



# Housing Briefs

Spring/Summer 2006  
Publication of Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing, Inc.

## LCBH Receives United Way Venture Grant

By Kathleen K. Clark | Executive Director

The process which ends with the Sheriff putting a Chicago family's furniture and belongings on the sidewalk begins in the Daley Center. This is where the Forcible Detainer and Eviction hearings are held every day in five courtrooms.

Facing eviction is an onerous prospect. Hundreds of Chicago's low-income tenants face this prospect every week, most with no legal representation. To assist these families, LCBH will be providing information, referrals, and public benefit screening on the 14th floor of the courthouse where most eviction hearings are held.

This new service is part of an Eviction Court Education Project funded by a \$91,000 Venture Grant to LCBH from United Way. Also included in the project is an educational video for pro se landlords and tenants to be shown every morning prior to the start of eviction hearings, other educational material explaining the rights of tenants and the eviction court process, and the ongoing policy work of the Housing Advocacy Consortium.

LCBH spearheads the Housing Advocacy Consortium, which has been meeting with Cook County judges to reform the eviction court

system and provide meaningful information for tenants who must represent themselves. Members of the Consortium include Cabrini-Green Legal Aid, CARPLS, Legal Assistance Foundation, Illinois Tenants Union, and Uptown Peoples Law Center.



Board President Andrea Townson (L) and Executive Director Kathy Clark (R), with Charter One Senior Vice President and State Director of Community Affairs, Allen Rodriguez.

The project is a continuation of efforts launched by "No Time for Justice," LCBH's 2003 report based on monitoring of eviction court by Kent Law School Honors Students, who also assisted in preparing the report. The report found that "lack of respect for the human dignity of tenants" was pervasive in the

eviction process. The full report and its findings are available at [www.lcbh.org/housingpolicy](http://www.lcbh.org/housingpolicy). ■

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### Many Thanks

*LCBH offers its sincerest gratitude to Charter One Bank for their generous support of LCBH and enabling the production of the Renter's Resource Guide, which provides tenants and landlords with information on the Chicago Residential Landlord Tenant Ordinance (RLTO). The guide has proved to be an invaluable resource for understanding housing law and legal remedies available for tenants in Chicago who are living in unsafe, deplorable housing conditions.*

### SAVE THE DATE!

**WHO:** LCBH, our volunteers, allies, and friends for the past 26 years

**WHAT:** Annual Reception and Awards Ceremony

**WHERE:** Jenner & Block, 330 North Wabash, 44th Floor

**WHEN:** Thursday, September 14th, from 5:00-7:00 p.m.

**WHY:** To celebrate the 20th anniversary of the passage of the Residential Landlord Tenant Ordinance (RLTO) and LCBH's dedicated volunteers and supporters



# Volunteer Venue

The value of a volunteer hour according to the Independent Sector: \$17.55.

The value of a volunteer hour to LCBH: priceless.

*It's easy to assume* that nonprofits work from the inside out- that good deeds are paid from organization to client. While the work done inside of an organization is incredibly important, what is too often overlooked is the fact that the individuals served are the driving force behind our work and their determination and advocacy are the most important components of change and achieving social justice.

At LCBH, former clients have the opportunity to continue advocating for safe, decent, affordable housing through the Better Housing Action Network. The BHAN is fairly new,

but the individuals involved have already successfully joined

together to advocate for legislation that, for example,

protects victims of domestic violence against having to remain

in unsafe, and potentially deadly housing

conditions because they are bound by a lease. Linda, a mother and grandmother, is one of the BHAN members who believes the group's work is important and "wants to be a voice, even if it doesn't change things for myself, maybe it will change things for someone down the line."

*"If we can make a difference just by saying something, I'll say something."* -Linda Moore

Linda's recent move, which was a result of her fighting a landlord to get a month of gas she paid for and was refused during the month of February, brought her to a garden unit in a large court yard building

that she comfortably shares with one of her daughter's, her soon to be son-in-law, their two children, and another granddaughter. AOD attorney, Gerard O'Toole, helped Linda get time to move after her landlord tried to

evict her for withholding a portion of rent for the gas she previously paid for and did not receive in the month of February.

It is not easy for a single mother and grandmother to find housing on a fixed income due to disability, but despite this fact Linda

feels that while she "struggles to find a place to stay, I see people living in a cardboard box in Chicago and know that just shouldn't be." Linda's determination and commitment to affordable housing has been a gift to the staff at LCBH and has already impacted legislation that promotes safe, decent, affordable housing. ■



BHAN member and Featured Volunteer Linda Moore, with her granddaughter.

## Renter's Tip

Persons that rent on a month to month basis (without a written lease) should be aware that there is more to be concerned about than your monthly payment of rent. It may be a good idea to get a separate letter of understanding (before tendering any payment and receiving your keys) from your landlord, when a landlord

agrees that the tenant's utilities are included in the rental payment. This may help the tenant in the event

that a dispute arises over who was responsible for the payment of utilities. Additionally, the letter

should also include other items that are important to the tenant, i.e., the right to have a pet, etc.

# The Ins and Outs of LCBH

## LCBH Welcomes and Greatly Appreciates our Summer Legal Volunteers:

### *PILI Fellow*

Valdir C. Barbosa, Graduate University of Chicago College of Law

### *PILI Fellow*

J'Antae D. Hall, Graduate Thurgood Marshall School of Law, Texas Southern University

### *PILI Interns*

Sarah M. Andrew, DePaul University College of Law

Kevin A. Ameriks, Chicago - Kent College of Law

Kathryn Richards - DePaul University College of Law

Michael C. Wong, Northwestern University School of Law

## ...and offers our sincere gratitude and best wishes for our outgoing clerks and volunteers:

Iris Chavira, DePaul University College of Law

Mark Eisenman, Urban Life Center / Albion College

Michelle Valdez, Northwestern  
University Paralegal Studies

Program  
Frank Wolford, Roosevelt University  
Paralegal Program

## Please welcome our newest staff members:

Melissa Cundari

Lance Drake

Christine Kellogg

## LCBH offers our best wishes and sincerest gratitude to outgoing staff members:

Amita Lonial

Steven Quaintance McKenzie

Rebekah Ray Nugyen

Please welcome LCBH's **Board** President, Andrea Townson. Andrea is employed by Fannie Mae and has already proved to be a true asset to the organization and its growth.



Board Vice President Sharon King (L) and 2005 Board President Ed Malstrom (R).

A very special thank you to our former board president, Ed Malstrom. Ed was an integral part of the growth and success of LCBH in 2005 and did a tremendous job garnering support for our 25th Anniversary celebration. We are fortunate to have Ed continue on as a member of LCBH's board and serve on the fundraising committee.

Thank you to the generous **firms** for hosting AOD trainings and recruiting incredible volunteers:

Wildman Harrold Allen and Dixon

Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal

Winston and Strawn

## POLICY BRIEF

### INSECURE IN YOUR OWN HOME? WHAT IT MEANS TO RENT IN ILLINOIS

The Illinois Renters Survey, sponsored and produced by Housing Action Illinois, Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing, and Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, was released in January, 2006. The goal of the survey was to understand the experience of renters in Illinois in order to determine how best to improve the landlord-tenant relationship and, ultimately, the quality of life for Illinois renters. Three-hundred and ninety-six Illinois residents from across the state responded to the survey and the experiences reported in the survey show that a lack of education,

Most notably, one in eleven households had a landlord threaten to shut off the utilities to the property and one in twelve had a landlord actually lock-out - illegally evict - the respondent from their apartment.

For a copy of the complete report, please visit: <http://www.lcbh.org/reports.html>.

Special recognition and gratitude to the authors:

Douglas Schenkelberg, Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing

Tammie Grossman, Housing Action Illinois

Katherine Walz, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

## Lobby Day



In the early morning of Lobby Day, on February 23, a crowd of people gathered downtown to board buses bound for Springfield. Among them were nearly a dozen members of the Better Housing Action Network, a group of low-income tenants organized by LCBH. The Better Housing Action Network members

that morning represented neighborhoods from throughout the city. An older couple came to share their experience with an illegal lock-out; a mother brought her young son to talk about their struggles in and out of homelessness. Most were experiencing their first taste of political action. Upon arriving in Springfield, they joined over 300 people from around the state in a rally calling on legislators to protect tenant rights and increase housing resources. Then they split into groups to try to meet with every legislator in the state. One member, Tiffany, was so persistent she tracked her representative down in the hallway. Tiffany told him she had never done this before and was nervous, but wanted him to know how much safe, affordable housing meant to her and her family. She returned excited and amazed, reporting that he had listened to her and would support the Safe Homes Act to protect victims of domestic violence. On the ride home, Tiffany and many of the other members marveled at their ability to access legislators and voice their concerns. Whatever may happen with the legislation they lobbied for that day, Better Housing Action Network members left having been empowered to step forward as community leaders. ■

### Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing

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## Development Update

LCBH launched its first Major Gifts Campaign at the end of 2005, securing a gift of \$10,000 from attorneys with a match from Sidley, Austin Brown and Wood. The campaign, Shelter From the Storm, will run through the end of 2006 and is lead by LCBH board members:

Greg Furda, Sidley, Austin, Brown and Wood

Scott Geik,, Harris Bank

Don Horvath, Jenner & Block

Nancy Loeb, Takeda Pharmaceuticals

Marsha Pender, Union League Club of Chicago

Andrea Townson, Fannie Mae

For information on this campaign or on how to make a gift to LCBH, please contact Erin Bauer at 312.347.7600 x24.

### Interested in becoming a volunteer?

Please contact Pro-Bono Coordinator, William Moore at (312) 347-7600 x15 or at [aadprogram@lcbh.org](mailto:aadprogram@lcbh.org).