FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD
At this moment, MVLS is on the cusp of its 30 year anniversary.
Looking back on this organization’s rich history, it’s easy to see that we are truly standing on the shoulders of giants; people of character and vision who have made MVLS an essential part of Maryland’s legal landscape. Every day brings new challenges, but we accomplish so much and help so many because of the hard work that has gone on before. All of us here at MVLS can’t thank those people enough.

This unique moment also affords us the opportunity to reflect on what we do at MVLS and why it’s so important. When we say that pro bono is for the public good, we mean it. If you look through the following pages you will see how our volunteer attorneys are making a positive impact on the lives of Marylanders stuck trying to navigate a system that seems stacked against them. When boiled down to the basics, their issues strike a chord with all of us—gaining financial security, seeking out a quality education, protecting a child. Their stories are our stories, only with a crucial twist—they couldn’t afford a lawyer to be an advocate for their interests. That was until they came to us.

During the last year we secured great volunteer attorneys for Chris Pecore, who simply wanted to gain custody of his daughter and take her out of a chaotic environment; for Tom Kelly, who was drowning in debts while living on public assistance; and for Tara and Tori Lafferty, autistic children just looking for what every child expects—a decent education. Each of these clients saw stellar results. MVLS was there for them, and for thousands more like them.

We promote pro bono legal work because we know that its one of the simplest, most cost-effective ways to change a person’s life for the better. Our system of justice is never quite open enough, but our volunteer attorneys are always working to crack that door open just a little more. In 2009 they donated 11,300 hours of their time. This year it was 12,300. Our volunteers don’t stop giving. One attorney for one client—that’s what we do.

And we’ll keep doing it. Because MVLS is a leader and we’ll continue to lead. We are strong and getting stronger. We have a new look and new challenges we’re eager to take on. We won’t be satisfied with sitting on our laurels. There are too many people who need our help for that. After nearly 30 years, we are just getting started.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Sullivan     Lawrence D. Coppel
Executive Director     President of the Board of Directors, FY 2011
When life goes off the rails, it’s usually sudden and unpredictable.

Your landlord threatens to evict you. Your ex-spouse jeopardizes your relationship with your children. A simple clerical error deprives you of your livelihood. Your insurance company denies your claim, leaving you deep in debt. You may have to default on a mortgage you didn’t understand and can no longer afford.

Suddenly, you need legal help. And no matter how hard the legal system strives to be fair and just for everybody, it isn’t always user friendly—particularly if your resources are limited and you’re feeling vulnerable. The very processes and procedures designed to protect you can seem bewildering, even threatening. You need someone to guide you through the maze.

You need an advocate.
Tara and Tori Lafferty are 7-year-old twins, both severely autistic. They’d made great strides at the Kennedy Krieger clinic and both graduated to a public school program in Baltimore County. They were progressing well until school administrators decided to relieve their overcrowding problem by placing the twins in a new class. But the new teacher wasn’t equipped to handle a special-needs classroom, and their mother Kimberly feared for their physical safety. As the school administrators dragged their feet, the twins regressed. Kimberly needed someone to intervene before it was too late.

**Maureen van Stone, the Director of Project HEAL at the Kennedy Krieger Institute,** was able to cut through the bureaucratic inertia and focus administrators’ attention on the girls’ very real problem. With the help of Dr. Nancy Grace and Cathy Groschan, both of Kennedy Krieger Institute, Maureen was able to place the twins in a private school. The girls are thriving again.
Chris Pecore was trying to be a responsible father. He paid regular child support for Brianna, his 14-year-old daughter, and informally shared custody with her maternal grandmother. But the law required his support payments go directly to Chris’s ex-wife, a drug addict; Brianna wasn’t getting a dime of it. And when the grandmother began trying to exclude Chris from his daughter’s life, he knew it was time to file for full custody. But the cost of legal representation was way beyond his means.

In an ideal world, Chris and the grandmother would have continued to share custody, with support payments going directly to them. But long-simmering resentments and suspicions prevented that from happening. MVLS volunteer Tom Mulinazzi navigated these troubled waters for Chris, clearing the way for him to achieve full custody of Brianna, while leaving the door open for future shared custody with the grandmother.
It took Tom Kelly 12 years to get in over his head in credit card debt. A quadriplegic since 1981, Tom used the card for everyday essentials to supplement his modest government benefits. He felt bad about his mounting debt, but the collection agency on the other end of the phone didn’t want to hear about it. They wanted their money. And they wouldn’t leave him alone until they got it. Tom needed a lawyer and he knew he couldn’t afford one.

Connie Hare, an MVLS volunteer, helped Tom file for Chapter 7 bankruptcy, effectively discharging all his debt. Because of his situation, Tom was essentially judgment proof, but Connie’s quick work saved him from what otherwise would have been a long and painful process.
Volunteer of the Year
Karl-Henri Gauvin

The MVLS Volunteer of the Year Award is given to the individual who has contributed the most to furthering pro bono services to MVLS clients through individual representation, recruitment of other attorneys to provide service or otherwise expanded pro bono services. We chose to honor the achievement of Karl-Henri Gauvin in 2010 for his outstanding contribution to furthering our foreclosure and bankruptcy pro bono programs. A relative newcomer to MVLS, Mr. Gauvin has nonetheless made a big impression in a short period of time.

Since joining our volunteer panel in January 2009, Mr. Gauvin has accepted a total of 41 pro bono foreclosure and bankruptcy cases. Rather than waiting for an MVLS paralegal to ask him to take a pro bono case, Mr. Gauvin will often contact us first, asking if there is anyone who needs help. As an example of his commitment to helping low-income bankruptcy clients, Mr. Gauvin offered to help 10 pro bono Chapter 7 Bankruptcy clients each quarter. He is also one of our star volunteers with the Foreclosure Prevention Pro Bono Project, accepting 16 foreclosure cases for low-income clients in fiscal year 2010.

Mr. Gauvin is a solo practitioner with offices in Baltimore and Washington, D.C. His practice concentrates on bankruptcy, foreclosure, consumer law, labor and employment matters. His goal in representing both his regular clients and pro bono MVLS clients is “to give a voice to individuals who have been historically silenced.” The many low-income pro bono clients who have been helped by Mr. Gauvin would undoubtedly agree that his voice is heard loud and clear. We congratulate Mr. Gauvin on this well-deserved award!

Law Firm of the Year
Mehlman, Greenblatt & Hare, LLC

The MVLS Law Firm of the Year Award is presented to a law firm that has provided significant pro bono services to MVLS clients during the year. We honor Mehlman, Greenblatt & Hare, LLC with the Law Firm of the Year Award in 2010 for their extraordinary commitment to providing pro bono legal services to low-income bankruptcy clients. Constance M. Hare, a principal with this Baltimore-based law firm, generously accepted a remarkable 15 pro bono bankruptcy cases in fiscal year 2010. On more than one occasion Ms. Hare has “stepped up to the plate” to accept multiple pro bono cases to help reduce a backlog of clients waiting for assistance. She is also the type of attorney who receives heartfelt thank you notes from her pro bono clients. Since 1993, the law firm has handled a total of 58 pro bono bankruptcy cases through MVLS. Given its small size—3 attorneys—this is a truly noteworthy achievement, and shows a real understanding of the importance of “giving back” to those less fortunate.

Ten Year Award

This year we recognize three long-time MVLS volunteers who received the Ten-Year Volunteer Award. These dedicated volunteers have accepted at least one MVLS pro bono case every year for the past ten consecutive years. We thank them for their ongoing commitment to MVLS and our clients. Our Ten-Year Volunteer Award winners are:

Thomas R. Simpson, Jr.
Elva E. Tillman
Randy S. Wase
2010 MVLS Volunteers

In 2010, 584 lawyers, accountants and other professionals donated 12,300 hours of work valued at over $2.8 million on behalf of MVLS clients.

Volunteer lawyers are the engine that runs MVLS. Without them, our clients would have to face the legal system alone. And so we say, “Thank you!” to all the volunteers whose names you see below. We have listed volunteers who accepted a new case between July 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010. Volunteers are listed by the county of their primary office. If the volunteer accepted more than one case it is noted in parenthesis. We also thank our dedicated volunteers who continued to work on pro bono cases from prior years.
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**Numbers Matter**

**2,983**
Low-income Marylanders who benefited from MVLS programs

**584**
Lawyers and other professionals who volunteered their services

**12,500**
Hours those professionals volunteered to help MVLS clients

**$2.8 million**
The dollar equivalent of those hours

**147**
New volunteers who joined our volunteer panel

**87**
Self-represented debtors assisted at the Debtor Assistance Project at the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Baltimore

**325**
Families and children assisted through Project HEAL at Kennedy Krieger Institute and the Harriet Lane Clinic at JHU

**501**
Self-represented litigants assisted at the Washington County Courthouse Advice Clinic

**191**
Homeowners facing foreclosure who were referred to an MVLS volunteer attorney

**820**
Individuals and organizations that supported MVLS financially

**Closed Case Highlights**

**CASES BY REGION**

- **Central** - 65%
- **Western** - 28%
- **Eastern Shore** - 3%

**TYPES OF CASES**

- **Family** - 49%
- **Tax / Income Maintenance** - 9%
- **Consumer** - 15%
- **Housing** - 9%
- **Education** - 7%
- **Miscellaneous** - 8%
- **Wills/Estates** - 3%

**FY 2010**

**MVLS Financial Highlights**

**Total Income:** $1,407,830
- Grants: 66%
- Miscellaneous: 1%
- Donations: 26%
- Annual Benefit: 6%
- Interest: 2%

**Total Expenses:** $1,486,304
- Fundraising: 8.6%
- Management & General: 8.4%
- Program Services: 83%
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