



# Lifeline to Justice



*Legal Aid of the Bluegrass  
Report to the Community*

2011



## Joint Letter from Jim Krueger, Board President, and Dick Cullison, Executive Director

Legal Aid of the Bluegrass provides civil legal assistance to alleviate brutal problems low-income people endure. Due to the financial crisis, more of our clients are experiencing greater suffering at the same time that LABG's support from the Kentucky General Fund and the Kentucky IOLTA Fund have decreased by 50%. Limited resources now force us to turn away more than half of those who are eligible on the basis of income and the nature of their legal problem.

As in the past, when confronted with change, we developed new approaches to meet this crisis. For example, a generation ago our program handled no immigration or foreclosure prevention cases, dealt less comprehensively with domestic violence cases, and concentrated less on elder law than we do today.



We focus on legal work that will have the greatest positive impact. We are proud that in 2010, Legal Aid of the Bluegrass made a difference in the lives of more than 17,000 of our neighbors.

We are humbled by the confidence our clients continue to place in us, honored by the trust our donors and supporters extend, and gratified by the courage, skill, and persistence of our staff, volunteer attorneys, and community partners. This report to our community provides more detail about recent Legal Aid of the Bluegrass work. We appreciate the community support that sustains our work.

Sincerely,

James R. Krueger  
*President, LABG Board*

Richard A. Cullison  
*LABG Executive Director*

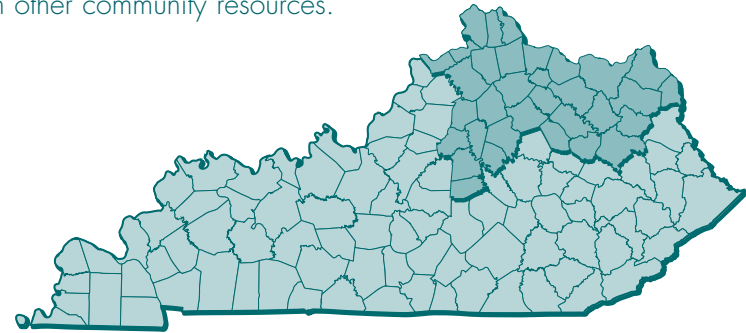


**Mission:**

To resolve the most important problems of low income and other vulnerable people by providing high quality legal assistance through direct representation, education, advice, advocacy and coordination with other community resources.

# Numbers That Matter:

## Legal Aid of the Bluegrass in 2010



- 35,173 People who asked for services in 2010
- 17,638 People we directly served in 2010
- 7,063 People who requested help and who were eligible in terms of income and the priority of their legal issue, but whom we were unable to serve because we lacked resources in 2010
- 5,100 Cases our staff lawyers closed in 2010
- 2,534 Elderly people we advised about or helped enroll in Medicare, a low-income subsidy, or a prescription drug plan in 2010
- 1,706 Frail and elderly nursing home residents for whom we advocated in 2010

- 535 Cases our volunteer lawyers closed in 2010
- 375 Private attorneys who provided legal help to our clients in 2010
- 212 Families we helped stay in or find a home in 2010
- 100 Community volunteers who help resolve the most important problems of frail elderly people by lending their expertise in counseling about public benefits. Many visit nursing homes to ensure quality of care and protection of individual rights.
- 33 Counties we serve
- 24 Board members, including 15 attorneys, 8 clients, and 1 representative from a social service agency

## Extending Lifelines to Safety and Stability

In early 2009, the Legal Services Corporation conducted a national study of unmet need, and concluded, "For every client served by an LSC-funded program, one person who seeks help is turned down because of insufficient resources." In Kentucky the inability to serve all who are eligible is 53%.



Our clients include elderly and low-income Kentuckians, people in danger of losing their homes, and victims, including immigrants, of intimate partner violence. The wrenching economy of the past two years increased people's need for LABG's services in our five priority areas, which we describe in more detail below.

As LABG faced increasingly desperate client need, our Kentucky General Fund dollars declined by 50%, and our Kentucky IOLTA Fund allocations declined by 70%. Limited resources force us to turn away more than half of the eligible clients who ask for help within our priority areas each year.

Even so, staff and volunteer attorneys continued to provide assistance that saves people's homes, incomes, and family stability. In 2010, our attorneys



closed 5,635 cases that directly affected 11,030 people. Other forms of assistance LABG provided to some 6,600 people included enrolling people in public benefits programs, assisting people in handling their own cases, and having a nursing home ombudsman advocate on behalf of nursing home residents.

### Strengthening Families and Children

We provide essential legal help that stabilizes families, increases children's security and wellbeing, and

#### Woman escapes violence and gets long term relief

*I am Sue. My husband was mentally ill and would sometimes hit me and threaten me. One time he said I was violent and tried to get a protective order against me. A Legal Aid attorney helped me show he was the violent one—not me! I got a protective order and now Legal Aid is helping me get a divorce and custody of my kids. I don't have to worry so much about my safety or that my kids will be taken away from me.*



### Instead of foreclosure, family gets permanently lower house payments

*I'm Chris, a skilled auto body worker who got laid off from work in this bad economy. We were six months behind on our mortgage and the foreclosure papers had come when I called Legal Aid. Our payment was \$812/month and was to go up to \$992/month. No way. Our Legal Aid attorney helped us get time to work things out. I was able to find a job and save my house. Now our total monthly payment is \$797.*

### Elderly Woman Escapes losing her Social Security Income

*My name is Margie and I am 84. I got a letter from the SSA saying I owed them \$48,000! It said they were going to take all my check every month until it was paid! How could I live? A Legal Aid lawyer appealed the SSA's decision and filed a waiver for me so the SSA wouldn't charge me with an overpayment. Now, I get my whole monthly social security benefit and don't have to worry about being cut off.*

extends a vital lifeline to people experiencing intimate partner violence. In Kentucky, 37% of women will endure such violence at some point in their lives. The legal help we provide for women and children experiencing violence paves the way for physical safety and self-sufficiency.

LABG helped secure 232 protective orders in 2010, reducing violence for 646 family members directly affected.

### Preventing Homelessness

Mortgage foreclosure rates remain alarmingly high, and court dockets are stuffed with foreclosure suits. Our staff responds expertly to families that are homeless or at the brink because of a housing crisis. Our work includes helping families transition to

other housing or stay in their homes. Each year LABG's legal assistance helps some 500 people secure or maintain housing.

### Fostering Independence

Independence—the ability to care for oneself and one's family adequately—benefits individuals and our communities. Without access to public benefits, many of our elderly neighbors would be forced to choose between eating and buying their prescription medications. Combining all the different categories of need together, each year LABG helps around 2,500 people access vital benefits that move them toward self-sufficiency.

### Helping the Most Vulnerable

In our communities, vulnerable people such as frail,

In 2010, we kept 217 people from losing their home through foreclosure. We kept 314 people from being evicted and helped 46 people get access to affordable public housing.





### Instead of charging elderly resident \$24,000, nursing home refunds \$47,872

*I'm Lexie. I had to put my husband of 40 years, Clyde, in a nursing home a few years ago. I had a bill from the nursing home for \$24,000. I nearly died. I couldn't take care of Clyde by myself and I didn't have that kind of money to pay. A Legal Aid attorney figured out the nursing home had been double billing me. My attorney got the Nursing Home Ombudsman\*\* to help, too. My attorney helped me with an appeal. The nursing home had to refund \$47,872 to Clyde and me and Clyde gets to stay where he will get good care \*\*The Kentucky Long-Term Care Ombudsman*

In 2010, we helped 2,736 families get access to public benefits for food, income and health care.

In 2010, we advocated for 1,706 nursing home residents. Our lawyers helped 68 disabled people gain admission to nursing homes or stay in their nursing homes when they were about to be wrongfully discharged. We also helped 54 non-English speaking domestic violence victims establish their legal immigration status which enabled them to be employed.



elderly nursing home residents and immigrant victims of extreme violence suffer great degradation; yet they have no voice and few avenues of relief. LABG can help the elderly find protection within the law. Our assistance often means that people too sick to stay at home without medical help get to stay in a facility where they get the skilled nursing care they need. Our assistance to immigrant victims of violence helps protect them from extreme violence. In many instances, LABG can also straighten out their immigration status. Each year, LABG's assistance remedies injustices for some 2,000 vulnerable, elderly clients and about 100 immigrant victims of extreme violence, helping them regain safe, stable lives.

### Mother sheds conviction and gets job instead

*Hi, I am Kim. I am not proud of what I did six years ago. My husband just left me and our two babies and disappeared. I had no job, no money, no place to go and nobody to help me. I wrote two cold checks to pay the rent and get diapers. With that misdemeanor on my record, I couldn't get a good job. Then, a Legal Aid attorney said since I had a clean record except for that one thing, he could help me get that charge taken off my record. Now, I have a good job and make enough money to take care of my kids.*

### Removing Impediments to Stable Employment - RISE

Increasingly, LABG's legal assistance aims at removing barriers to employment so families can achieve stability and autonomy. Securing and keeping a job can be impossible when one's housing or family situation is unstable. A vicious cycle of failure can set in, harming individuals, families, and communities. Nearly every case LABG handles annually lifts one or more barriers to employment. In 2010, we served 1,884 unemployed or underemployed people who had barriers to employment and removed those barriers for 343 people. In addition, each year LABG refers about 300 people to community partners for expert support in moving toward economic self-sufficiency.

## Our Private Bar Colleagues Extend Lifelines to Our Clients

As funding cuts and increasing client need converge, Legal Aid of the Bluegrass has turned to private attorneys in our entire service area to extend vital legal assistance to clients we simply lack resources to serve ourselves. In 2010, our private bar colleagues provided services that affected 1,498 people who would have otherwise been denied access to the courts. At least 375 attorneys offered pro bono services. Roughly 90% of the cases private attorneys handle involve uncontested and contested divorce cases, child custody, and other similar issues. However, LABG and its private attorney partners have launched new initiatives:

- In Covington, HOUSE (Helping Our UnderServed Evictees) features private volunteer attorneys who appear in court for our clients, freeing LABG staff attorneys to work in counties with fewer pro bono attorneys.
- In Covington, HELP (Homeowner Education & Legal Protection) pairs homeowners at risk of losing their homes with pro bono attorneys.



*L to R- Bruce MacDonald, LABG Board; William C.O. Reaves, Pro Bono Attorney; and James Moore, LABG Board Vice President*

The attorneys advise clients about options and guide them through the work of developing legally potent documents.

- In Covington, private attorneys who take part in Voices Against Violence agree to appear in court to represent people who are victims of violence at the hand of a loved one.
- In Lexington, the Fayette County Bar Association Pro Bono Program, Inc., LABG and the Fayette County Bar Foundation have partnered to develop a new domestic violence project where lawyers volunteer to represent victims of intimate partner violence when an LABG staff member cannot take the case.

*With Legal Aid by my side, I felt comfortable and safe going to court.*

—Client

Every dollar spent on vital legal services brings \$2.20 into the pockets of those who receive it and results in an overall annual gain to the economy of \$7.42 in total spending.\*

\*A 2009 Texas study by the Perryman Group



- In Lexington, a grant-funded partnership with the Bluegrass Domestic Violence Program and the Fayette County Bar Association makes it possible for private attorneys representing victims to receive 33% of the standard hourly fee when LABG lacks staff to meet the victims' needs.

LABG supports these invaluable partners in many ways, including recruitment, recognition, training, case processing, resource development, and clinic supervision.

*LABG has recruited and kept a really strong staff in terms of the expertise and commitment of their attorneys, for many, many years.*

*—Rich Seckel, Director,  
Kentucky Equal  
Justice Center*

*During this time when the clients are increasing and the Legal Aid budget is decreasing, we must get to work to fix this.*

*—Wm. T. (Bill) Robinson III,  
American Bar Association  
President*

Legal Aid of the Bluegrass thanks the Northern Kentucky Volunteer Lawyers, the Fayette County Pro Bono Program and the Boyd-Greenup-Lewis Attorney Access Program for their partnerships, which resulted in leveraging over \$360,000 in donated legal services provided to eligible clients in 2010.



*Wm. T. (Bill) Robinson III, American Bar Association President, speaking at our Pro Bono luncheon.*

## Community Partners and Allies Offer Lifelines to Aid More Clients

Legal Aid of the Bluegrass works intensively with other key partners, collaborating organizations, and community volunteers to carry out our mission. We thank them for their generous collaboration, which makes it possible to assist more eligible clients.







Adult and Tenant Services LFUCG  
 Bluegrass Community Action Partnership  
 Bluegrass Domestic Violence Program  
 Bluegrass Rape Crisis Center  
 Brighton Center  
 Cardinal Valley Center LFUCG  
 CARES  
 Catholic Charities Diocese of Covington  
 Center for Great Neighborhoods of Covington  
 Centro De Amistad  
 Children's Law Center  
 Community Action Commission  
 Community Action Council  
 Community Ventures Corporation  
 Covington Partners in Prevention, Inc.  
 DOVES  
 Family Counseling Service  
 Gateway Homeless Coalition, Inc.  
 Habitat for Humanity  
 HealthPoint Family Care, Inc.  
 Helping Hands  
 Hope Center  
 Hope's Place  
 Hospice of the Bluegrass  
 Kentuckians for the Commonwealth  
 Kentucky Coalition for Immigrant  
     and Refugee Rights  
 Kentucky Commission on Human Rights  
 Kentucky Domestic Violence Association  
 Kentucky Equal Justice Center



*L to R: Laurie Dowell, NKVL President; Dick Cullison, Executive Director; Jim Krueer, LABG Board President; Bessie Mays, LABG Board*

Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation  
 Kentucky Poverty Law Center  
 Kentucky River Foothills  
     Community Action Partnership  
 Lexington Fair Housing Council  
 Lexington-Fayette County Health Department  
 Lexington-Fayette Urban County  
     Human Rights Commission  
 Life Learning Center  
 LifePoint Solutions  
 Maxwell Street Legal Clinic  
 Meals on Wheels  
 National Alliance for the Mentally Ill  
 New Perceptions, Inc.

NorthKey Community Care  
 Red Cross  
 Rowan County Interagency Council  
 Safe Harbor  
 Salvation Army  
 Senior Services of Northern Kentucky  
 Shelter of Hope  
 Stop Foreclosure Clinic of ARDF of Ky., Inc.  
 Sunflower Kids  
 Urban League of Lexington  
 Welcome House of Northern Kentucky  
 Women's Crisis Center





*Legal Aid of the Bluegrass is comprised of professionals passionately devoted to the organization's mission and the people it serves who help avoid Kentuckians being marginalized between those who are able to pursue their legal rights and those who cannot.*

— *LABG Board Secretary,  
Stephanie A. Dietz,  
Attorney at Law,  
O'Hara, Ruberg, Taylor,  
Sloan & Sergent*



*Rhonda Henry, LABG Board Member*

## Legal Aid of the Bluegrass Board Members

**The Board of Directors for Legal Aid of the Bluegrass includes 24 members: 15 attorneys, 8 clients, and 1 representative from a social service organization. The Board reflects ethnic, racial, gender, and geographic diversity.**

James R. Krueer, President, Attorney at Law,  
Northern KY Bar Association

James Moore, Vice President, Attorney at Law,  
Boyd County Bar Association

Stephanie Dietz, Secretary, Attorney at Law,  
Northern Kentucky Bar Association

Palmer G. (Gene) Vance, II, Treasurer, Attorney at Law,  
Fayette County Bar Association

Rebecca Cook, Licking Valley Community Action Agency

Nicole Sotiriou Bearse, Attorney at Law,  
Franklin County Bar Association

Paul Blair, Attorney at Law,  
Rowan County Bar Association

Sara Elrod, Attorney at Law,  
Northern Kentucky Bar Association

Oscar Gerald, Attorney at Law,  
Fayette County Bar Association

Rhonda Henry, Bluegrass Rape Crisis Center

Elizabeth Hughes, Attorney at Law,  
Fayette County Bar Association

Kim Hunt Price, Attorney at Law,  
Bath County Bar Association

Michelle Ireland, Black and Williams Advisory Board

Deanna Jessie, Kentucky Homeplace

Connie Kyle, Brighton Center

Bruce MacDonald, Attorney at Law,  
Greenup County Bar Association

LaToi D. Mayo, Attorney at Law,  
Fayette County Bar Association

Bessie Mays, Senior Services of Northern KY

Patrick McClure, Attorney at Law,  
Boyle County Bar Association

Michael E. Nitardy, Attorney at Law,  
Northern Kentucky Bar Association

Nora Ostlin, Centro de Amistad

Lisa Partridge, Women's Crisis Center

Nico Railey, Tenant Services, Lexington

Debra Rigg, Attorney at Law,  
Mason-Bracken County Bar Association



## Financial Overview

The following is an overview of Legal Aid of the Bluegrass' income and expenses for fiscal year ending December 31, 2010.

Total Income:	
(includes prior year carryover)	\$4,723,187
Program Expenses:	\$3,346,303
Fundraising Expenses:	\$100,519
Administrative Expenses:	\$442,278
Total Expenses	\$3,889,100
Ending Net Assets:	\$834,087

*Legal Aid of the Bluegrass thanks the members of its Board of Directors, who raised \$100,000 of the \$715,000 in total donations for the purchase and renovation of the new headquarters building. 100% of our Board members contributed. We are grateful for this level of community support in challenging economic times.*

Legal Aid of the Bluegrass has a track record of sound business practices. Funding has never been adequate to meet the needs of our clients and their families. LABG sets priorities for using its resources so that clients get maximum value.

- During the present economic downturn, with its negative impact on LABG funding, we have continued these sound business practices:
- A CPA audit firm, demonstrating the highest standard of fiscal responsibility and accountability, audits LABG annually. This level of fiscal oversight assures our



Paul Blair, LABG Board Member



Deanna Jessie, LABG Board Member

grantors, donors, and funders that LABG manages its available resources in accord with their intended purposes.

- LABG invests in staff retention, maintaining quality benefits and desirable working environments.
- Experienced, effective staff members deliver more services, at higher levels of quality and success in legal arenas, than inexperienced staff. Thus, we save the substantial costs associated with frequent recruiting and training of new staff.
- LABG holds its percentage of funding used for administration to 13.6 %. In addition, LABG has taken advantage of new efficiency options that have become available to us.





## Legal Aid of the Bluegrass Staff

Richard Cullison, Executive Director  
Brenda Combs, Business Director  
Glenda Harrison, Advocacy Director

### Ashland Office

Brian Dufresne, Staff Attorney  
Audelia Francis, Administrative Attorney  
Jennifer Guzman, Legal Secretary  
Angela Rigsby,  
Paralegal/Nursing Home  
Ombudsman

### Covington Office

Bonnie Bolinger, SHIP Specialist  
Tiffany Coleman, Intake Attorney  
Lisa Goetz, Comptroller  
Donna Hackett, Legal Secretary  
R. Taylor Houston, Law Clerk  
Wanda Johnson, SHIP Coordinator  
Jocklyn Jouett, Paralegal  
Stephanie Langguth, Staff Attorney  
James McHugh, Staff Attorney  
Carl Melcher, Intake Managing Attorney  
Cynthia Millay, Staff Attorney  
Brian Miller, Network Administrator  
Phyllis Miller, Contractor/Legal Assistant  
Ashley Moore, Law Clerk

Pete Nienaber, Scripps Howard Foundation  
Law Fellow  
Karen Otten, Legal Secretary  
Patricia Pickett, Casehandling Paralegal  
Jenny Schild, Administrative Assistant  
Ryan Smither, Law Clerk  
Erica Stacy Stegman, Staff Attorney  
Cara Stewart, Staff Attorney  
Lori Sublett, Intake Attorney  
Sharon Tolliver, Legal Secretary  
Chenae Vickers, Clerk  
Alma Yaros, Staff Attorney  
Jennifer Zell, Staff Attorney

### Lexington Office

Lisa Barger, Legal Secretary  
Mary Lou Campbell, Medicare  
Outreach Specialist  
Jennifer Casey, Administrative Attorney  
Robert Cetrulo, Law Clerk  
Trinia Clemons, Paralegal  
Catherine DeFlorio, Staff Attorney  
Amy Dougherty, Staff Attorney  
Josh Fain, Staff Attorney  
Kristen Gordon, Paralegal  
Tammie Haddix, Attorney/Fayette  
County Bar Association  
Pro-Bono Director  
Amy Hayden, Staff Attorney  
Amanda Hiitt, Legal Secretary/  
Intake Specialist

Kimberly Iden, Staff Attorney  
Brandie Ingalls, AmeriCorps Fellow  
Melissa Miller, Legal Secretary  
Rhonda Stanger, AmeriCorps Fellow  
Katie York, Benefits Specialist  
Angela Zeek, SHIP Coordinator/Paralegal

### Morehead Office

Katrina Ackerman, Staff Attorney  
Kim Adkins, Nursing Home Ombudsman  
Julia Cope, SHIP Assistant  
Angela Dailey, Administrative Assistant  
Melinda Jennings, Paralegal  
Beverly Kirch, Staff Attorney  
Daniel Mason, Managing Attorney  
Teresa Mason, Legal Secretary  
Cathy Pettit, Legal Secretary  
Sue Prater, Staff Attorney  
Debra Ratliff, Paralegal  
Dianna Reynolds, Paralegal/  
Special Assistant

## Legal Aid of the Bluegrass

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*We thank Mark Byron for the photos of Board, staff, and buildings.*

