstanding Women of Cambridge: Senior Attorneys **Susan Hegel** and **Ellen Shachter** of GBLS' Cambridge and Somerville office were honored by the Cambridge YWCA for advancing the Y's mission statement: "YWCA Cambridge is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all."

Ubuntu Award, Boston Center for Refugee Health & Human Rights (BCRHHR): GBLS' **Immigration Law Unit** was honored by BCRHHR at the Boston Medical Center. When it announced its awardee selection BCRHHR stated, "Ubuntu speaks of humaneness, hospitality and sacrificing for the benefit of others, and we feel that you are more than deserving of recognition for your commitment and good work on behalf of survivors of human rights violation."

Harvard Law School Dean's Award for Excellence: **Nancy Kelly** and **John Willshire Carrera**, co-directing attorneys of the Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinic at GBLS, were honored for their exceptional teaching and mentoring of students at Harvard Law School and for their leadership in developing child asylum and gender-based asylum law, as well as asylum law as it relates to indigenous Guatemalan and gang-based asylum claims.

2014 Top Women of Law, Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly: Asian Outreach Unit Managing Attorney **Cynthia (Cyndi) Mark** was named a Top Woman of Law, and GBLS CORI & Re-entry Project Lead Attorney **Pauline Quirion** was inducted into the Top Women of Law Circle of Excellence.

Supreme Judicial Court Adams Pro Bono Publico Award: GBLS Equal Justice Works Fellow attorney **Elizabeth McIntyre** of the Elder, Health and Disability Unit was honored for her extraordinary breadth of poverty law experience and dedication throughout her law school career.

Did you know?

In 2014, GBLS assisted over 11,450 clients.

Case Types

10%
Employment

12%
Family

11%
Health and Disability

31%
Housing

8%
Income
Maintenance

17%
Immigration

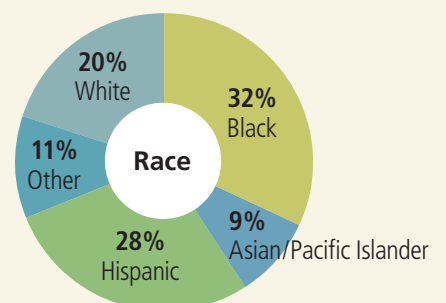
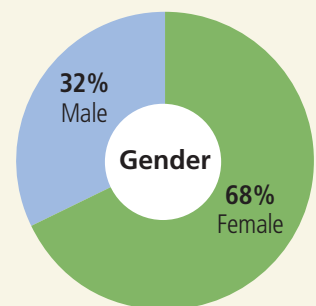
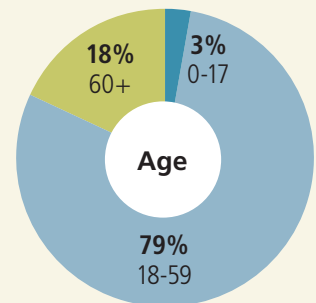
11%
Miscellaneous

GBLS Immigration Law Unit Attorney **Carla Moniz** was selected as one of **2014's Boston Rising Stars**, a list of 40 outstanding lawyers in the Boston area, age 40 or younger, by the National Law Journal & Connecticut Law Tribune. Per the National Law Journal's website, "Whether their expertise is in intellectual property, private equity, public sector practice, torts or elsewhere, these attorneys have accomplished big feats in their short legal careers..."

Richard M. Fontera Memorial Award, Arnold M. Dubin Labor Education Center of UMass Dartmouth:

GBLS Board member and Brazilian Immigrant Center Executive Director **Natalicia Tracy** was recognized for "[her] dedication to improving the lives of the working women throughout New England and the United States, making [her] commitment to education and to the ideals of democracy and social justice an integral part of [her] life through [her] struggle for the rights and better working conditions of domestic workers in this nation."

Access to Justice Legal Services Award: GBLS Immigration Unit Senior Attorney **Jerry Wall** was honored by the Massachusetts Bar Association. The annual Access to Justice awards honor attorneys and law firms who "made significant strides in enhancing access to justice," recognizing their exemplary legal skills and service to the community.



Financial Statements

INCOME	2014	2013
Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation	4,468,598	4,032,362
Law Firms and Attorneys	3,526,175	3,422,145
<i>Cy Pres</i> and Other Similar Awards	231,187	92,327
Foundations/Corporations	1,240,766	1,313,393
Government Grants	1,813,014	1,820,660
Individual Contributions	1,171,453	1,358,922
United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley	439,271	459,479
Miscellaneous	1,411,419	1,541,545
TOTAL INCOME BEFORE DONATED SERVICES	14,301,883	14,040,833
Volunteer Services	7,082,926	7,240,878
TOTAL INCOME	21,384,809	21,281,711

EXPENSES	2014	2013
Salary and Benefits Subtotal	12,583,385	11,498,889
Non-Personnel:		
Occupancy	439,823	503,312
Equipment and Supplies	404,554	396,241
Contract Services	342,023	328,141
Library and Litigation Expenses	250,060	272,369
Transfer to Capital	45,000	45,000
Miscellaneous	627,310	600,952
Non-Personnel Subtotal	2,108,770	2,146,015
TOTAL EXPENSES BEFORE DONATED SERVICES	14,692,155	13,644,904
Volunteer Services	7,082,926	7,240,878
TOTAL EXPENSES	21,775,081	20,885,782

CUMULATIVE OPERATING NET ASSETS	5,027,499	5,417,771
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An Interview with Lead Paralegal MARTHA RAMOS

What led you to choose a career in legal services/at GBLS? What were you doing before you joined GBLS? How long have you worked here, and for what units?

Before I joined GBLS, I was completing a training in Accounting. At that time, the law units were being formed and GBLS was looking to have a bilingual secretary in every unit. Although I had no secretarial experience, I interviewed for the position. GBLS then offered me a secretarial position in the Income Maintenance Unit (IMU). Prior to my initial interview, I had never heard of GBLS.

I began working at GBLS in July of 1984 as a bilingual secretary in the IMU formed by three units: Employment, Welfare and Disability. From 1985 through August 1992, I worked in the Employment Unit as a Paralegal; I helped with the monitoring of the Culbreath Consent Decree (a lawsuit against five state agencies that were not in compliance with the recruitment and Civil Services Exams), did employment hearings and MCAD cases. In 1992, I began working on Social Security Disability cases and MassHealth cases in the Disability Unit. In February of 2015, I transitioned to the Family Law Unit.

What do you find most enjoyable about your work?

The best part of my job is working directly with my clients. By having the opportunity to work with them one-on-one, I have been exposed to different cultures, learned of their backgrounds, what makes them unique, and what their various needs are. I especially enjoy the challenges that each and every one of my clients gives me to help them.

What are some of the biggest challenges you've faced?

The biggest challenge was meeting and working with our homeless clients seeking Social Security Disability Benefits. Every homeless client that I represented came with a different set of social, educational, linguistic, and medical issues. They are a unique population with so many needs to cover and it is extremely difficult to help them with only a handful of their issues.

Please describe one of the most memorable clients you're helped.

I remember one of my homeless clients, whom I will refer to as Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith had severe mental issues. He used to carry a briefcase. He took it to a hearing and the judge asked him what he had in his briefcase. Mr. Smith stated that he had a computer, which was the most valuable item he had. The judge told him that he liked computers and asked him if he was willing to show it to him. Mr. Smith hesitated for a moment, looked at me and said, "Do you think that I can trust him with my computer?" I nodded and he proceeded to open his briefcase. Inside was an old, large book from the Boston Public Library. The judge looked at the book and asked, "How do you operate your computer?" Mr. Smith replied, "Look, it's very simple. Just lift the cover and all the knowledge is there." The judge looked at him and said, "You know your way around computers. Keep it safe and I wish you the best of luck."



PHOTO: LINDA LANK

"The best part of my job is working directly with my clients. By having the opportunity to work with them one-on-one, I have been exposed to different cultures...and what their various needs are."

— Lead Paralegal Martha Ramos

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

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(\$800 or more per Boston attorney)

Choate, Hall & Stewart
Collora, LLP
Englander, Leggett, & Chicoine, P.C.
Goodwin Procter
Goulston & Storrs
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WilmerHale

PACESETTER LEAGUE

(\$650-\$799 per Boston attorney)

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Davids & Cohen, P.C.
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REGINALD HEBER SMITH LEAGUE

(\$500-\$649 per Boston attorney)

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Proskauer Rose LLP

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Fish & Richardson, P.C.
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Krokidas & Bluestein LLP
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(\$200-\$349 per Boston attorney)

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Dechert LLP
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(up to \$199 per Boston attorney)

Adler, Cohen, Harvey, Wakeman & Guekguezian LLP
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Shaevel & Krems, LLP
Stoneman Chandler
Swartz & Swartz
Verrill Dana LLP
Wolf Greenfield

Law Firm Fellowships

In addition to their 2014 Lawyers Fund Drive contribution, the following firms provided funding to support the salaries of GBLS attorneys.

McDermott Will & Emery
Skadden
WilmerHale

Loaned Associate Fellowship

In addition to its 2014 Lawyers Fund Drive contribution, the following firm provided a law firm associate, Samara Fox, to work full time at GBLS.

Ropes & Gray

2014 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.

Berman DeValerio
Gordon Law Group, LLP
Lichten & Liss-Riordan, P.C.

**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.*

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Pictured above are the 2014 GBLS Associates Drive captains from law firms across the Boston area. They helped to raise more than \$355,000 from 1,100 associates to provide legal aid to survivors of domestic violence.

PHOTO: JOHN KENNARD

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Jennifer Gorman
Thomas P. Gorman
Evie Goryshina
Anthony Gostanian
Julie M. Gottselig
Dominic Gouker
Johanna Goulding
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Lisa Haines
Edwin L. Hall
Emma Hall
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Zachary Hyde
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Jennifer Ioli
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Marc Johannes
Chelsea Johnson
Laura Johnson
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Oona Johnstone
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Catherine Jones
Sara Jones
Brian Judge
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Sandra Kahn
Faith Kaliski
Elizabeth Kaloyanides
Kevin Kam
Jennifer Kamocsay
Jeannie Kampas*
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Joshua Katz
Kristyn Kaupas
Kristen A. Kearney
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In July 2014 Governor Deval Patrick signed into law "An Act Relative to the Preparation of Certain Bilingual Ballots in the City of Boston" that permanently mandates that Chinese and Vietnamese ballots be available for all elections in the City of Boston. GBLS' Asian Outreach Unit along with a coalition of community organizations including the Chinese Progressive Association and Chinatown Resident Association worked for years to implement and maintain bilingual ballots. GBLS Equal Justice Works Fellow Tram Nguyen is on the Governor's right and Paralegal Tram Nguyen is on his left, flanked by Asian-American fellow advocates and community members.

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An Interview with Volunteer Attorney SUSAN CHIMENE

What led you to choose a career in legal services? What were you doing before you joined GBLS?

The opportunity to both provide direct services to clients and to address the root causes of poverty and inequality through law reform and policy advocacy drew me to legal services. I was a legal services staff attorney in New York before I moved to Cambridge and then was at home raising my three children before I started volunteering at GBLS. I am especially proud that my eldest daughter will be starting her own career as a legal services lawyer in few months.

Why did you choose GBLS, specifically, and how long have you worked here? For what units have you worked in those years?

I met Todd Kaplan when our daughters became friends and he introduced me to CASLS [Cambridge and Somerville Legal Services, GBLS' Cambridge/Somerville office], where I started volunteering in 2003. I love being part of the CASLS team and feel privileged to be able to contribute to GBLS' mission.

What do you find most enjoyable about your work?

I am constantly amazed by the grace and grit of so many of our clients in incredibly difficult situations and by the brilliance and dedication of my colleagues. Working together to try to achieve a positive outcome is always gratifying, and thrilling when we succeed.



PHOTO: LINDA LANK

"I am constantly amazed by the grace and grit of so many of our clients in incredibly difficult situations and by the brilliance and dedication of my colleagues."

— Volunteer attorney Susan Chimene

What are some of the biggest challenges you've faced?

It's challenging working within a system that's rigged against our clients in so many ways—for example, helping clients access disability benefits when they are too disabled to seek needed medical care or helping clients who need emergency shelter navigate harsh rules. The need for more affordable housing feels overwhelming.

In a few sentences please describe just one or two (if that's possible!) of the most memorable clients you're helped.

One client I remember was a lovely older gentleman who took care of his developmentally disabled brother. My client had lost his job and was unable to pay the rent. He was distraught because he knew his brother would not be able to manage living in a shelter. Luckily we were able to help them get into public housing.

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An Interview With Lead Attorney PAULINE QUIRION

What led you to choose a career in legal services? Why did you choose GBLS, specifically, and how long have you worked here? What were you doing before you joined GBLS?

My interest in civil rights and equality for all led me to law school and legal aid. I was in the first generation of my family to finish high school so legal services was a good fit since a fair number of advocates come from poor and working class families. I was at Cambridge and Somerville Legal Services (CASLS) in 1996 when CASLS merged with GBLS.

For what unit(s)/for what project have you worked?

From the 1980s, I did domestic violence/family law work before starting the CORI & Re-entry Project in 2009. [CORI stands for Criminal Offender Record Information.] As Lead Attorney for appeals, I also help other GBLS law units with appeals.

What do you find most enjoyable about your work?

Empowering low-income communities and bringing about systemic change. I am the most proud of cases in the Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) and the Appeals Court which broke new legal ground and helped countless people. Also my legislative work such as the domestic violence child custody presumption bill that started with a white paper law review article and then 7 years of organizing and advocacy.

What are some of the biggest challenges you've faced?

Agencies and judges who interpret the law in ways that are not consistent with the intent of the law, or are downright hostile to our clients. For example, victims of abuse trying find safety or desperately poor clients trying to seal CORI to end their unemployment, homelessness and sometimes hopelessness.



PHOTO: MERRILL SHEA

"I am the most proud of cases in the Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) and the Appeals Court which broke new legal ground and helped countless people." — Lead Attorney Pauline Quirion

Please describe one or two of your most memorable cases.

The CORI & Re-Entry Project's recent SJC win in *Commonwealth v. Pon* lowered what was an onerous and unworkable standard for sealing of criminal cases in court. Our client, whose request to seal had been denied, was amazing and had community awards for his volunteer work helping youth avoid the mistakes he made.

Another favorite is *Caplan v. Donovan*, where the SJC set new precedent that courts can enter abuse prevention orders against out-of-state abusers without personal jurisdiction based on the same type of status jurisdiction used in divorce cases. I never imagined I would have a case relying heavily on that old legal chestnut *Pennoyer v. Neff* that we all study in law school and that I would become so intimately acquainted with the legal history and policy reasons for development of the law in this area. This case was a lot of fun and perhaps made up for my less-than-zealous interest in the topic in law school. This case like all the other appeals show that individual cases can have huge implications.

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Joanne Daniels-Finegold

Board member, client, donor and volunteer: Joanne Daniels-Finegold has worn many hats since she joined the effort to make the T accessible. As someone who uses a wheelchair to get around, Joanne shared her experiences at a 2003 meeting with others who were affected by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's (MBTA's) lack of compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Dan Manning, Associate Director of GBLS, recalls, "Joanne pretty quickly emerged as a leader." She became one of the named plaintiffs in the case known as *Joanne Daniels-Finegold, et al. v. MBTA*. Not only did Joanne play an active role in negotiating the settlement that led to significantly-increased accessibility for T users, she also volunteered at GBLS to help review the voluminous documentation obtained during the litigation. Since the case was settled in 2006, Joanne has continued to participate in official monitoring activities, contributing her unique perspective, particularly with respect to the issue of staff training at the T. She also serves on the GBLS Board of Directors and is a generous donor. "It is gratifying to see everyone benefit from the changes that were made. It's been a privilege to work on the board and contribute in a small way to the important work GBLS does."



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Clients of the Chelsea Collaborative working with GBLS on a mortgage modification case at the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination. Former Chelsea Collaborative organizer Eliza Parad is in the center (wearing glasses) and GBLS Consumer Right Unit Managing Attorney Nadine Cohen is pictured far right, in the first row.

Thank you to the many donors who recommended that GBLS receive a grant from the

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Ashley H. Brooks

"I have long admired the work of the GBLS attorneys. I donate to support my legal comrades in the work they do for low-income individuals, families, and community groups in Greater Boston." Ashley H. Brooks of Sullivan & Worcester follows a proud family tradition, not only in her choice of profession, but also in her commitment to legal services. "My grandfather, also an attorney, always stressed the importance of supporting organizations like GBLS that bridge the legal gap by providing representation to people in need." In addition to her personal support, and despite the demands of law firm life, Ashley has been involved since 2007 as a firm captain in the Associates Fund Drive for GBLS. "I too believe that funding legal services for those who could not otherwise afford representation is a professional imperative." And that's the message she passes on to her colleagues. With the help of a new generation of young lawyers like Ashley, the Boston legal community continues its tradition of making access to justice a priority.



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The following individuals, in addition to many law students, volunteered substantial commitments of time in 2014 to GBLS and its clients. Their service, as reported in the Financial Statements, was valued at \$7,082,926. 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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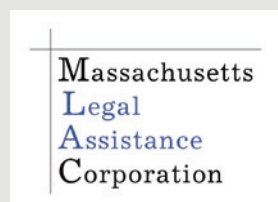
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