



Contact: Robert Acton (312) 738-2452 ext. 412, robacton@cglanet.net

Cabrini Green Legal Aid Moves to New, More Modern Offices in West Town, Expanding Facility, Staff, and Services

New location, near bus and Chicago station on CTA blue El lines, will better serve low-income Chicagoans, a task CGLA began at the Cabrini Green housing project 35 years ago

CHICAGO (September XX, 2008) – **Cabrini Green Legal Aid**, which has provided free legal services to Chicagoans since 1973, has moved from its former location near the Cabrini Green complex to new offices at 740 N. Milwaukee Avenue, in West Town.

The last four years has seen a substantial increase in CGLA’s client case load as well as its staffing, necessitating a move from quarters the agency purchased 13 years ago. Since 2004, the number of individuals served annually has increased tenfold, to 5,000, while its full-time staff has more than doubled, to 16.

Established by attorney **Charles V. Hogren** in 1973 to aid tenants in the Cabrini Green housing development, CGLA now serves underprivileged residents throughout the city of Chicago.

Cabrini Green Legal Aid Executive Director **Robert B. Acton** says its new space allows CGLA to provide services and amenities it could not before, including two meeting rooms for the scores of clients and potential clients who visit each week; a 20-seat conference room; an up-to-date legal library; and a modern reception area that seats 11, replacing one at its former offices that sat just three and lacked both heating and air conditioning.

CGLA’s facilities are now fully accessible to the disabled.

“For the first time, the client experience reflects the quality of the legal services clients receive when they come to us,” said Mr. Acton, who is also a lawyer. “Now, clients come through the door and they’re wide-eyed for a moment – ‘Wow, this is a real law firm!’ When we meet with potential clients to discuss their cases, we no longer have to kick staff members out of their offices – we have two private client meeting rooms.”

Cabrini Green clients have annual incomes no greater than 150 percent of the federal poverty threshold, which varies by household size. Aside from a \$20 intake fee, clients receive all services free of charge. CGLA offers legal counsel in the areas of family law, housing law and criminal defense, as well as

expungement, sealing and clemency services to assist clients in clearing criminal records, often a crucial step in helping those with records for certain crimes to secure employment. In the fiscal year that ended on June 30, 2008, CGLA helped 4,457 people understand their options for handling their records, and the 42 percent who qualified were assisted with filing for an expungement or sealing—a figure unsurpassed by any legal entity in the state of Illinois. (In the summer of 2008 a federal lawsuit was filed on behalf of a dozen Cabrini Green clients whose clemency petitions to Governor Rod Blagojevich have languished, unsigned, for as long as six years—including one petitioner whose sentence was completed during the Nixon administration. More than 2,000 clemency petitions await the governor’s signature.)

In addition to eight full-time attorneys, Cabrini Green Legal Aid also has two staff social services professionals who are available to help clients with non-legal issues that might nonetheless bear on their cases, including but not limited to employment situation, child care, domestic relations, or counseling.

In 2008 CGLA received the prestigious **Alford Axelson Award for Non-Profit Managerial Excellence** in the small non-profit category.

Cabrini Green Legal Aid’s full-time volunteer coordinator works with those who donate their time to serve CGLA’s clients. In the last fiscal year, 400 people – major law firm partners and associates, sole practitioners, summer associates, law students, and other community members – volunteered 12,000 hours at CGLA.

“I think the respect in which Cabrini Green is held is reflected in how we are supported by the large law firms in Chicago, both in terms of people donating hours as well as financial support,” Mr. Acton said.

Joseph Lombardo, a corporate and litigation attorney at Chicago’s **Chapman and Cutler LLP**, began volunteering on clemency cases four years ago and now serves on CGLA’s Young Professionals Board. Several of Cabrini Green’s volunteer attorneys come from Chapman and Cutler, which also supports CGLA financially. Mr. Lombardo is thrilled at the move to more modern and spacious quarters.

“Clients have always received outstanding legal and support services,” he said, “and the new office space will allow clients to receive those services in an equally outstanding office space.”

###