Celebrating 20 years of providing free legal services.

During the 1980s, homelessness became a major problem in the City of Philadelphia with hundreds of homeless individuals sleeping on sidewalks throughout the city. Shelters could not keep up with the growing demand.

At the outset, legal services for the homeless were provided by the Problems of the Homeless Committee of the Philadelphia Bar Association and later by the bar association’s Volunteers for the Indigent Program. By 1990, VIP’s leadership determined that a separate entity was needed to provide free legal services to homeless individuals and to nonprofit organizations developing shelter and housing. As a result, on June 18, 1990, the Homeless Advocacy Project (HAP) was incorporated by Maureen McCullough, Howard Yares, Andre Dennis, Eve Klothen and Chris Fallon.

While working as an associate at Duane Morris, Sandy Ballard served on the Bar Association committee that addressed the problems of the homeless. The committee organized what would later be called HAP’s Annual April Benefit, a fundraiser to launch a new free legal services program to help the homeless. Sandy applied for the job and was offered the position. Sandy was advised that the group had just enough money to pay her a salary of $30,000 for six months (exactly half of what Sandy made at Duane Morris). If within those six months Sandy could not raise sufficient funds to continue, she would be out of a job. Despite collecting the half pay, no job security and no experience, she believed this was her calling. Sandy took the job and became HAP’s first Executive Director; she believes it was one of the best decisions she ever made.

HAP continues to expand its size, programs and scope to meet the demands of its clients and the homeless services community. From an initial staff of two operating out of a supply closet with a budget of $50,000 in 1990, HAP has grown to a dedicated staff of 15 and a budget of $1,000,000. Today, HAP salutes the 400 legal volunteers from 30 law firms, corporate legal departments and law schools who partner with HAP to staff over 150 annual legal clinics in 25 different homeless shelters, soup kitchens, transitional housing sites and overnight cafes located throughout Philadelphia.

HAP’s Children and Families Project, designed in 1994 to help 100 homeless children annually with welfare benefits and special educational needs, has grown today to a program serving over 350 homeless children annually, with a significantly expanded focus including family law and emergency shelter services. Since CFIP’s start, HAP has helped over 2,750 homeless children with their legal needs. HAP’s Veterans Project, initially designed as a one year fellowship program to help 50 homeless veterans in 2001, has grown into a nationally recognized legal services model that has helped over 880 homeless veterans to access veterans pension and disability benefits to date. In 2007, HAP developed Pennsylvania’s first SOAR (SSI Outreach Access and Recovery Program) Project – an expedited application program to assist homeless men and women access federal disability benefits (SSI/SSDI). With a 100% approval rating for over 300 homeless SOAR applicants to date, HAP’s SOAR program is recognized as the model for the project in the country. Along with our growing staff and expanded projects, HAP engages in an ever-increasing number of advocacy efforts to ensure access to safe and dignified shelter for Philadelphia’s most vulnerable citizens, and to remove the barriers that prevent individuals and families from moving from shelter to independent living. Despite ameliorative efforts made by federal, state, and local governments and non-profit organizations, homelessness remains a persistent and deeply rooted problem both nationally and in the City of Philadelphia. Over the past three years, Philadelphia has experienced an alarming rise in homelessness to levels not seen in the last decade.

During the past twenty years, hundreds of passionate Philadelphia lawyers have provided free legal services to the neediest members of our community and the organizations that serve them. The time value of those services today exceeds 33 million dollars. As a result, many formerly homeless citizens have regained their dignity and many are now self-sufficient.

On this, our 20th Anniversary, we salute our dedicated volunteers and thank the hundreds of law firms, corporations, law schools, private foundations and individuals who give so generously of their time and talent to help HAP’s works possible. The need for HAP’s services has never been greater. Please join us by volunteering at one of our clinics; and, if you are able, please give generously to our Annual Appeal, to HAP’s United Way Donor Choice Program (03552) or on-line through HAP’s website at homelessnessadvocacyproject.org. We are so grateful for your continuing assistance; we still need your help.

I am privileged and honored to serve as HAP’s Executive Director as we reach this 20th year milestone. On a daily basis, I am inspired by the strength and dignity of the clients we serve and marvel at the dedication of HAP’s staff, volunteers, board members and supporters!

Marsha I. Cohen, Esq.

We would like to thank the following individuals who contributed to this letter: Sandy Ballard, Esq., and Christopher C. Fallon, Jr., Esq.
RECENT HAPPENINGS

Our Mission

In the fall of 1990, a group of concerned members of the Philadelphia bar and the homeless services community created HAP to address the unmet legal needs of the city’s homeless population. HAP was founded in the belief that homeless people have unique and complex legal problems that often are not adequately addressed by traditional providers of legal services to indigent and low-income individuals. Homeless individuals often lead transient, unstable lives, and are often debilitated by mental illness, substance abuse, and inadequate education. They frequently lack an understanding of their legal rights and the ability to make effective use of the network of advocacy and service organizations that is available to assist them. Living in crisis, often without income or resources, homeless persons are less likely, and less able, than other indigent clients to make use of Center City-based legal services programs.

To ensure that homeless people had access to legal services, HAP’s founders created an organization designed to deliver legal services directly to them in the places where they live and eat. Since its inception, HAP has conducted legal clinics in shelters and soup kitchens throughout Philadelphia. By recruiting and training volunteer attorneys, legal assistants and law students to staff these clinics, HAP is able to leverage its resources to provide free legal counseling and representation to a population not adequately served by other legal services programs. HAP is the only legal services organization in Philadelphia that conducts such direct outreach to the homeless population.

HAP collaborates with shelter providers, homeless advocates, community service providers and the legal community to provide homeless clients with legal representation and to connect them with other social services. HAP currently holds legal clinics at twenty-five homeless shelters and soup kitchens. Since HAP’s first legal clinic in December 1990, HAP’s 350 volunteers have helped more than 24,000 homeless people. To date, HAP’s volunteers have provided more than $33 million worth of free legal services to homeless clients.

HAPpy Outcomes

SSDI Success Story

Volunteer attorney, Tom Hardy, first met 56 year old Mr. E at the HAP legal clinic at Our Brothers Place, a homeless shelter for single men, run by the Bethesda Project. Mr. E was suffering from severe cognitive problems and depression, as a result of a stroke several years prior, and the loss of his wife prior to that. Mr. E had been employed as a janitor at the Hilton Hotel up until the time of the stroke. The stroke left him severely disabled and unable to work or pay his bills, leading to his homelessness.

Tom Hardy worked closely with Mr. E to file his Social Security disability application by completing all paperwork, collecting and submitting medical records in support of the claim, and advocating on Mr. E’s behalf throughout the process. After several months of advocacy, Tom was successful in proving medical disability at the BDD (Bureau of Disability Determination) level and, due to Mr. E’s long work history and Tom’s advocacy, Mr. E was awarded $1161 in monthly SSDI benefits and $18,000 in back benefits! Thanks to the efforts of Tom Hardy and the resulting large monetary award, Mr. E was able to leave the shelter and move into a one bedroom apartment in West Philadelphia. Mr. E is currently awaiting delivery of his apartment furniture, and is well on his way to independence and financial security.

SOAR Success Story

HAP staff attorney, Meg Retz, first met Mr. H at a HAP legal clinic at St. Francis Inn. At the time, Mr. H was living in a park under the El in the Kensington section of Philadelphia. At first, Meg had difficulty maintaining contact with Mr. H, but eventually they reconnected and Meg was able to file a SOAR claim on his behalf. Mr. H had inconsistent medical treatment for the severe depression and anxiety disorders from which he suffers. Rather than seek regular medical treatment, Mr. H often checked himself into a hospital only when his depression progressed and caused him to feel suicidal. In addition to the struggles he faced from his depression and anxiety, Mr. H left school in 7th grade because of learning disabilities. Reading and writing proved challenging for him and he often became confused with directions and instructions. Even more problematic was the fact that Mr. H suffers from glaucoma, a condition requiring a complicated series of eye drops on a daily basis. Mr. H’s doctor at Will’s Eye Hospital recommended surgery for the condition, but Mr. H was unable to schedule surgery as he had nowhere to go post-op.

In October of 2009, Meg Retz took Mr. H to attend a consultative exam, during which he received IQ testing and a psychiatric evaluation and thereafter was approved for SSI benefits. Mr. H began receiving checks in November. In December 2009, Mr. H rented a room in Kensington. In April 2010, Mr. H called his HAP attorney to inform her that he was finally able to have the corrective surgery for his glaucoma and is now recovering at his home.

Adopt-a-Shelter List

Adopt-a-Shelter: Through HAP’s Adopt-a-Shelter project, a firm or corporate legal department agrees to staff a HAP legal clinic. HAP collaborates with the following law firms, corporate departments, and law schools through this program.

- Caton Village – Schnader LLP
- Covenant House – Duane Morris LLP
- Eliza Shirley House – Reger Rizzo & Darnell and Blank Rome LLP
- HELP Philadelphia – Villanova University Law School
- Kirkbride – Hangley Aronchick and Gibbons P.C.
- Mercy Hospice – Dechert LLP
- Our Brother’s Place – White and Williams LLP
- The Perimeter – Saul Ewing LLP
- Project H.O.M.E. – Merck and Reed Smith LLP
- RHD Ridge – Cozen O’Connor and Hogan Lovells LLP
- Red Shield – Dilworth Paxson LLP, Montgomery McCraken LLP and Klehr, Harrison, Harvey, Branzburg LLP
- South Philadelphia – Womble Bond Newland LLP
- Temple University School of Law – Philadelphia Bar Foundation
- Temple Law School – Philadelphia Bar Foundation
- Villanova University School of Law

HOW YOU CAN HELP HAP...

HAP needs your help to serve the thousands of homeless men, women and children who make Philadelphia their home. There are many opportunities for lawyers, paralegals, law students and others with a variety of backgrounds to assist HAP. You can:

- Become a legal clinic volunteer. Spend a few hours meeting with a client and assist that client with his or her legal problem.
- Volunteer for the Children and Families Project and assist homeless parents with education, family law and disability matters.
- Volunteer for the Veteran’s Project and assist homeless veterans with obtaining veteran’s benefits and compensation.
- Make a monetary contribution and/or assist with fundraising efforts.

To help make a difference, please call us at 215-523-9595, or complete and return the form on the next page.
HAP Raises More than $190,000 at April Benefit!

The Homeless Advocacy Project held its 20th Anniversary April Benefit on April 8, 2010. On this day we were proud to honor three individuals who helped create HAP and make it the successful organization that it is today: Founding HAP Executive Director, Sandy Ballard, Esq.; Founding HAP Board Member and Former HAP Board President, Christopher C. Fallon, Jr., Esq.; and Former HAP Board President and former Vice President and General Counsel, Sunoco, Jack L. Foltz. All proceeds of the silent auction and cocktail party benefited HAP. This year’s benefit raised over $190,000 for HAP. HAP would like to thank the following sponsors of the event:

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I would like to make a donation of: ☐ $25 ☐ $50 ☐ $100 ☐ $250 ☐ $500 ☐ $1,000 ☐ $ _________

Enclosed is a check made out to “HAP”

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