

METROWEST Legal Services

ANNUAL REPORT



METROWEST
Legal Services

Protecting rights. Improving lives.



F Y 2 0 1 7

CONTENTS

The mission of MetroWest Legal Services is to provide legal advocacy to protect and advance the rights of the poor, elderly, disabled and other disenfranchised people in our service area and to assist them in obtaining legal, social and economic justice.

We help our clients secure access to basic needs and challenge institutional barriers in order to achieve equal justice for all.

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*MWLS Fiscal Year is from July 1 through June 30

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Stanley Rowin: bottom cover photo, pages 3, 4, 5, & 9

Jeff Poole: page 8

WELCOME LETTER

Why We Do What We Do

Dear Friends and Supporters:

Welcome to our inaugural Annual Report. 2017 was quite a year in so many ways, offering opportunities and presenting challenges in responding to the legal needs of our clients. MetroWest Legal Services' (MWLS) dedicated staff, volunteers and Board of Directors rose to the occasion by delivering high-quality legal services to 2,675 clients through direct legal services, and another 1,495 individuals benefited from community legal education, training, clinics, and Lawyer-for-the-Day programs.

MWLS attorneys provided legal representation to victims of domestic violence, helping them and their children escape abuse; immigrant children who fled their countries of origin to escape abuse, gangs, and mutilation; tenants in subsidized housing, allowing them to maintain a roof over their heads; elderly and disabled clients wrongly denied disability or other cash benefits, allowing them to meet their basic human needs; low-wage workers whose employers did not pay them for work done; and children with special needs who had to fight for appropriate educational services in their school settings.

Access to legal representation for low-income individuals and families is a critical component of access to our judicial system. Since there is no right to counsel for the poor in civil cases, we will continue to use our resources to help those in the most desperate need. In the pages that follow, we invite you to read about our work and how legal aid can be life-changing for people like our client Laura. With your help and support, we will continue to work to ensure equal access to justice for those who cannot afford an attorney. Our fight continues. Thank you for joining us.



Jack K. Merrill
Board President



Elizabeth A. Soule
Executive Director

CASE STUDY — Laura's Story



I'm Finally Learning to Drive

I was one when my parents brought me to the US from Brazil, but I didn't find out I was undocumented until I was 16. For the most part, my childhood was just like everyone else's. **Everything changed when I was 9 and my mother died of ovarian cancer. That was the day my father started to hit me.**

After my mom died, my grandparents got custody of me and I lived with them in New York City. Then when my grandparents got sick, I was 14 and I was sent to live with my father in Massachusetts. I lived with him until I was 17, that's when my father left the US and went back to Brazil without telling me. I was essentially on my own so I made my way to my grandparents in New York. I earned my GED and started working. When I was 25, I started dating Ethan and decided to move back to Massachusetts to be with him.

In February 2008, we began living together in an apartment in Framingham. **We had our first very bad argument that August.** We were at Ethan's mother's house and he walked out and drove back

to Framingham, leaving me stranded in Roslindale. Ethan's mother drove me back to our apartment, but by the time I got there, Ethan had changed the locks and packed up all my stuff. Looking back now, this incident **should have been a big red flag for me**, but I thought that Ethan would change and things would get better. I was alone in Massachusetts and I felt like I needed Ethan. I was in love with him.

We got married later that year in New York, but unfortunately, we had problems and argued all the time. **When Ethan was mad, he would get very mean and aggressive towards me.** He would get close to my face and scream. Ethan was very destructive when he would get angry. I used to get very anxious and scared whenever I could sense that he was getting upset. During one argument, he dug his fist into my cheek. He told me that **"you're so lucky that I don't hurt you."** I told Ethan that I would call the police if he hurt me. Ethan always said, "If you call the cops, you'll get yourself deported, stupid." I was so scared of Ethan, but

CASE STUDY — Laura's Story

also terrified that I would get picked up by immigration. I had lived without immigration papers for my whole life and was constantly afraid of being deported.

September 11, 2015, was our last fight. Ethan threw my iPad against the wall, making a hole. Ethan got a hammer and smashed my printer. He took my phone and threw it in the street, locked me out of the apartment and left in his car. Thankfully, I was able to get back into the apartment by climbing through an unlocked window. Ethan came back about 5 days later and packed up some of his belongings. He told me that he was going to file for divorce as soon as he could, but he never did. A few days later, I had the locks changed.

This is when I reached out to an organization that helps domestic violence survivors. When they found out I was undocumented, they put me in touch with MWLS. Attorney Jennifer Ollington helped file a Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Self Petition so I could get legal status without my husband's help. Jennifer drafted my affidavit and helped me gather all the documents I needed for both my VAWA Self Petition application and my application for Lawful Permanent Residency (LPR). She came with me to my interview and both my applications were approved! **There was no way I would have been able to get through this process and gain legal status without Jennifer's help.**

While working on my immigration case, Jennifer told me that MWLS could also help if I ever decided to file for divorce. A few months later, I decided I was ready and MWLS connected me with Attorneys Colleen Cunnally and Brian Angel Burke who are members

of the MWLS Pro Bono Panel. My divorce case went to trial because Ethan didn't want to pay any alimony. **I wouldn't have gotten through the divorce without Colleen and Brian.** Ethan was horrible, but with them by my side, I didn't have to speak if I didn't want to. Our divorce was finalized in early 2017 and I received an \$11,000 settlement in lieu of alimony.

Once I became an LPR and got my work permit I was able to get a legitimate job, which I still have, and stay in my apartment. **I'm currently learning to drive and I'm hoping to get my license and a car by the end of the year.** My plan is to go to college and get a degree in accounting. After I separated from Ethan, it was really important for me to try and make it on my own. I will be forever grateful for everything that Jennifer, Colleen and Brian did for me.



PROGRAMS OVERVIEW

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEGAL SERVICES



1,628

Intakes



2,675

Cases



Held 31 Trainings



Reaching 1,495 People



Held 111 Legal Clinics

With 620 Attendees

CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT

17,171

Households received

\$9,356,353

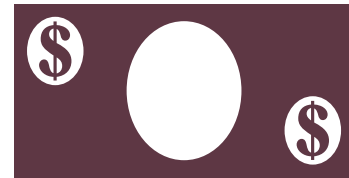
in retroactive SNAP (food stamps) benefits



WAGE & HOUR PROJECT

\$110,000

of wages paid to workers



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROJECT

Assisted 235 victims of domestic violence with their restraining orders or family law cases



PROGRAMS OVERVIEW

HOUSING



Prevented/Delayed Evictions

PRO BONO



140 Volunteer Attorneys



Cases

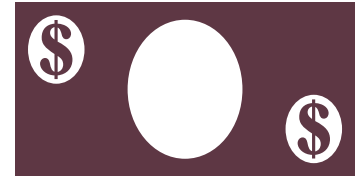
IMMIGRATION



Active Cases



Hours Donated

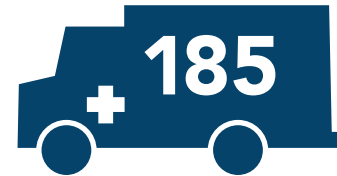


\$509,490
in Donated Services

MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIP



Active Cases



Provider Consults

COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE PROJECT



Helped Small Businesses and Nonprofits

EDUCATION



Represented 93 parents of special needs children in their education matters

EVENTS

40th Anniversary Celebration

Congressman Joseph P. Kennedy III delivered a moving keynote address about the struggles your neighbors face each day:

“Over the past four decades, MetroWest Legal Services has fought day and night to ensure our justice system works for the people who need it most,” said Kennedy. “As we advocate for increased funding for civil legal aid in Washington, it is an honor to stand with the staff members, volunteers, and supporters who give MWLS the strength needed to succeed in its mission.”



Congressman Joseph P. Kennedy III

We honored our “Forty Stars for Forty Years”, individuals whose contributions have added to the success of MWLS.

The Nancy King Award was given to Paul T. Dacier, Esq., the **Community Partner Award** was given to Bob Brack, of the Brack Family Fund and the Joan H. Brack Foundation, and the **Pro Bono Excellence Award** was given to the Boston law firm Nutter McClennen & Fish LLP.

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EVENTS

2017 Nancy King Memorial Golf Tournament

Over 90 golfers took to the Framingham Country Club golf course on Monday, June 5th. Although the weather left much to be desired, drizzly with highs in the 50's, the golfers took it in stride.

The round of golf was followed with a fun evening of live and silent auctions, an award ceremony and raffle. 100% of the funds raised benefit children and adults in need in MetroWest, by providing legal advice and representation to improve their lives.

Thank you to all our sponsors, golfers, donors and volunteers for making the 20th Annual MWLS Nancy King Memorial Golf Tournament a huge success! With your help we raised over \$80,000 to help protect the rights and improve the lives of impoverished children and adults in MetroWest!



Roland Fryer, Glenn Migliozi, Brendon Donnellan, and Board President Jack Merrill

Pro Bono Open House

After an overwhelming response to a call-to-action from the local legal community, MetroWest Legal Services hosted a Pro Bono Open House on March 2nd at the Fountain Street Fine Art Gallery. The event attracted both new and current volunteers to learn about the many pro bono opportunities available at MetroWest Legal Services.



Attorney Jennifer Ollington, Rep. Chris Walsh, and Executive Director Betsy Soulé

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Herb Connolly Acura
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+ Leadership Circle member who has donated to MWLS for 3 or more consecutive years

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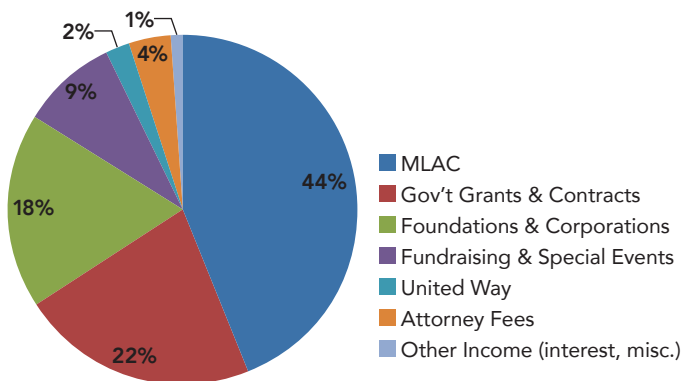
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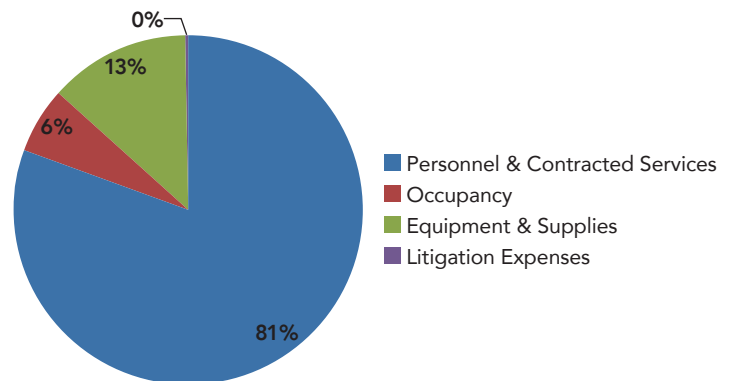
FINANCIALS*

	FY2017	FY2016	FY2015
Revenue			
MLAC	\$ 827,030	\$ 723,298	\$ 626,645
Government Grants & Contracts	405,425	408,199	509,565
Foundations & Corporations	336,729	325,606	282,569
Fundraising & Special Events	169,191	111,833	107,159
United Way	36,000	35,500	41,000
Attorney Fees	73,101	8,923	23,321
Other Income (interest, misc.)	10,023	6,804	5,870
Donated Services	548,017	537,566	513,012
Total Income After Donated Services	\$ 2,405,516	\$ 2,157,729	\$ 2,109,141
Expenses			
Personnel	\$ 1,349,601	\$ 1,182,025	\$ 1,164,304
Contracted Services	97,005	96,295	99,112
Occupancy	105,754	102,975	104,355
Equipment & Supplies	222,399	194,683	171,874
Litigation Expenses	2,786	4,245	2,513
Miscellaneous	4,171	2,814	1,272
Donated Services	511,115	518,845	500,655
Total Expenses After Donated Services	\$ 2,292,831	\$ 2,101,882	\$ 2,044,085
Change In Net Assets	\$ 112,685	\$ 55,847	\$ 65,056
Cumulative Operating New Assets	\$ 1,415,197	\$ 1,292,402	\$ 1,224,379

FY17 Revenue without Donated Services



FY17 Expenses without Donated Services



*MWLS Fiscal Year is from July 1 through June 30

SAVE THE DATES

MetroWest Legal Services Nancy King Memorial Golf Tournament

June 4, 2018
Charter Oaks Country Club
Hudson, MA



SAVE THE DATE

JAZZ FOR JUSTICE BRUNCH



SUNDAY OCTOBER 14, 2018, 10 AM
THE CENTER FOR ARTS NATICK



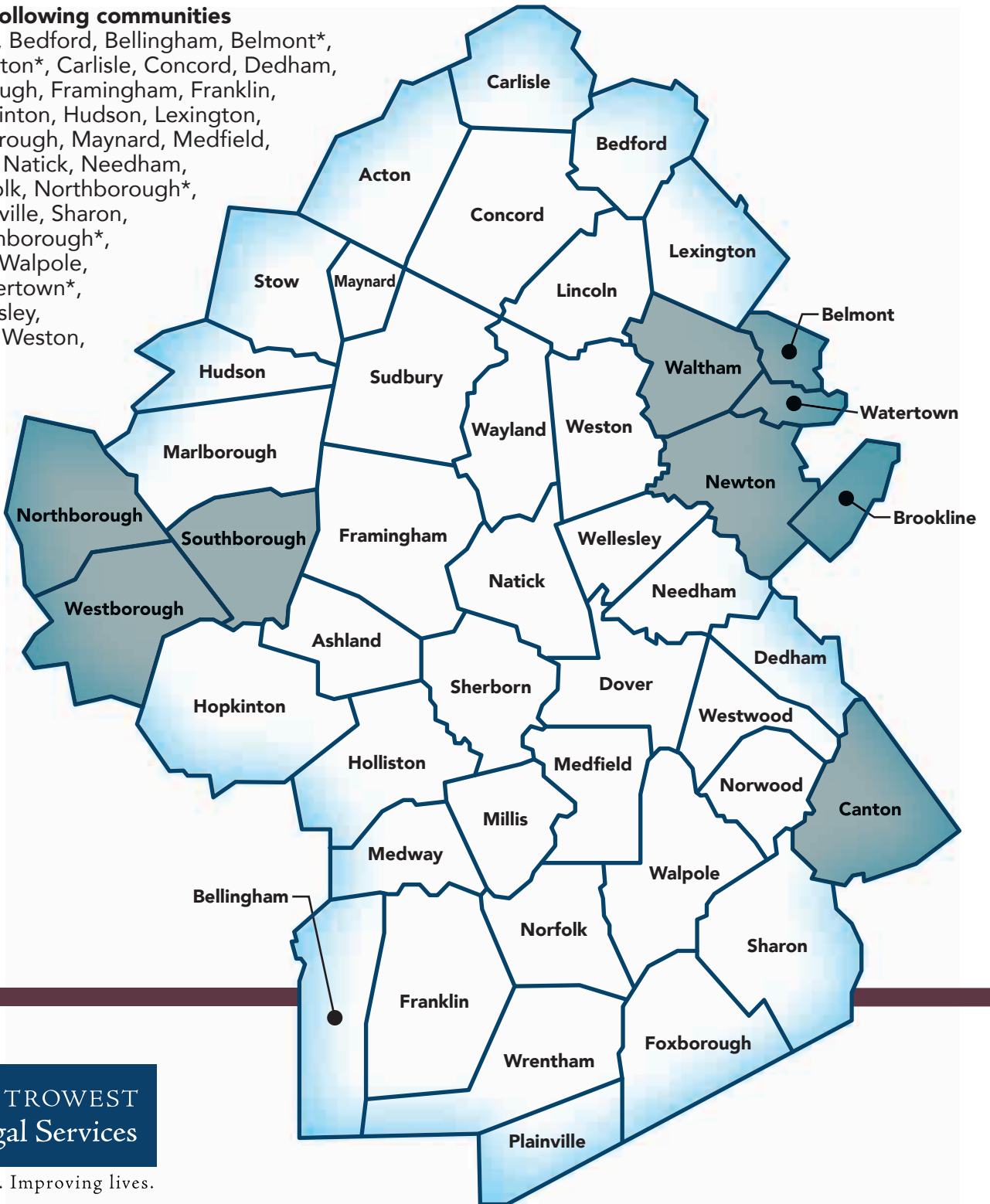
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