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Executive Director Transition

by Charles C. Jackson



On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to announce that CGLA, after an extensive search, has hired Gretchen Slusser as our new Executive Director. I hope that you will join me in welcoming Gretchen to the CGLA family. Gretchen comes to CGLA from thredpartners, a Chicago-based management consulting firm she co-founded in 2004. She has a long history of volunteerism and service, including at CGLA. And, as a successful entrepreneur, Gretchen brings a wealth of experience in people management, an extensive Chicago network, and a passion for developing creative solutions that drive results.

Gretchen's first day was August 1st. Since then she has been busy gathering extensive feedback from our staff, reviewing our services and operations, meeting Board members and other stakeholders, and working closely with the Board to establish strategic priorities. Gretchen introduces herself below, and she will be speaking at the Annual Benefit on October 12th.

The Board also expresses its deep appreciation to Dr. Laura Zumdahl, whose steady leadership kept CGLA's programs and operations running smoothly until Gretchen's arrival. Laura recently accepted a new position as Vice President of Non-Profit Services at the Donors Forum, where she is providing leadership for its non-profit capacity-building initiatives. The position is a perfect fit with her recently-completed doctoral work in non-profit leadership development. Thank you Laura, once again, for your service to CGLA and our clients, and congratulations on this next step in your career!

The Board is excited for CGLA's future. CGLA's legal services provide real opportunity to our clients by helping them overcome their often intractable legal problems and giving them a fresh chance to take charge of their lives. We look forward to working with Gretchen and to growing our services and expanding CGLA's impact on our most vulnerable neighbors and on Chicago.

My Journey to CGLA

by Gretchen Slusser



Our purpose is to answer God's call to seek justice and mercy, so I find it appropriate that my journey to CGLA started last summer with my volunteering in CGLA's front office, answering the phone. If you've never volunteered to answer calls at CGLA, I would highly recommend it; a true view into the lives of the people that CGLA serves.

While answering phones and helping where needed, I got to know CGLA's clients and staff which inspired me to get more involved. I made CGLA a recipient of a foundation sponsorship through the company I was running at the time and began reaching out to my friends to support CGLA as well. Quite frankly, CGLA had found a place in my heart, and I

My Journey *(continued from page 1)*

had found an organization that I was passionate about and could believe in the work that they were doing in our community.

One short year later, I found myself being considered for the Executive Director position. As many have heard me say, "This is my dream job," but one that I had not planned on having for another 10 years. Throughout the interview process, I learned more about the organization and the people that we serve, and it became apparent that all the experiences of my life had been preparing me to be right where I am today, exactly where I was meant to be.

Since I started as Executive Director in August, I have witnessed people helping people with so much passion and relentless advocacy that I find it hard to make it through a day without a sense of awe and admiration. This work and the people who do it will melt your heart and make you feel just a little jealous at the same time.

There is a special feeling when you are among people that are striving towards a common goal, a goal that makes a difference in people's lives and in our community.

I am thrilled to have been given this opportunity and look forward to the future of CGLA.

CSS Program Increases Impact on Clients

Thanks to our generous supporters, CGLA's Client Support Services (CSS) Program was re-launched in April of 2011 with the hiring of Staff Social Worker Deresha Gibson. In just five short months, the additional support and services offered through the CSS program has been a tremendous help to our clients and our attorneys. Clients have been able to more effectively access needed services, and our attorneys have been able to focus more of their efforts on their legal work.

The CSS program has served forty-eight clients since April, offering a variety of strategic supportive services designed to help stabilize clients in crisis and strengthen those who need help leveraging their legal success for long-term impact. We have conducted house visits, helped clients to find better housing, enrolled parents in GED classes, and provided access to job training programs and counselors. We have helped clients to navigate acrimony with their landlords, apply for public benefits, and access a wide range of other services for which they are eligible. In many cases, we have made targeted referrals to partnering agencies, ensuring that more of our clients are able to benefit from both social and legal services as part of their CGLA experience.

This fall, two masters level social work interns will join Deresha to help round out the program and extend our reach. As the program grows over the next year, our team

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CGLA's 2011 Annual Benefit

Wednesday, October 12

5:00 pm
Reception & Silent Auction

6:30 pm
Dinner & Program

Hyatt Regency
151 E. Wacker Dr.
Chicago, IL 60601

To RSVP, contact Tim Wallace at
timwallace@cglanet.net/
312.738.2452x417
or visit our website at
www.cglanet.net



CGLA Staff Social Worker, Deresha Gibson has provided case management, referrals and brief services to forty-eight clients since beginning in April, 2011.

Criminal Records Program Offers Hope

Attorneys at CGLA have the unique opportunity to meet people in the midst of trying circumstances and have a real and immediate impact on their lives. In some instances, people are being held back from success because they are unable simply to get their story heard in a courtroom. Ms. Simpson has one such story.

Ms. Simpson is a strong woman who went through a dark period in her life which resulted in a criminal record. When we met her she wanted to apply for public housing and was trying to get her record cleared on her own. When she went before a judge to ask him to seal her record, she was accused of lying and told to leave, "get her story straight," and come back.

Fortunately, CGLA staff attorney Paul Haidle was in the courtroom for another case and heard the judge admonish Ms. Simpson. Paul believed she was telling the truth and offered to have CGLA represent her. Shortly thereafter we met with

Ms. Simpson and listened to her full story.

More than eight years ago, Ms. Simpson's story took an extraordinarily tragic turn. Her husband was murdered by gang members in her neighborhood and then four days later her house burned down. Afterwards, Ms. Simpson admittedly fell into a deep depression and turned to drugs as a way to cope. She had been convicted several times on minor drug related charges when she found her strength and checked into rehab. She has been clean and sober for eight years now.

When Ms. Simpson went back to court to face the same judge, this time she had a CGLA attorney at her side. We helped her to tell her story in a way that the judge could understand, and he immediately ordered her record sealed. Today Ms. Simpson is able to legally put behind her the trials and tribulations that she had already personally overcome. We are privileged to have been a part of her story.

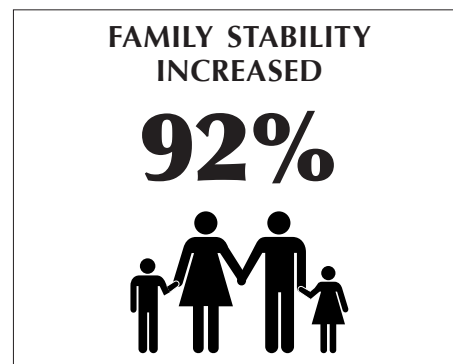
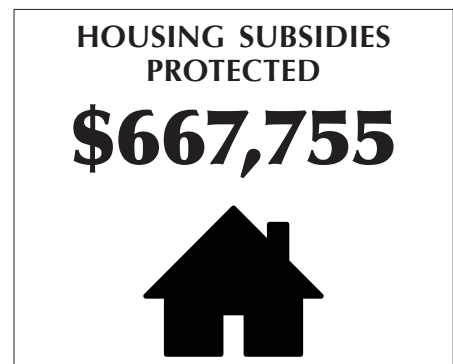
CSS Program *(continued from page 2)*

will focus their efforts on developing relationships with more community organizations and offering additional services to our clients. The CSS staff will also continually work with our legal team to further integrate the two practices to ensure better streamlining and more holistic services for our clients.

Making A Difference Statistics Key

*Housing Subsidies Protected - the combined monetary value of housing subsidies that were protected by CGLA's Housing Law Program; *Family Stability Increased - Percentage of Family Law clients who reported increased family stability after receiving services from CGLA. .

Making A Difference in FY 2011





Cabrini Green Legal Aid
740 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Chicago, Illinois 60642

Fall 2011

Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Chicago, IL
Permit No. 4641

Join us On-Line

As we continue our efforts to make updates more accessible and convenient for our supporters and become a greener organization, we'll be transitioning to e-newsletters beginning this winter.

To continue receiving this quarterly publication electronically and help us cut our carbon footprint, please visit our website at www.cgla.net to enter your e-mail and join our mailing list.

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