



# Annual Report

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



## A YEAR IN REVIEW Twenty-Five Years and Still Standing ...

By Kathleen K. Clark | Executive Director

The determination, dedication and optimism of a group of young, public-interest lawyers 25-years ago in Rogers Park laid a solid foundation for the Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing to address the housing issues of those **most** in need of legal representation. The founders' hard work and foresight allowed the fledgling organization to weather the storms common to the nonprofit world.

We've made tremendous progress over the past 25 years. Yet circumstances sometimes cause us to question whether we are foolish or optimistic in believing that decent, safe, affordable housing and justice for all can be achieved. We watch with the rest of the world as unpreventable natural disasters expose the preventable disasters present in our communities - **poverty, discrimination and inequality**. The question becomes whether it is more difficult to look at what a disaster like Hurricane Katrina exposes, or not to look. The hope in overcoming destruction is that people will have the courage to look.

Looking into our clients' homes we see a different side of Chicago than most of us imagine. We are proud to call our home Chicago. Still, our client's homes hold a striking resemblance to the homes damaged by natural disasters such as hurricanes and tsunamis. Clearly mold and rat

infestation as well as rotting walls, floors and roofs can just as easily result from landlord neglect.

Chicago may not be fully equipped to cope with the destructive forces of inequality, poverty and discrimination. But, we at LCBH with the support, generosity, and commitment of our tremendous friends and allies have worked to ensure affordable housing is available for all of our community members for the past 25 years, and will continue to fight for as many more necessary until we have won. Thank you to everyone for giving LCBH the opportunity to help Chicagoland tenants find shelter from the storm.

## Success in Homesharing

Dr. Alexander, a 79 year old widower sought an individual to share his beautiful, big home in a historic district on the south side. Emily Robinson is a 48 year old Chicago woman who was looking for "affordable housing," though she preferred to find that housing through "community" rather than on her own. By choosing to live in the same house, Dr. Alexander and Emily have both found important needs in their lives met through **HomeSharing**. And their needs have been met through a creative connection ... *gardening*.

Emily could not afford the price Dr. Alexander was asking, but she was able and excited to offer the gift of one of her passions - gardening skills - in exchange for lower rent. Though Dr. Alexander did need extra financial resources, he also wanted someone who could beautify his yard.

**HomeSharing** made the match worthwhile for both individuals.

## BOARD DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

Five new members were elected to our Board of Directors:

- **Nora Ferrell, Valerie Denny Communications**
- **Scott F. Geik, Harris Bank**
- **Dana Holly Hayes, Huron Consulting Group**
- **Marsha Pender, Union League Club of Chicago**
- **Cara Roecker, Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP**

# Program Highlights

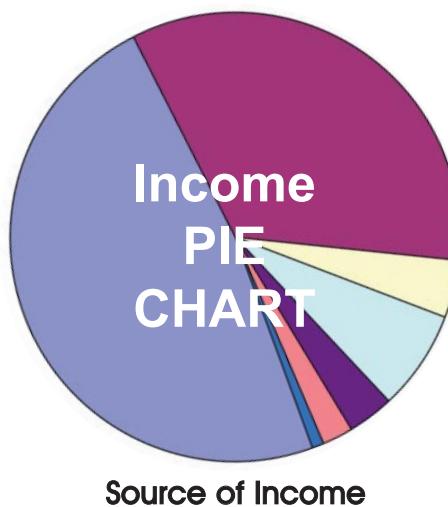
Our three core legal programs provided education, advice, and representation to over 3,720 individuals:

- The Tenant Advocacy Project served 148 tenant families, avoiding litigation in 66% of completed cases.
- With the assistance of 30 volunteer attorneys who contributed over 1,000 hours, the Attorney of the Day Eviction Defense Program represented 478 low-income families (over 1,500 individuals) in eviction court, achieving success in 78% of the cases.
- The Affordable Housing Preservation Program worked with tenant groups in 89 buildings. In addition, 427 tenants were represented in retaliatory evictions, conditions cases or counter claims.
- Our Case Management program provided supportive services to 247 of our legal clients, assisting 42 of them in applying for and receiving emergency homeless prevention funds.
- The Source of Income Discrimination Project continued to move forward in taking discrimination cases to court and
- Legal staff provided brief service to 1,238 tenants who called for advice and assistance and trained 365 individuals on landlord-tenant law in 30 sessions.
- Our Housing Policy and Advocacy Program: Launched the Better Housing Action Network, a project to give tenants the opportunity to make their voice heard on housing issues that impact their lives;
- Our newest project, Homesharing, made (INSERT) matches between home seekers and homeowners and continued to serve as an affordable housing solution for Chicago community members.

# LCBH Attorneys in action, meant

- A senior citizen was able to remain in her apartment, a full 10 months after eviction proceedings were initiated against her after the turning point when LCBH defeated her landlord's summary judgment motion and successfully postponed trial for an inordinate period of time.
- At trial in another case, a landlord was broken on cross-examination and admitted to shutting off our client's water, as we had alleged.
- During cross examination in the course of a hearing, one landlord that he didn't even own the property, buying our extremely low-income client, who was expecting a baby any day, a month and a half additional time in her apartment, where she remains to date.

## LCBH Offers our Sincerest Gratitude to our 2005 Contributors:



### \$50,000 and above

Edwin J. Brach Foundation  
City of Chicago Department of  
Housing  
City of Chicago Department of  
Human Services

Sara Lee Foundation

United Way of Metropolitan Chicago  
W.P. and H.B. White Foundation  
Wieboldt Foundation

### \$5,000-\$9,999

Charter One Foundation  
The Chicago Bar Foundation  
Exelon  
Jenner & Block LLP  
Kirkland & Ellis LLP

### \$25,000-\$49,999

Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois  
The Retirement Research Foundation

### \$10,000-\$24,999

Chicago Area Foundation for Legal  
Service  
Equal Justice Works  
John R. Housby Foundation  
McCormick Tribune Charities

### \$1,000-\$4,999

William Blair & Co. Foundation  
Greg Furda  
Gayla Wicks Germain\*  
Honeywell International Inc.

# 25 Anniversary Celebration and Awards Ceremony

LCBH celebrated its 25th anniversary with a reception at Jenner & Block, which began with a cocktail hour, followed by an awards ceremony made entertaining and engaging, with the help of some self-proclaimed "LCBH Relics". David Orr, Cook County Clerk and a founding member of LCBH, served as MC of the evening. Jack Kaplan,



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one of the self-proclaimed relics and also a founding member, gave an introduction to the evening and an informative and fascinating history of the organization and how LCBH was formed and has grown over the years. Patricia Mell, former Dean of John Marshall Law School keynoted the event.



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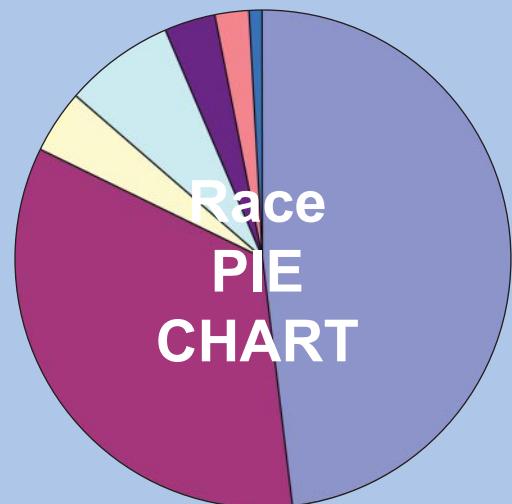
- The Barbara Grau Outstanding Housing Advocate Award was presented to Joe Arnold, founder of Action Society for All People and LCBH Board Member, for his undying commitment to housing justice and his life-long work advocating for social justice.



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and advisory council member, and for her tireless advocacy and legal work promoting justice and equal opportunities for all.

- Jenner & Block was recognized for their many hours of service to LCBH through AOD volunteers, the dedicated attorneys who serve on our board, and their incredible generosity with The Friend of LCBH Award.



Client Race/Ethnicity

The racial/ethnic breakdown of our clients is:

- African-American, 69%; Hispanic, 15.5%; Caucasian, 15%; and .5% other minorities such as Asian, American Indian, or mixed race.
- The average age of our client head of household is 41, and the average family size is 3.2.
- 30, 954 eviction court cases were heard in Cook County during 2005
- The number of forcible entry cases where families are physically removed from their homes and their belongings are left on the street carried out by The Cook County Sheriff's office: Over 6,000.

## Client Statistics

An analysis of our 2005 client data base shows that the:

- Median monthly income of our client families was \$1,052 (\$12,624/year)
- Average monthly rent was \$778, which means that these families are paying, on average, 74% of their monthly income toward rent.

While some of these families may have other support such as food stamps not reflected in the income figure, the vast majority of our clients have no housing subsidy. They are simply trying to keep a roof over their heads at a time when unemployment is high and the affordable housing stock in Chicago is shrinking. This unfortunate juxtaposition creates an untenable situation for many of the working poor in Chicago.

# 2005 Contributions *continued ...*

Donald S. Horvath & Juli K. Crabtree\*

Michael Kennelly\*

Sharon King\*

LaSalle Bank

Edward Malstrom\*

Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw LLP

McDermott Will & Emery

Michael Best & Friedrich LLP

Midwest Bank & Trust Co.

Neal, Murdock & Leroy, LLC

Northern Trust Company

Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI)

Sidley Austin Brown & Wood LLP

Waveland Partners LLC

## \$500-\$999

Bank of America

Julie Bentz\*

Sandra Black\*

Blackman Kallick

Kathleen Clark

Donald C. Clark, Jr.

Foley & Lardner LLP

Globetrotters Engineering Corp.

Heartland Development Corporation

Northshore Consulting Ltd.

The Private Bank

Scariano, Himes & Petrarca

Shefsky & Froelich Ltd.

Andrea Townson\*

## \$100-\$499

Frank Bear

John Casey\*

Linton J. Childs

David Conley

Donald & Therese Gimbel

Sharon Glick

Albert Hanna

Joyce & Rich Hirsch

Jack Kaplan

Kinoy, Taren, & Geraghty PC

Kay Q. McKenzie

Miller Shakman & Hamilton LLP

Pugh, Jones, Johnson & Quandt, PC

Lenore Reif

Yosef Riemer & Vitina Biondo

Leonard S. Rubinowitz

Terry Rose Saunders

Michael & Alice Schenkelberg

Betsy Shuman-Moore\*

Julian & Stacee Solotorovsky

Debra Stark\*

Dan Starr

Thomas P. Sullivan

Brad Sullivan

Tina Tchen

Turow Foundation

Velma Butler & Company, Ltd.

Julius Yacker\*

## \$0-\$99

Robert J. Blazejowski

Mark S. Brooker

Jack Doppelt

David Graham

James & Maura Hagestad

Teresa Kilbane

JoAnne Looney

Kimberly Lust

John & Maria Maher

Sheila Murphy & Patrick Racey

Claire O'Connor\*

Mike O'Hara

J. Beau Rezendes

Priscilla Rockwell

Claudette Sansom

Catherine Stansel

Elizabeth Warren-Mikes

Vicky & David Unruh

Diana White

\* Denotes Board Members

AOD Director Gerard O'Toole was involved in his first trial for a client. Our client was a 61-year old disabled woman who, along with her 5 adopted children (ranging in ages from 7-12 years), had moved into a rental house with serious structural defects. She eventually missed one month's rent payment and was sued for eviction. LCBH countersued for breach of warranty of habitability and various RLTO violations, and prevailed on all of our counterclaims, entitling our client to a damages award, which our client declined.

## With LCBH representation and settlement efforts:

One 65-year old man was permitted to remain in his SRO apartment, rent free, for 5 months.

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A family with 5 children and another child on the way was able to remain in their apartment, rent free, for 4 months.