

South Middlesex Legal Services

ANNUAL APPEAL DECEMBER 2003

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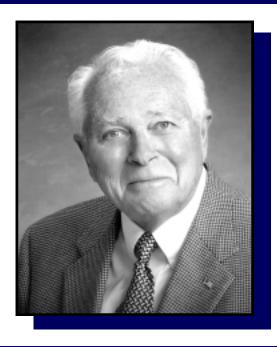
SMLS' Nancy King Honored at United Way's First Women and Philanthropy Forum

The United Way of Tri-County recently honored SMLS Executive Director Nancy King at its first Women's Forum held in Framingham. Upon being presented with the "Character Matters Award", Ms. King stated, "It is a privilege to be recognized for work I love doing. I draw inspiration from the clients we represent, victims of domestic abuse, families facing homelessness, parents seeking a better education for their children, and disabled clients in need of medical coverage. These are the most decent, courageous and dignified people you could ever meet." The United Way of Tri-County funds agencies in 34 towns between Boston and Worcester.

Ms. King received the award for her work at South Middlesex Legal Services and her community work in South and Central Middlesex and South Norfolk Counties. As the Executive Director since 1979, she manages a non-profit law firm representing the most vulnerable people living in 36 area communities.

SMLS has grown and faced great challenges during Ms. King's tenure. After devastating cuts in federal funds in 1980, she has successfully sought to diversify funding through foundation grants and private donations. She has also participated actively in the community, serving on the steering committees of the Neponset Valley and MetroWest Community Health Care Coalitions. She serves on the Board of the Metrowest Boys and Girls Club, the Executive Board of the South Middlesex Bar Association, chairs the Children's Law Support Project Advisory Committee (a statewide group to coordinate legal aid efforts on behalf of children) and was a founding member of the Alliance for MetroWest Unity, which sponsors the annual Community Prayer Breakfast. She has received various honors, including the Legal Services Access to Justice Award from the Massachusetts Bar Association; the Public Service Award from the South Middlesex Bar Assoc-

(continued on page 2)



In Gratitude and Remembrance John P. Garrahan, Esquire

John Garrahan, long-time member of South Middlesex Legal Services' Board of Directors, died on September 7, 2003, at the age of 75. We remember him with fondness and gratitude for all he has done for our organization, our attorneys and our clients.

Charming, funny and shrewd, Attorney Garrahan was a well-connected and urbane power broker, when that role was helpful and valuable. His influence was felt in a great many charitable, business and political spheres. Since joining the Board in 1980, John Garrahan's contributions helped shape SMLS' mission, promoting expansion of our work into new areas, such as special education, as well as encouraging fundraising initiatives. He prized SMLS' strong and independent voice for the most vulnerable. He was a firm proponent of SMLS' advocates being involved in community activities. Understanding the importance of attorneys' public support for legal aid and

(continued on page 5)

Nancy King Honored

(continued from page 1)

iation; the Framingham Rotary Club's Distinguished Citizen of the Year; the Volunteer of the Year Award from BayPath Elder Services; and the Honorable David S. Nelson Public Interest Award from Boston College Law School.

"For years Nancy has been one of the most dedicated individuals in the community, working diligently for access to justice," says Eileen Agnes, a former SMLS Board member, current member of the SMLS Campaign For Legal Services, and prominent attorney practicing in Framingham. "She is a tireless and selfless advocate for low-income people and she inspires her staff with those same qualities. She has persuaded local bar associations to join in the effort to provide access to justice for all individuals in the area. Attorneys support SMLS largely because of their working relationships with Nancy and her staff members."

Ms. King serves as a model of dedication for community members working on SMLS' Campaign For Legal Services. "Staples started working with SMLS because we knew that the program was likely to benefit some of our associates or their family members," says Bob Molloy, Co-Chair of the SMLS Campaign For Legal Services and Assistant General Counsel and Vice President for Staples. "Nancy's commitment to SMLS has been the key to our involvement in the program's fundraising efforts. Working with her has been a truly rewarding experience and we endorse the United Way's assessment of her as a Woman of Character."



Nancy King of South Middlesex Legal Services was recently honored by the United Way.

State Funding for Legal Services Rescued

With the strong support of the State Senators and Representatives from SMLS' service area, the legislature overrode the Governor's veto of funding for civil legal services. SMLS and other legal aid organizations stood on the brink of elimination from the state budget in July 2003. "We are extremely grateful to our local legislators for their willingness and determination in fighting for our clients," said SMLS director Nancy King. All legislators who voted for the override recently received "Pillar of Justice" certificates at ceremonies hosted by their local legal aid offices. At one, Senator Mangani thanked advocates for the work they do, saying, "I can't imagine not being able to call SMLS for help with constituent problems." The vote for the override was 147-10 in the House and 35-5 in the Senate. The area legislators who supported the override are listed below.

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Campaign for Legal Services Update and Annual Appeal

Thanks to our dedicated committee members, golf tournament participants, phonathon volunteers, and many con-tributors, the Campaign for Legal Services has held its ground in a difficult economic environment. Through their hard work, persistence and generosity, they raised \$90,000 this year, with an additional \$10,000 needed to meet the annual goal. "Our donor base continues to expand, thanks to the participation and support of attorneys in the SMLS service area," said Michael Leon, Co-Chair of the Campaign Committee. "Local lawyers are the key to long-term success." The donations raised by the Campaign will be especially significant in the face of the elimination of federal funding. As part of a nationwide effort to consolidate funding, the Legal Services Corporation in Washington, D.C. is planning to fund fewer programs in the Commonwealth. SMLS will, therefore, lose \$200,000 from its annual budget. While this will remove burdensome restrictions placed on advocates' work by the federal government, it will also represent a substantial loss. We are planning to intensify the Campaign's fundraising efforts to minimize the impact. We rely on support from you, our private donors. Please give generously so we may continue to represent the disadvantaged in our communities. Thank you!

SMLS thanks the following volunteers who gave so generously of their time during the past year. Their valuable work included accepting cases, staffing Lawyer for the Day, presenting at education programs and helping with our fundraising activities.

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Six of our phonathon volunteers. Clockwise; Sheila Corkhill, Eileen Agnes, Suzanne Cartledge, Christopher Horblit, David Schuler, Anthony Moosey.

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Lee Payton

John Garrahan

(continued from page 1)

volunteer work for low-income clients, he strongly encouraged participation in local bar associations.

"John was always there for us," said Nancy King, Executive Director. "He was involved in many other community activities, but he made his Board work a priority. He was truly interested in what we were doing and wanted to contribute. Even when he couldn't attend a meeting, he'd read the materials and call me to discuss his ideas. He had such keen business sense and good judgment. He helped guide our organization in many ways."

Financially supportive of SMLS as well, Garrahan took part in the annual golf tournament, donating a three-some at the Hyannisport Club to the event each year. The opportunity to spend time with him on the links was always a popular auction item. He was a member of SMLS' Finance Committee, and took a special interest in making sure the organization was fiscally sound.

"He was genuinely concerned about the staff," said King. "No matter how busy he was, he'd always take the time to ask about them. It was important to him that they have access to the best legal training and that they were fairly compensated - as fairly as our budget allowed."

Many others have experienced the generosity of John Garrahan. A dedicated husband and father, skilled attorney and committed business associate, Garrahan contributed many hours to community service. He was the founder of the MetroWest Community Prayer Breakfast, a very successful celebration of the area's diversity, which is attended by over 500 people each year. He was also the past president of the South Middlesex Bar Association, Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Catholic Charitable Bureau of Boston, Chairman of the Board of MetroWest Chamber of Commerce, Overseer of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society and Commissioner of Framingham Public Works. He has received many awards and honors for his dedication to the community.

John Garrahan leaves his wife, eight children, 22 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. He will be greatly missed.

Story by Jan D'Angelo



Fran Bakstran, paralegal for SMLS' Health Access Project, helps client Joan Owen understand the eligibility requirements for health benefits.

Health Access Project: Joan's Story

Toan, a homeless cancer survivor, came to SMLS looking for help in obtaining her prescription medications. She had recently lost her health insurance from her former employer. With Social Security benefits and long term disability insurance, her monthly income was about \$1,200. Her prescription needs alone came to nearly \$500 per month, so she applied for MassHealth. When she was notified by MassHealth that she would have to incur nearly \$9,000 in medical bills (also called a "spend-down") before MassHealth would begin benefits, she sought our help. The Health Access Project Paralegal, Fran Bakstran, reviewed the situation thoroughly with Joan to educate her about all her options. Fran assisted Joan in obtaining a stipend from the Susan B. Komen Foundation, coverage through Prescription Advantage and assistance from certain drug manufacturers' programs. Finally, she helped Joan to locate and verify a number of unpaid medical bills to meet a lower spend-down for MassHealth benefits. Throughout this process, Joan's income was adjusted a few times, requiring new calculations and changing her eligibility for health coverage programs. "I could never have found my own way through the maze of medical insurance without Fran. She is so knowledgeable and friendly. She really went out of her way to get me help," said Joan recently. The Health Access Project is supported in large part through a grant from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation and through your contributions.

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Thank you all for your continuing support. The Campaign for Legal Services Committee



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ABOUT SMLS

South Middlesex Legal Services provides free legal representation in civil cases to low income people living in our service area, listed below. We handle cases involving Housing, Government Benefits, Domestic Relations, particularly for abuse victims and Education. We also specialize in Elder Law.

Towns Served by SMLS: Acton Ashland Bedford Bellingham Canton* Carlisle Concord Dedham Dover Foxboro Framingham Franklin Holliston Hopkinton Hudson Lexington Lincoln Marlborough Maynard Medfield Medway Millis Natick Needham Norfolk Northborough* Norwood Plainville Sharon Sherborn Southborough* Stow Sudbury Walpole * ELDERS ONLY Wayland Wellesley Westborough* Weston Westwood Wrentham