We are proud to present the 2012 Annual Report of the Women’s Bar Foundation (WBF). This year, our small, dedicated staff has maintained an impressive level of service to clients thanks to the assistance of hundreds of volunteer attorneys as well as law firms committed to the highest ideals of the legal profession—giving back to the community through pro bono work. Through the WBF’s five pro bono projects, we were able to assist nearly 1,000 low-income clients—primarily women and their children—facing extremely difficult circumstances such as domestic abuse, homelessness, incarceration, and end-of-life decision making.

Kate Cook
2012 WBF President
Here are a few highlights from 2012:

- The Family Law Project (FLP) staff managed nearly 1600 calls to the intake line and provided legal assistance to 360 clients including 124 referrals to pro bono attorneys.

- The Elder Law Project (ELP) implemented a new intake line which allows seniors to contact the Project directly. We provided information for 106 callers and referred 78 clients to pro bono attorneys for assistance with preparing end-of-life documents. In 2012, the ELP served three times the number of clients it served in 2011.

- The Hampden County Housing Court Project has been so successful in assisting homeless families facing eviction that it has expanded into Hampshire County.

- The Women’s Lunch Place Project secured two volunteer coordinators to assist with legal questions from the guests of the shelter.

- The Framingham Project for Incarcerated Women continues to serve women who are incarcerated or recently released from a correctional facility. In 2012, the Framingham Project successfully negotiated for its volunteers to resume educational seminars at MCI Framingham.

We thank the Board of Trustees, the staff, and the volunteer attorneys for their commitment to the organization’s mission to advance social and economic justice by providing low-income women with access to legal representation. We also thank our donors for their financial support. We look forward to continuing our work together to make access to justice a reality for our clients.
Patricia

We first met Patricia in 2008 when she was referred to the FLP. She needed a lawyer to represent her at a hearing to extend a temporary restraining order. The woman we met in 2008 was terrified. She had been subjected to a steady stream of verbal and physical threats and intimidation by her spouse. She also was blind and deaf, as a result of a degenerative disease called Usher’s Syndrome. Her spouse had been arrested and charged with felony assault and battery on a disabled person, and eventually pled guilty to the charge. Patricia was afraid to take steps against her spouse because she believed there was nothing she could do to protect herself.

The FLP represented her at annual hearings to extend her 209A Abuse Prevention Order and, in 2010, the Court granted our request that the Order be made permanent. However, even though Patricia was safer with a restraining order, she also needed a divorce and alimony in order to transition into a new life, abuse-free. The FLP succeeded in securing a divorce for her which included the return of her property, a lump sum settlement, and alimony payments.

These days, living on her own in modest housing, Patricia is the woman she was always meant to be: lighthearted, witty, and independent. She is the subject of a documentary film and is not afraid to speak out about the abuse she suffered or to offer assistance to those in similar circumstances. She often can be found as a guest speaker in libraries throughout the Boston area. Patricia has many friends, including those of us at the FLP who have had the distinct honor of being a part of her journey.

In 2012, the FLP continued to provide critical legal assistance to low-income domestic violence survivors. The FLP staff referred 124 full representation cases to our pool of volunteer attorneys, whom we recruit, train, and mentor. We responded to nearly 1,600 calls to the intake line. The FLP staff attorney provided brief service and advice to 236 clients. In addition, the FLP trained 175 attorneys in domestic violence, divorce, custody, and other issues related to family law.
The Framingham Project for Incarcerated Women

The Framingham Project for Incarcerated Women provides legal information to women who are incarcerated or have been recently released from a correctional facility. In teams, Framingham Project volunteer attorneys hold educational seminars and answer questions on a broad range of legal topics, including family law, housing, benefits and Criminal Record Offender Information (CORI) laws. The Framingham Project operates at MCI-Framingham and South Bay House of Correction in Suffolk County, and at two Boston post-release programs, Kingston House and Aid to Incarcerated Mothers. In 2012, the Framingham Project held ten educational seminars reaching approximately 60 women. Additionally, Framingham Project representatives served on the advisory board of the Women’s Justice Network, an interdisciplinary research project of the Wellesley Centers for Women.

Women’s Lunch Place Project

In 2012, the Women’s Lunch Place Project provided volunteer attorneys to staff a weekly clinic for the guests of The Women’s Lunch Place on topics such as Social Security benefits, criminal procedure, consumer law, immigration, new Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) laws, and housing. This year, our volunteer attorneys counseled approximately 150 guests during their on-site visits.
The Elder Law Project

The ELP grew exponentially in 2012. The ELP recruited, trained, and mentored 74 new attorneys who provided pro bono legal assistance to 78 low-income seniors who were in need of end-of-life documents, including wills, health care proxies, living wills, durable powers of attorney, and homestead declarations. The number of clients served through the ELP in 2012 was nearly three times the number served in 2011. Also new in 2012 was the implementation of an intake line which broadened the scope of the ELP’s outreach to seniors. In addition, the ELP established two new partnerships: one with the Boston Housing Authority (BHA), enabling many more site visits to take place within BHA-owned senior housing developments, and the other with the Massachusetts Academy of Elder Law Attorneys, which has provided mentors and trainers for the Project.

Leo

Leo heard about the Elder Law Project through his community senior center in Roslindale. He is 74 years old, a former Boston Police Department dispatcher and a very proud father of four adult daughters. Leo has health issues and was worried about what would happen if he ever became incapacitated. He wanted to be sure that his modest assets would be used to provide for one of his daughters who is disabled. Adding to his worry was the fact that his daughter lives with her mother, who is currently battling breast cancer. Leo’s volunteer attorney incorporated a provision in his will for the benefit of his disabled daughter. Said Leo about his experience with the ELP “My lawyer answered all of my questions—she was really very good.”
The Hampden County Housing Court Project continued to provide critical legal assistance to low-income pro se litigants on “eviction day” (every Thursday). In 2012, forty volunteer attorneys participated in the Project in one of three capacities: (1) lawyer-for-a-day; (2) full representation; or (3) limited assistance representation. The Project served more than 85 clients this year.

Sandra

At Christmas time “Sandra” received a notice from her landlord alleging non-payment of rent. The notice required that she and her infant daughter vacate the apartment in fourteen days. Our volunteer lawyer met Sandra on the day she appeared in court for her eviction trial. Sandra was withholding her rent because there were many deplorable conditions in her apartment and although she had previously written to her landlord about the terrible conditions, her landlord failed to make the necessary repairs.

Sandra’s volunteer lawyer moved the court for leave to file a late answer so that Sandra could assert her defenses, including substantial violations of the State Sanitary Code (the apartment was infested with mice, cockroaches and water bugs, and repeatedly had been cited by the City of Holyoke’s Department of Code Enforcement). In addition to the infestations, there were numerous other sub-standard conditions, including a lack of heat and hot water during some of the coldest months of the year as well as lead paint.

With the assistance of her volunteer lawyer, Sandra and her baby daughter were able to remain in their home. All the necessary repairs were made, including de-leading of the apartment, so that it is now safe for Sandra’s daughter.
The WBF hosted its eighth annual Comedy Night on May 24, 2012. Professional comedian Steve Calechman, also known as the voice of the Boston Lobsters, headlined the event with back-up from lawyer-comedienne Elaine Epstein of Todd & Weld LLP. Habeas Chorus of Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP delighted the audience with their legal take on several popular tunes. Susan Wornick, News Anchor for WCVB-TV, was a fabulous guest host and produced record-breaking fundraising results during the live auction. More than 400 guests engaged in high-spirited bidding during the live auction, which featured Bruce Springsteen tickets and vacation homes in Rhode Island, Cape Cod, and the Berkshires. Among the popular silent auction items were theater tickets, jewelry, restaurant gift certificates, and Red Sox tickets.

At a reception immediately preceding Comedy Night, the WBF honored Liberty Mutual Insurance’s Domestic Violence Pro Bono Program and Attorney Paula Mangum with its annual Pro Bono Awards.

Liberty Mutual has worked closely with the WBF’s Family Law Project over the past two years accepting very difficult, and often last-minute, abuse protection order referrals. In one case, they worked with a domestic violence victim who was deaf, but did not use American Sign Language, and could not communicate at all with the Court without assistance. They also secured a permanent abuse prevention order in a Chicopee case in which the defendant had several outstanding assault and battery cases against him, along with witness intimidation charges. Liberty Mutual’s Legal Department is among the first to respond to our referral requests, and their attorneys make it possible for some of our most vulnerable clients to get the emergency safety orders they need.

Paula Mangum has a solo family law and domestic relations practice with a focus on domestic violence. Paula’s very first case, ten years ago, was a pro bono case that she accepted from the Family Law Project. Since then, Paula has distinguished herself as a volunteer and mentor. In fact, Paula is one of only a handful of attorneys involved with the Family Law Project who accepts cases year after year and continually mentors less experienced attorneys. Paula spends a great deal of time with those she mentors, providing the benefit of her experience in family law as well as sensitivity to issues involving poverty and domestic violence. She is someone whom the Family Law Project can rely on to accept cases even at the very last minute.
The Women’s Bar Foundation Would Like to Thank Its 2012 Comedy Night Sponsors

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The WBF is an organization for women run by women. There is a profound sense among all that, as lawyers, we have been given the “keys to the kingdom” in terms of professional skills and a license that gives us access to institutions and people that can serve the cause of justice for our sisters in need. We have an obligation to use those keys for just that purpose.”

Donna Stoehr Hanlon

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Donna Stoehr Hanlon
Many Thanks to the Attorneys Who Accepted New Pro Bono Cases in 2012

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“...It was truly an amazing experience having been able to help my client feel more secure and better prepared for the next chapter in her life.”

Janet Cha, Family Law Project volunteer attorney
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Volunteering for one of the *pro bono* projects of the Women’s Bar Foundation is rewarding, challenging, educational, and inspiring. Not only will you receive comprehensive training in an area of law you may not otherwise have an opportunity to learn, you’ll be providing critical services to people who do not have access to legal representation. Participation in our *pro bono* projects includes being assigned to a mentor who will provide guidance, answer questions, review documents and more. To volunteer, please contact Rachel B. Biscardi via email at rbiscardi@womensbar.org or by telephone at 617-973-6666.

** Become a Mentor **

One of the most important components of the Women’s Bar Foundation’s *pro bono* projects is our commitment to provide mentors to volunteer attorneys. Each volunteer attorney is paired with a senior attorney who specializes in a discrete field of law. Over the years, we have found that mentors truly distinguish the Women’s Bar Foundation’s *pro bono* projects. We need mentors for all of our *pro bono* projects. If you are willing to share time and wisdom with a new attorney, please contact Rachel B. Biscardi via e-mail at rbiscardi@womensbar.org or by telephone at 617-973-6666.

** Become a Contributor **

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Income

<table>
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<th>January 1</th>
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<th>Total Income</th>
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<td>December 31</td>
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**FUNDRAISING INITIATIVES**

$152,263

**PLEDGES & INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS**

$78,387

**GRANTS**

$97,350

* THESE NUMBERS HAVE NOT BEEN REVIEWED OR AUDITED

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January 1
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2012

Total Expenses

$303,380

Expenses*

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