



2007

Community Legal Resources

Connecting Lawyers and Communities



Community Legal Resources delivers free legal assistance to nonprofit organizations serving low-income communities through staff and volunteer lawyers.

Connecting Lawyers and Communities

Community Legal Resources delivers free legal services to nonprofit organizations building neighborhoods in Detroit and throughout Michigan. The program began in 1998 as an initiative of Michigan Legal Services to connect business lawyers to nonprofit organizations building neighborhoods by constructing affordable housing, attracting new businesses, feeding and sheltering the homeless, and mentoring youth. The legal work of volunteer lawyers and law firms creates stronger communities and more effective nonprofit organizations.

Community Legal Resources is part of a network of established programs across the country that serve nonprofit organizations that are already having success in building their neighborhoods. Founded with the support of the American Bar Association's Business Law Section's Pro Bono committee, Community Legal Resources follows the simple formula: provide these nonprofit organizations with access to business lawyers who volunteer to review contracts, negotiate real estate sales, and structure partnerships. Then stand back and watch their impact grow. The legal services provided benefit communities in Detroit and throughout Michigan in the form of new houses, new jobs, more after-school programs for youth, and more beds at the shelter.

Since 1998, Community Legal Resources has provided over 250 nonprofit organizations with free legal services valued at an estimated \$2 million.



Why pro bono for nonprofit organizations?

We are all familiar with free (pro bono) legal services for individuals, especially criminal defendants, a service which has been provided by many groups over the decades. Community Legal Resources arranges for pro bono legal services to nonprofit organizations, rather than individuals. This is a unique service which nonprofit corporations cannot find elsewhere, but which is desperately needed. In today's world, nonprofit organizations need to run a gamut of legal, regulatory and business issues which require legal and professional assistance. Those serving poorer communities simply do not have the resources to hire the legal talent they need. By matching volunteer business lawyers in private practice with these nonprofit organizations, Community Legal Resources fills this need.

Building Our Neighborhoods

In Detroit and across the United States, the need for services at the local level is great and continues to grow. The 2000 Census reports that 26% of Detroit's residents and 35% of its children live at or below the poverty line. Twenty-two percent of households lack cars to carry them to low-wage jobs in the suburbs. Thirty percent of Detroiters aged 25 and older lack the high school diploma that would enable them to tap into higher-wage employment.

In Detroit, neighborhoods are being abandoned, dotted with vacant houses and empty lots. What is happening in Detroit can be seen in Flint and Pontiac, as well as in smaller towns and rural areas across Michigan. There is an urgent need for affordable housing, constructive activities for young people, stores to buy groceries: a need for community development.

Nonprofit community-based organizations are stepping in where government and the private sector have failed.

In Detroit alone, an estimated 450 nonprofit organizations are providing the after-school programs, new units of affordable housing, adult education and vocational training classes, emergency meals, and transportation services to seniors and the disabled who would otherwise go without. They do all of this with very lean staffs, on shoestring budgets and against great odds.

Community Legal Resources helps nonprofit organizations focus their energy on what they do best: building our neighborhoods.



Neighborhoods

Attorneys in the Trenches

Through Community Legal Resources, lawyers have provided an estimated \$2 million worth of free legal services—working directly with nonprofit organizations or producing manuals and trainings through our education initiative. Unlike traditional pro bono opportunities, Community Legal Resources gives business lawyers a chance to volunteer in their area of expertise. Our growing list of volunteers stands at over 250 corporate, real estate, environmental, litigation and employment attorneys.

Our staff carefully screens the nonprofit organizations to establish their program effectiveness, to establish their ability and capacity to work with professional business lawyers, and to define their legal needs. Our experience enables us to locate the most skilled volunteers and ensure that a nonprofit's needs are being met.

Among our participating law firms and legal staffs:

Barris Sott Denn & Driker
Bodman Longley & Dahling
Butzel Long
Clark Hill
Comerica Bank
Dickinson Wright
Dykema Gossett
Foley & Lardner
Ford Motor Company
Garan Lucow Miller
General Motors Corporation
Honigman Miller Schwartz & Cohn
Howard & Howard
Jaffe Raitt Heuer & Weiss
Johnson Controls
Kerr Russell & Weber
Miller Canfield Paddock & Stone
Miller Johnson Snell & Cummiskey
Pepper Hamilton
Varnum Riddering Schmidt & Howlett
Weisman, Young & Schloss

"...Aside from feeding my family, it's really why I became a lawyer."

— Don Katz, CLR volunteer attorney, on pro bono involvement in charitable causes

"[Community Legal Resources] allows you to use your particular expertise in a focused way to help people who need the benefit of that expertise...[Their staff] makes it easy for you to be of assistance as economically and efficiently as possible."

— David Paruch, CLR volunteer attorney



Avoiding legal problems before they arise...

Community Legal Resources staff and volunteer lawyers are committed to helping nonprofit organizations make wise business decisions through access to seasoned legal professionals and up to date information. Manuals, brochures and workshops on legal topics important to nonprofit organizations are developed and made available to a wide array of nonprofit organizations, their boards of directors, and the lawyers who help them. Community Legal Resources staff and volunteers work collaboratively with other agencies providing training and resources to avoid reinventing the wheel and to maximize our impact.

Affordable Housing and Community Economic Development

In 1999 and 2000, nonprofit organizations built roughly 30% of all new single-family housing in the city of Detroit, and nearly half of all new homes since 1984—all of it affordable to low- and moderate-income families. They improve neighborhood shopping opportunities through entrepreneurship and job training, loans to new businesses and community policing efforts.

Representative Clients

Grandmont-Rosedale Development Corporation, Detroit (*housing rehabilitation*)

Jefferson East Business Association, Detroit (*commercial redevelopment, entrepreneurship*)

Lighthouse Communities, Grand Rapids (*affordable housing construction and rehab*)

Reo Town Commercial Association, Lansing (*historic commercial strip revitalization*)

Success Story

Nonprofit Organization:

Detroit Catholic Pastoral Alliance, Detroit

Volunteer Lawyers:

Bob Berlow, Gwynn Lam, Jennifer Bakhuyzen, Scott Broekstra and Tony Ilardi, law firm of Dykema Gossett

Legal Issues:

Commercial development financing; real estate assembly and transfer; environmental issues; corporate structuring

The Detroit Catholic Pastoral Alliance was formed in the late 1960's to provide support to and advocacy for low-income neighborhoods in Detroit. Since the early 1990's the nonprofit organization has rehabilitated and sold 19 houses to low-income first-time home buyers and opened a small business incubator to support new businesses in the community. They are now working to create shopping and employment opportunities in a revitalized neighborhood commercial district

on Gratiot Avenue, turning a declining Detroit neighborhood into a viable place to shop, live, and work.

Bob Berlow is leading a team of lawyers from Dykema Gossett in helping Detroit Catholic Pastoral Alliance address the complex issues of commercial redevelopment, from site assembly and environmental research to financing rehabilitation and ultimately leasing the space to new tenants.

"The service provided by the Dykema Gossett lawyers has been unbelievable. They respond quickly and treat us like paying clients in every way. Their help is extremely valuable."

— Angela Wilson, Director for Commercial and Economic Development, Detroit Catholic Pastoral Alliance



Detroit Catholic Pastoral Alliance 9200-9208 Gratiot Ave

MERC

Youth Development

With over one-third of Detroit's children living in poverty, the role of the nonprofit sector in providing constructive activities for our young people cannot be underestimated. Nonprofit organizations in Detroit provide thousands of children with what is often their only access to computer training and after-school activities, counseling and recreational opportunities. Innovative nonprofit organizations find ways to leverage private dollars to offer sports programs and buy new equipment for dozens of public neighborhood parks.

Representative Clients

Businesses United with Officers and Youth (BUOY), Precinct 11, Detroit (*mentoring*)

Young Detroit Builders (YouthBuild Detroit), Detroit (*construction skills training/GED*)

Imagine Kids' Impact, Detroit (*civic participation and volunteerism opportunities*)

Clark Park Coalition, Detroit (*recreation and computer training*)

Success Story

Nonprofit Organization:

Mosaic Youth Theatre, Detroit

Volunteer Lawyer:

David Hipp, law firm of Bodman Longley & Dahling

Legal Issue:

Lease negotiation

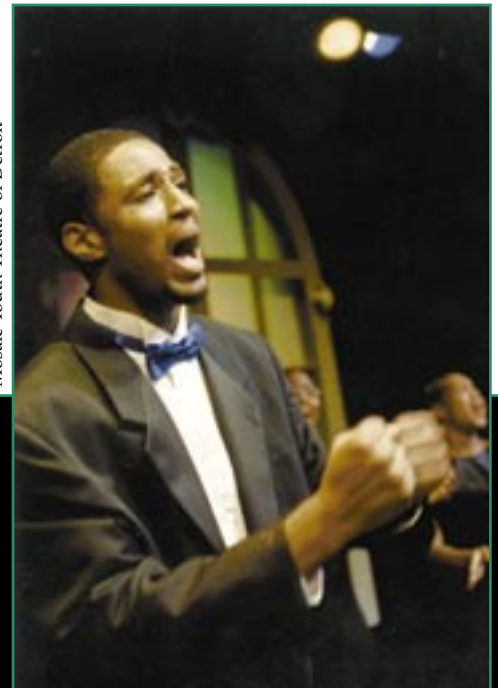
The Mosaic Youth Theatre is a leader in arts programming for young people who would otherwise lack exposure to the cultural, educational and social benefits of the arts. The program— which is free to the nearly 250 Detroit kids and teenagers it trains each year in acting, theater production and vocal music—produces around 100 performances each year and has traveled to Europe, Asia and Africa.

Bodman Longley attorney David Hipp, a supporter of youth arts, is drafting a lease agreement for the youth performing arts program which will allow them to move to a home in a central location that is accessible to more youth from the community.

“David [Hipp]’s help has been absolutely invaluable. As a small arts organization looking to establish ourselves as a stable institution, being able to have this level of legal representation that we could not afford any other way has allowed us to make this move in a much wiser and professional manner.”

— Rick Sperling, Executive Director,
Mosaic Youth Theatre

Photo courtesy of the
Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit



Services for Our Neediest Citizens

According to Detroit's Coalition on Temporary Shelter (COTS), nearly 10,000 individuals and families are homeless on any given night in Detroit. Shelters like COTS provide a warm bed and supportive services to families struggling to escape homelessness. Other nonprofit organizations in Detroit provide transportation and meal delivery to the elderly and disabled, counsel those suffering the effects of substance abuse, and provide medical treatment to those living with HIV/AIDS.

Representative Clients

Capuchin Soup Kitchen, Detroit (*feeding the homeless*)

Citizens for Better Care, Detroit (*services to seniors*)

Mariners Inn, Detroit (*substance abuse counseling and sheltering the homeless*)

Muslim Family Services, Detroit (*family counseling and emergency assistance*)

Deaf Options, Detroit (*housing and advocacy for the hard of hearing*)

Success Story

Nonprofit Organization:

American Indian Health and Family Services

Volunteer Lawyer:

Erika Butler-Akinyemi, law firm of Jaffe Raitt Heuer & Weiss

Legal Issues:

Consulting contracts and personnel policies

American Indian Health and Family Services was founded in 1978 to provide health care to uninsured Native Americans living off the reservation. Each year the nonprofit provides hundreds of low-income individuals with substance abuse treatment and prevention, mental health services, and basic health and dental screenings.

Attorney Erika Butler-Akinyemi leads a team of lawyers from Jaffe Raitt in providing a range of legal services as part of a Community Partnership with American Indian Health and Family Services. In 2002, Erika and her colleagues resolved a contract dispute that saved the agency thousands of dollars.

The nonprofit was able to reinvest these savings back into their important programs. The lawyers provide a wealth of ongoing advice regarding contracts, employee policies, and other business matters, improving the productivity and satisfaction of the nonprofit organization's dozens of dedicated employees.

"Erika [Butler-Akinyemi]'s turnaround time is phenomenal. There is such a sense of security in knowing that—for anything we get involved in—there will be someone who knows the questions to ask, and who will be there to answer them."

—Gail Yeager, Program Manager, American Indian Health and Family Services



Building on Our Success

Community Legal Resources is the only organization of our kind in Michigan – a provider of skilled private attorneys to nonprofit organizations. We have received national acclaim as one of only five organizations throughout the country awarded expansion funding from the New York-based Power of Attorney foundation, joining existing programs in Washington D.C., Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco. In addition, our former executive director, Steve Tobocman, was awarded the 2002 American Bar Association Business Law Section's *National Public Service Award* for his role in founding, growing and sustaining our program.

During our five years of operation, by adhering to our clear program plan, we have:

- Served over 250 nonprofit organizations and provided assistance on more than 400 legal matters
- Recruited 260 volunteer lawyers
- Generated an estimated \$2 million in volunteered legal services
- Presented over 1,000 hours of training to nonprofit organizations and lawyers
- Matched 9 nonprofit organizations with law firms in Community Partnerships to guide their business decisions for one year, 7 of which have been renewed for multiple years
- Developed a community development library for use by nonprofit organizations and volunteer business lawyers

For 2003 – 2005, the goals of Community Legal Resources include:

- Connecting lawyers with 300 nonprofit organizations building affordable housing and economic opportunity; nurturing at-risk youth; and providing critical services to our neediest citizens
- Matching 10 nonprofit organizations with law firms in Community Partnerships to guide their business decisions for one year
- Producing 30 brief publications to assist nonprofit executives with managing tax, employment, and real estate development issues
- Increasing financial contributions from law firms and lawyers by 300%



Building

Funding Our Program

Community Legal Resources is the only organization in Michigan matching lawyers in private practice with nonprofit organizations lacking funds to pay them. Our work helps the community as a whole and contributes to sustained efforts to improve life in our neighborhoods. *We rely on gifts and grants to enable us to provide the unique legal service we arrange.* Foundations, law firms, corporations, individual attorneys and our clients contribute to Community Legal Resources. We continue to seek out broader and more diverse funding sources.

Key Contributors

Foundations, corporations and government

Power of Attorney
City of Detroit
Community Foundation for Southeastern Michigan
Equal Justice Works
Comerica Bank
Michigan State Bar Foundation
Matilda R. Wilson Fund
Minority Corporation Counsel Fund
Ford Motor Company Fund

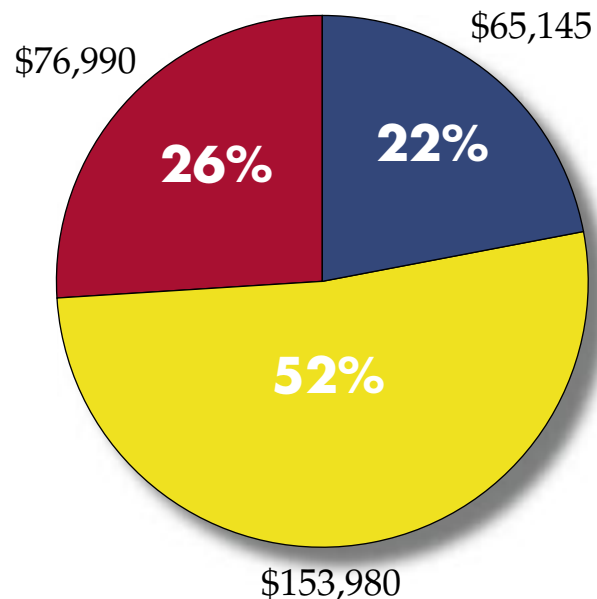
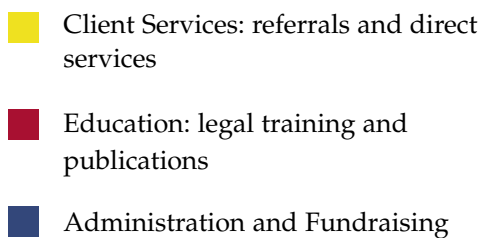
Henry Ford II Fund
General Motors Corporation
DTE Energy Foundation
Bank One
Local Initiatives Support Corporation
Michigan State Housing Development Authority
Standard Federal Bank
Johnson Controls
MASCO Corporation

Law firms

Dykema Gossett
Honigman Miller Schwartz & Cohn
Jaffe Raitt Heuer & Weiss
Barris Sott Denn & Driker

Bodman Longley & Dahling
Butzel Long
Miller Canfield Paddock & Stone
Pepper Hamilton

Total Current Budget:
\$296,116



Funding

Giving to Community Legal Resources

Community Legal Resources is requesting gifts to provide free legal services to organizations that are engaged in **affordable housing and community economic development**; operating **youth development** programs; and providing **services to our neediest citizens**. We encourage gifts through the State Bar of Michigan's Access to Justice Fund which contributes to legal services throughout Michigan.

To make a gift:

- 1) contact Community Legal Resources staff at (313) 964-4130;
- 2) access our website at www.clronline.org or
- 3) make checks payable to "Access to Justice," designating Community Legal Resources on the memo line of the check, and mail to: Community Legal Resources, 220 Bagley, Suite 900, Detroit Michigan, 48226.

Community Legal Resources is a program of Michigan Legal Services, a Michigan nonprofit corporation exempt from taxation and qualified to receive contributions under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.



Giving

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Karinda Washington

Office Manager

Community Legal Resources

220 Bagley Avenue, Suite 900

Detroit, Michigan 48226

(313) 964-4130 phone

(313) 964-1192 fax

www.clronline.org

clr@michiganlegal.org

Community Legal Resources is a joint project of Michigan Legal Services and the Pro Bono Committee of the Business Law Section of the American Bar Association working in conjunction with the Michigan Litigation Assistance Partnership Program.

