Community Law Center, Inc. celebrates 25 years as lawyers for neighborhoods and nonprofits
Community Law Center, a nonprofit law firm, provides legal services to community and nonprofit organizations throughout Maryland to promote stronger nonprofits and more vibrant neighborhoods.

Community Law Center’s mission grows out of the conviction that providing legal tools for organized groups will strengthen the nonprofit sector and make neighborhoods more vibrant while improving everyone’s quality of life and access to justice. Community Law Center’s staff and volunteer attorneys create and utilize innovative legal solutions that continually prove to be effective tools for the betterment of Maryland’s communities.

Illustration by Aehyun Shin
Dear Friends

Please join us in celebrating Community Law Center’s 25 years of helping people improve their communities. At our founding in 1986, Community Law Center functioned as an informal network of volunteer attorneys and community organizers committed to providing legal and technical assistance to groups in Baltimore working for change. By 1987, Community Law Center had set up an office with its first employee, Anne Blumenberg, Esq., as Executive Director. As the organization grew, Community Law Center became a national model for community lawyering.

Community Law Center is critical to Baltimore-area community-based revitalization efforts. Community Law Center works with hundreds of inspiring organizations, many of which return for legal services again and again to tackle multiple issues. Clients seek legal assistance with acquiring vacant properties for rehabilitation, challenging liquor licenses of nuisance bars, beautifying vacant lots, preserving historic properties, improving the environment, crafting community plans or otherwise expanding their services and growing their organizations. Like Community Law Center, all of these clients care deeply and passionately about their missions. Our clients need the legal services Community Law Center provides to accomplish their important work.

Some of these organizations are just getting started, while others have been operating for decades. Many have no employees, accomplishing amazing work with very small budgets and extraordinary volunteers. Community Law Center’s clients vary greatly in size, geography, mission, and budget, but they all have determination and vision.

On behalf of our board, staff, and clients, we thank you for the role you have played, whether as a client, a funder, a pro bono attorney or a friend, in charting Community Law Center’s path over the past 25 years. As Community Law Center embarks on its next 25 years, we hope that you will join us in celebrating the work we have the privilege of performing.

Sincerely,

Kristine Dunkerton, Esq.
Executive Director

Danielle Howarth, Esq.
Chairperson, Board of Directors

2011 CLC CASES AND CLIENTS

ACTIVE CASES BY TYPE

- A 31% Greening & Nuisance Abatement
- B 20% Tax Exemption Application & Reinstatement
- C 17% Nonprofit Formation & Reorganization
- D 13% Community Benefits Agreements & Contracts
- E 13% Property Acquisition & Rehabilitation
- F 3% Community Outreach & Education
- G 3% Other

CLIENTS BY ORGANIZATION TYPE

- A 42% Neighborhood Association
- B 29% Housing & Community Development
- C 16% Education, Youth & Family
- D 5% Health
- E 3% Environmental & Animal Welfare
- F 3% Arts
- G 1% Consumer
- H 1% Other

*KRISTINE DUNKERTON, ESQ.*
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*DIANELLE HOWARTH, ESQ.*
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF DIRECTORS
2011: Community Law Center celebrates its 25th anniversary! CLC begins offering semi-annual trainings to volunteer attorneys. In 2011, attorneys volunteered over 1,800 hours of legal services at a value of over $500,000. Some of the legal services provided include organizational formation, zoning appeals, real property acquisition, and nuisance abatement.

2010: Develops a legal focus on equitable development and begins a dialogue with community groups, government, private developers, and others about the importance of including neighborhood residents as stakeholders in developments occurring within their boundaries. "As an individual that spends countless hours working in the community, I recognize the true value of CLC. Our communities need to be aware of all the resources that are available to them. Without the hard work of CLC, we would not be setting the standard for future development / community partnerships. I am sure we can and should form a means to let all of Baltimore know the value of CLC as a resource and garner support for the organization as well. Thanks for your hard work!!" — James Hamlin, State Center Neighborhood Alliance

2009: Establishes MOUs with liquor licensees as a standard practice in Liquor Board hearings to curtail nuisance and criminal activity at liquor establishments throughout Baltimore.

2008: Educates community leaders and volunteer attorneys with the start of a regular workshop series. The informative and inexpensive workshops help neighborhood leaders understand their rights, nonprofits understand their responsibilities, and attorneys understand the issues and perspectives of our clients.

2007: Establishes the Enforcement Committee of the Baltimore Homeownership Preservation Coalition to focus attention on the need to better regulate and enforce the banking and real estate industry in Maryland. "None of our progress would be possible without your critical and fine work. I am extremely impressed. You are a Maryland gem." — Sarah Bloom Raskin, Commissioner of Financial Regulation, Department of Labor Licensing and Regulation

2006: Sponsors city-wide effort to remove "We Buy Houses" signs from city streets, leading to the removal of over 1,200 illegally posted signs.

2005: Honors Anne Blumenberg for her service as Executive Director of Community Law Center for 18 years. Kristine Dunkerton is hired as Community Law Center's new Executive Director.

2004: Creates the Real Estate Services Project to focus on vacant property acquisition and renovation in Baltimore. "Community Law Center has been with us every step of the way through the acquisition, redevelopment, and sale of houses in our community. The amount of legal expertise needed was overwhelming and it was Community Law Center that kept us alive. We could not have done it without them." — Michael Mazepink, Executive Director, People's Homesteading Group

2003: Uncovers unscrupulous practices by national mortgage servicers and sparks HUD investigation. Nationwide and industry-wide changes are made to the industry to better protect consumers from losing their homes to foreclosure.

2002: Protects the health and safety of city residents after forcing the closure of a corner store selling rotten meat labeled with altered expiration dates and drafts legislation enacted to protect city residents from stores selling expired foods. Community Law Center creates an initiative to focus on environmental justice to give communities a voice in land use decisions impacting neighborhoods.

2001: Drafts legislation enacted to allow state funding to be used to create side-yards out of vacant lots.

2000: Establishes the Project to End Predatory and Deceptive Real Estate Practices to conduct research and analysis designed to curb illegal and unethical property transactions after recognizing that the high rates of vacancy and foreclosure in the city were largely the result of property scams and mortgage fraud.

1999: Attacks open-air drug markets in Baltimore by forcing the removal of hundreds of illegal payphones routinely used in the drug trade.

1998: Argues the first drug nuisance abatement case against an owner-occupant in Baltimore City, resulting in the eviction of a drug dealer from a property that he owned.

1997: Focuses anti-crime and vacant house reduction strategies in Patterson Park communities, initiating over 70 drug nuisance abatement cases in one year. This strategy, with many partners, proved successful in creating a "neighborhood of choice." "I thought about all that CLC and Patterson Place went through together, trying to think of what was the most memorable case. The work that helped us most was, actually, the least exciting. We benefited most from the nitty gritty hands-on work of identifying property owners and property status. Those things were never straightforward, always it was an abandoned house whose previous owners had divorced then died or disappeared from the face of the earth. So, in the end it was the searching through records that saved our neighborhood." — Carol Hartke, President, Patterson Place, Inc.

1996: Initiates the Community Bill of Rights legislation enacted to allow community associations to seek enforcement of housing, building, zoning and health codes.

1995: Establishes the Pro Bono Program to dramatically expand recruitment of volunteer attorneys to serve the needs of nonprofit, grassroots and community-based organizations. The Pro Bono Program matches community-based organizations and other nonprofits with attorneys who have volunteered to provide them with pro-bono legal assistance.

1994: Develops a self-help nuisance abatement strategy to allow community members to board up vacant houses in the city and begins the Community Legal Services Program to provide comprehensive legal services to support communities with anti-crime efforts. In the program’s first year, violent crime is reduced from 25 – 56% in those communities represented by Community Law Center.

1993: Files first drug nuisance case against a landlord with tenants distributing drugs from a rental property. Drug nuisance cases against rental properties quickly became effective tools for both organizing neighborhoods and addressing crime and violence on a block.

1992: Files the first vacant house receivership actions on behalf of Baltimore City community associations to put vacant houses back into productive use.

1991: Advances a new weapon for renovating vacant houses with a Baltimore City Circuit Court victory in which a receiver was ordered to oversee a vacant property owner’s repair of housing code violations.

1990: Hires the first staff attorney.

1989: Files suit against the owners of 1300 illegal billboards blighting the city by advertising alcohol and tobacco primarily in low-income communities.

1986: Receives initial grant funding to open its office.

1983: Incorporates and forms an informal network of volunteer lawyers interested in providing legal assistance to small, nonprofit organizations.
Community Law Center marked its 25th anniversary in 2011 with over 200 guests enjoying music and wonderful foods and beverages donated by local restaurants and caterers. The event honoree was Maryland Attorney General Doug Gansler who was inducted into Community Law Center’s Honorary Board. Attorney General Gansler, told the gathering, “I am a great believer in the power of the law to improve the lives of our citizens. The goals of my office and that of Community Law Center have great synergy. We both work to create safer, stronger, more just communities.”

Legal Briefs honored 25 clients served by CLC over the past 25 years. Speaker Inez Robb (Sandtown Winchester Condominium Association) touched on the kinds of cases CLC has handled with the many groups with whom she has worked, including drug nuisance cases, nuisance property and zoning cases, and organizational matters. “Our neighborhoods are better places because CLC exists,” she said. A special annual feature of Legal Briefs is the auction of artistically decorated briefcases. This year, Police Commissioner Bealefeld and State’s Attorney Bernstein collaborated with artist Edina Hiser to produce the Law and Order Case; Kaitlin Manning painted the Raven’s Case, signed by Offensive Coordinator Cam Cameron and 22 Ravens team members; and celebrity Chef John Shields and his staff collaborated to produce the Chesapeake Chef Case.

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Sofi’s Crepes
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LEGAL BRIEFS CELEBRITY ARTISTS
Frederick H. Bealefeld, III,
Police Commissioner,
Baltimore City
Cam Cameron, Baltimore Ravens
Gregg Bernstein,
State’s Attorney, Baltimore City
John Shields,
Gertrude’s Restaurant

From top to bottom: 1. Community leader Inez Robb addresses the gathering. 2. Artist Edina Hiser discusses the Law & Order Case with Baltimore City Police Commissioner Fred Bealefeld and Baltimore City State’s Attorney Gregg Bernstein. 3. CLC Board Chair Danielle Howarth chats with CLC client André Lake of Fayette Street Outreach. 4. Event Chair Frank McNeil. 5. Attorney General Doug Gansler presents his remarks. Photography by Aaron Shadis.
## REVENUES, GAINS AND OTHER SUPPORT

### PUBLIC SUPPORT RECEIVED DIRECTLY:

- Contributions: $465,554
- Contributed professional fees: $505,002

**Total:** $970,556

### SPECIAL EVENTS:

- Contributions and sales: $37,154
- Less direct cost: $6,144

**Total Special Events:** $31,010

### GRANTS FROM GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES:

**Grants From Governmental Agencies:** $88,212

### OTHER REVENUE:

- Fees: $47,399
- Miscellaneous: $1,502

**Other Revenue:** $48,901

**Total revenues, gains and other support:** $1,138,679

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## EXPENSES

### PROGRAM SERVICES:

- Legal assistance to communities & nonprofits: $929,133

### SUPPORTING SERVICES:

- Management and general: $117,702
- Fundraising: $57,882

**Total Supporting Services:** $175,584

**Total expenses:** $1,104,717

**Change in net assets:** $33,962

**Change in net assets – beginning of year:** $349,158

**Change in net assets – end of year:** $383,120
Top: Community Law Center Staff Attorney Robin Jacobs and client Inez Robb outside the Sandtown Winchester Condominiums. Bottom: Residents and volunteers of the Fayette Street Outreach Organization cleaning up a park with Community Law Center Staff Attorney Christina Schoppert (pictured, front center) in 2011.
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Senior Paralegal &
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