

Legal Aid *matters*

our mission

The Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York provides effective, free civil legal services and education to and advocacy for people with low income or other barriers to accessing the legal system. We secure basic needs, protect and preserve legal rights, provide equal access to justice and seek fairness and dignity for our clients.

Serving the low-income and needy residents of Albany, Clinton, Columbia, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Greene, Hamilton, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, St. Lawrence, Schoharie, Warren and Washington Counties, and the St. Regis Reservation.

executive director

Lillian M. Moy

inside:

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With Legal Aid at her side, domestic violence survivor stands up to abuser

When Stephanie Coons' husband was arrested for domestic violence, it was the proverbial final straw. She went to the hospital for injuries and called the domestic violence hot line. The help she received included a temporary order of protection and a referral to the Legal Aid Society.

Over the course of 18 months, with the assistance of Staff Attorneys Katrina Dryer and Shannon Woods, Stephanie was able to stand up for herself, ensure her family's safety and break free of her batterer.

"Before I left, I didn't think I would be able to. I didn't know how I would do it or if I would be able to survive," Stephanie says.

The Legal Aid Society attorneys who helped Stephanie have expertise in issues victims face. "We are very specialized in understanding and explaining what is going on," says Katrina. "It is nice for clients to know they are not alone and that we know exactly what to do."

Cases such as Stephanie's involve petitions for custody, child support and divorce; court appearances; subpoenas; and follow-ups with the district attorney, if criminal charges are pending. These complicate the trauma of the abuse and worries about housing,



Now safe: Stephanie Coons and her children.

It is essential that victims have attorneys who understand the many different tools batterers use to control their partners.

income and employment, which may be at risk due to absences for court proceedings.

Shannon says, "Many clients in Stephanie's position may not know their rights ... and give in to the batterers' demands because they are fearful of the retaliation. It is essential that victims have attorneys who understand the many different tools batterers use to control their partners."

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FROM THE *executive director*

Transitions

Happy New Year!

At the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York, we start the new year with some significant transitions. First, our most senior Paralegal, Henda Strasser, retired at the end of December. Many lawyers in the Capital Region know Henda because of her work administering the Assigned Counsel Program, our Pro Bono Divorce Project for Albany and Rensselaer Counties. In addition to operating the Assigned Counsel Program for many years, Henda has also represented low income clients in a variety of public assistance and Social Security matters. Please join me in wishing her well in her retirement.

We also bid a fond farewell to four long term Legal Aid Society Board members whose terms have now

ended: Peter V. Coffey, Jeffrey E. McMorris, Jane E. Scott and James T. Towne, Jr. Collectively, these four attorneys have devoted more than 50 years of distinguished service to our Board. We thank them and know that we can count on them to continue on the Legal Aid Society team in the years to come. We welcome five new Board members: John Caffry, of Caffry & Flowers; Eleanor DeCoursey, of Gordon, Tepper & DeCoursey, E. Stewart Jones, Jr. of The Jones Law Firm, Ronald J. Kim, Esq. and Sandra Robinson. Please join me in wishing John, Ellie, Stu, Ron and Sandra good luck as their Board service begins.

We hope to start 2008 with a new project to provide more in-house bankruptcy representation and other consumer law representation as well. In 2008, we also will continue our life-changing legal services for victims of domestic violence, children with disabilities, those no longer able to work and those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. With our partners at the Albany County Department of Social Services, the Homeless & Travelers Aid Society, Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless and United Tenants, we will seek renewal funding for our Homelessness Intervention Project. Through this program, we help prevent evictions and support families in maintaining housing for a substantial period of time. This is our first formal interdisciplinary program and it has been a huge success. We will seek renewal of this grant in



Farewell, Henda!

Henda Strasser, paralegal at the Legal Aid Society, retired after 28 years of distinguished service to the Legal Aid Society and our clients.

2008 and hope that we can continue to provide these services.

In 2008 we will also share more thoughts from our friends and supporters in the legal community about why Legal Aid matters to them. Feel free to send your own answer to me at lmoy@lasnny.org. Your quote may appear in *Legal Aid Matters* during 2008.

Best wishes for a happy and prosperous new year.

Client Programs:

Senior Legal Services Program
Homelessness Intervention Project
HIV/AIDS Legal Consortium
Children's Law Project
Legal Aid Society Homelessness Project
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project
Upstate New York Immigration Law Project
Disability Advocacy Project
Protection & Advocacy for the Mentally Ill
Protection & Advocacy for the Developmentally Disabled
Owning is Power
Saratoga Springs Homelessness Prevention Program
Nutrition Outreach & Education
Community Legal Education and Training

Volunteer & Donor Programs:

Private Attorney Involvement Program (PAI)
Justice for All Campaign, Annual Appeal
Law Day Celebration
Legal Aid Endowment Fund

Legal Aid matters

January 2008

A regular bulletin published by the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York, Inc.

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A letter from E. Stewart Jones, Jr.

Dear Friend,

I am writing to you on the eve of the Legal Aid Society's 85th Anniversary to thank you for being a part of its continued success—whether as a volunteer and or as a donor. Please join me in marking this anniversary by helping us meet our goal of \$200,000 for this year's Justice for All Campaign (JFA).

You understand that justice is powerful. And so does the staff of the Legal Aid Society which closed over 6,200 cases last year and assisted 29,000 people in Northeastern New York. The majority of these cases were in the areas of Family, Housing and Income Maintenance Law—and 350 of them were closed by volunteers like you.

Behind each statistic are hundreds of lives transformed by justice.

Justice is powerful. No one understands that better than the clients, volunteers, and Legal Aid staffers whose stories you've read here.

Attorneys like Ricja Rice with Legal Aid's Senior Legal Project acted quickly when her 82 year old client's Social Security income was illegally seized by a Long Island-based collection agency. Rice helped her recover all her money in three weeks. And prevented her from entering court as a pro-se litigant.

17 Year old Kyle Hayner discovered the power of justice when he graduated from Watervliet High School with plans to attend college last year. For years Kyle's attorneys at the Legal Aid's Children's Law Project championed his right to get the services he needed to achieve academic success.



Ricja Rice recovered funds for Shirley Quinn.

Justice is powerful and no one knows that better than you and everyone else who has been a part of this thriving organization at some point during its 85 year history.



Judy Swierczewski secured Kyle Hayner's educational rights.

Donors and leaders in the Justice for All Campaign are an important part of that history.

My campaign co-chair, Kim Williams of **McNamee, Lochner, Titus and Williams**, is a former LASNNY board chair and has been a devoted member of Legal Aid's Private Attorney Involvement Program (PAI) for many years.

In 2004 Peter Coffey, the then President of the LASNNY board and active PAI attorney, appealed to my belief in the private bar's professional and ethical obligation to the needs of the poor. And I assumed the co-chairmanship, of the then newly formed *Justice for All Campaign*. At that time I was joined by another former LASNNY Board President, Art Siegel of **Bond Schoeneck and King**.

Today the Justice for All Campaign boasts hundreds of individual donors and a growing number of corporations and law firms who give at the leadership level. Legal aid also boasts a panel of 400 PAI attorneys and an endowment committee.

Your support of justice is powerful. That is why I will match the difference between your last gift and this year's gift up to \$10,000.

On behalf of my co-chair Kim Williams and the Board to Fund Equal Justice, I hope that you will commemorate the Legal Aid Society's 85th Anniversary with an extra generous gift this year.

Thank you again for all you do.

Sincerely,

E. Stewart Jones, Jr., Justice for All Campaign Co-Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Stewart Jones, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

P.S. Please donate by Feb. 14. Your gift to the Legal Aid Society is fully tax deductible.



Unemployment and Consumer Volunteers Needed

It is hard to believe that 2007 is behind us and we are beginning a new year! Thank you for making it a marvelous success. The work we do together really makes a difference.

In 2008, we hope to continue our success by providing additional legal services to meet the changing legal needs of our clients.

Unemployment devastates families and weakens our community. More people need assistance to obtain wrongfully denied unemployment benefits because of the declining economy. For many years Albany Law School's Litigation Clinic helped in our unemployment cases. Unfortunately, this clinic is only available a few weeks per year. With your help, we can continue to represent unemployment clients. These cases are nearby (Troy) and relatively simple and quick. *Please help us provide these much needed services.*

With a fluctuating economy, predatory lending and unlawful collections are frequent concerns for our clients as well. Some creditors target higher risk consumers such as the

disabled, elderly or recently unemployed. We need to make sure our clients know their rights, and know we are here to help.

The Legal Aid Society and our Private Attorney Involvement volunteers assist many clients facing a financial dilemma, e.g.: bankruptcy, unfreezing a bank account or saving a home. In 2007 alone, 750 people contacted Legal Aid with consumer issues, including requests for bankruptcy assistance.

In 2008, we plan to assist our clients in avoiding these predicaments by providing consumer education class-



es. When clients make informed decisions, they may avoid foreclosure or bankruptcy, family instability and the need for publicly-funded shelter and public assistance. This means savings for every member of our community.

If you would like to volunteer to assist clients with an unemployment case or consumer matter, or for a consumer education class, please call me at 518-689-6322, or e-mail kcinelli@lasnny.org.

Thankfully,
Kristie M. Cinelli, PAI Paralegal



Greenberg Traurig received the PAI Distinguished Award at the 2007 ACBA & Legal Aid Holiday Party for their contribution to the pro bono efforts of The Legal Aid Society (from L to R: Lillian Moy, Jeff Baker, Glinesa Gailliard, Erin Kate Calicchia, Heather Behnke, Beth Sacco and Paula Mueller)

Save-The-Date:

Effective Representation of Battered Women in Custody Proceedings

March 19-21, 2008
Albany Law School

A free, intensive 2.5 day trial skills training. Attendance is limited and applications must be submitted no later than **January 31, 2008**. Information and applications from Kristie Cinelli, LAS PAI Paralegal, at kcinelli@lasnny.org, by phone at 518-689-6322, or click on the link on our website home page: www.lasnny.org.

Thanks to the following attorneys who have accepted cases

From July 1 Through November 30, 2007:

Albany:

- Albany Law School
- Linn Baker
- Jerrold Bartman
- Justin Baytes
- David Blabey
- Ira Bloom
- Erin Kate Calicchia
- Guy Criscione
- Christopher Dribush
- Dennis Feeney
- Nicole Helmer
- Daniel Hurteau
- Kristen King
- Brian LeCours
- Ira Mendelson
- John Maxwell
- Michael J. O'Connor
- Anne Reynolds-Copps

- Jena Rotheim
- Nancy Stroud
- Richard Weiskopf

Columbia:

- Carl Whitbeck

Greene:

- Eugenia Brennan
- Edward Kaplan

Montgomery:

- Sherri Vertucci

Rensselaer:

- Tony Arcodia & Marc Ehrlich
- Carolyn D'Agostino
- Robert William Johnson, III
- Geri Pomerantz

St. Lawrence:

- Genelle Bayer
- Richard Gardner
- Jerry Leek
- Cathleen O'Horo

Saratoga:

- James Cox
- Rodriguez & Doern
- Ronald Kim
- Alan LeCours
- Shaw May
- Martin Pozefsky
- William Reynolds
- Bruce Rosenthal
- Christopher Torelli
- James Trainor (2)

Schenectady:

- Schenectady County Bar Association
- Peter Coffey
- Peter McHugh
- Frank Putorti
- Greg Schaaf
- Laura Silva

Warren:

- Bernadette Hollis
- Jennifer Jensen
- David Little
- Christopher Nenner
- Michael O'Dell
- Michael Toomey

Washington:

- Matthew Fuller

Pro-bono attorney assists mother in advocating for her family

Schenectady resident Donna Jones was fighting as hard as she could to help her daughter Chadaejzhia, but when Social Security discontinued the teenager's disability benefits, it became considerably more difficult.

At first, attorney Linn Baker, working pro-bono through the LAS PAI Program, saw that Chadaejzhia's disabling condition—severe asthma—had improved. She says, "There was no case." However, looking closely at school records, Linn saw behavior and learning issues significant enough to meet disability criteria.

The stakes were high. Chadaejzhia's SSI had been cut two years earlier. The family continued benefits during the appeals process and would have to repay Social Security if appeals failed.

"Donna was devoted to her daughter," says Linn, "and I admired her. Despite her own problems, she was doing everything she could." With ADHD and bipolar disorder, Donna strug-

gled to sustain employment. She had a disability case of her own pending, and Linn volunteered to help Donna through those hearings as well.

Donna says, "Linn was the grace of God. She really cared. She saw me as a person who wanted a better quality of life for my family."

When Linn won both cases, Donna was free from the tremendous financial burden of repayment, and both she and Chadaejzhia will receive future benefits. The family can make ends meet while finding resources to prepare for success at school and work.

Donna wants to start a nonprofit

organization to help minority parents understand their rights and show them how to fight for their children. Because of the PAI Program, Donna can make life better for her family and, perhaps, help others do the same.

"The family can make ends meet while finding resources to prepare for success at school and work."

Linn, who takes on a few clients pro bono each year, says, "It's nice to help out. The clients appreciate you." With prior employment in the Social Security office she has expertise in this area and says she enjoys "working on the other side."

Client Services

Pro Se Divorce Clinic:

The clinics are held in Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer and Schenectady Counties. The clinics in Rensselaer, Columbia and Greene Counties are held in conjunction with The Third Judicial District Gender Fairness Committee. The Schenectady County clinic is held in conjunction with The Schenectady County Bar Association. Interested persons must be eligible for Legal Aid and not have any property subject to distribution, must have grounds, family court orders in place, consent from spouse and no safety concerns.

If someone contacts you, and you feel he or she is appropriate for this service, they can contact The Legal Aid Society at 518-462-6765.

Ask-a-lawyer Clinic:

Albany County: The Legal Aid Society in conjunction with The Legal Project and In Our Own Voices will

hold a legal clinic once a month. A person is given the opportunity to receive a advice from a volunteer attorney regarding a legal issue. This clinic is targeted to person of color in the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender community. Space is limited. If you know someone who may benefit from this service, he or she should contact In Our Own Voices at 518-432-4188.

Saratoga County: The Legal Aid Society in conjunction with DVRC of Saratoga County hold a legal advice clinic the 2nd Wednesday of each month. It is held from 1:00 pm until 3 pm at the DVRC office located at 480 Broadway, Saratoga Springs. The service allows victims of domestic violence to receive advice from a private attorney regarding a legal issue. Space is limited. Interested Persons must be eligible for Legal Aid. If you know someone who may benefit from this service they should contact DVRC at 518-583-0280.

Legal Aid matters because...

"without it, the poor have no safety net to protect them in dealing with legal needs... Poor people, after all, are part of who we are as citizens in this country. Legal aid helps us remember that.

*Stephen Easter, Esq.
President, St. Lawrence
County Bar Association*

Standing up to Abuse

continued from page 1

Stephanie fears what may have happened “without Legal Aid on [her] side ... fighting for [her].” She now has a 5-year order of protection for her and her three children, full custody and child support. Her divorce will be complete in December 2007.

After living with mental and physical abuse for most of her 10-year marriage, Stephanie sees her future as limitless for the first time in her life. Crediting Shannon and Katrina, she says, “I can do whatever I want. There’s nobody to stop me.”

The optimism Stephanie has found is one reason Katrina loves her job. She

says, “Many of my clients are great people in really difficult situations that they cannot get out of because of fear for their safety or the safety of their children. Knowing that I helped even one person on the path to freedom, whether it’s economic, mental or physical, is perhaps the greatest feeling in the world.”

Shannon also finds this work rewarding. “I hope I was able to provide support for [Stephanie] during a difficult time in her life,” she says.

Remembering her ex’s arrest as the night that started her on that path,

Stephanie sees her future as limitless for the first time in her life

Stephanie says, “I finally got some backbone.”

She may not give herself enough credit, but her attorneys do.

“The family is thriving due to the legal assistance we provided, and the strength of character she has,” says Katrina.

Shannon says, “Although she was terrified of her husband, she faced him in court. She never wavered in her determination to do what she needed to establish a safer life and home for herself and her children.”

Finding safety and independence for domestic violence victims

Through the Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project (DVLAP) the Legal Aid Society provides lawyers for victims of domestic violence in most rural counties* served by LAS offices in Albany, Amsterdam, Saratoga and Plattsburgh.

Carlotta Palmer, Supervising Attorney for the domestic violence program, coordinates assistance for domestic violence victims who face many legal issues, including custody, visitation, divorce, family offenses and evictions.

“Having a lawyer who partners with a local domestic violence service provider, is crucial to helping a victim overcome her physical, social, and economic isolation,” says LAS Executive Director Lillian Moy. “Our legal services help victims gain

safety, housing, income and independence from batterers.”

Carlotta reports that in 2007, the LAS domestic violence program opened 676 cases.

*Clinton, Columbia, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Greene, Hamilton, Montgomery, St. Lawrence, Saratoga, Schoharie, Warren and Washington Counties.



Children’s Law Project Training on the Rights of Children with Disabilities was presented to a packed house on November 30, 2007.

Agenda and seminar materials available at www.lasnny.org, click on the “Special Projects” page, under “Family & Juvenile.”

Funding:

The Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York is funded by grants from the Legal Services Corporation, the U.S. Department of Justice, the Interest on Lawyer Account Fund of the State of New York, U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, New York State Legislature, NYS Office of Temporary & Disability Assistance, NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services, NYS Department of Health, NYS Commission on Quality of Care and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities, Albany County Department for Aging, Fulton County Office for Aging, St. Lawrence County Office for the Aging, Washington County Office for the Aging, St. Regis Mohawk Tribe Office for the Aging, City of Saratoga Springs, City of Albany, Bank of America as trustee for the Frederick McDonald Trust, New York State Bar Foundation, United Way of Northeastern New York, Legal Aid Society of Rochester, Albany Law School, Nutrition Consortium of the State of New York, Bank of America, The Community Foundation for the Capital Region’s Sara Huntington Catlin Memorial Fund, Greenberg Traurig Fellowship Foundation, Law Firms and private contributors through the Justice for All Campaign.

Last chance to pledge!

The 2007

Justice for All Campaign

ends February 14.

Use enclosed envelope.

PROFILE: *board president*

Jeff Baker, a partner at Young/Sommer LLC, has just been named to a third and final year as President of the LASNNY Board of Directors. Lillian Moy, LASNNY Executive Director, says “Jeff has been a great president and I’m delighted he’ll stay on for one more year.”



Jeff Baker

Jeff has been practicing environmental law for 20 years, representing a mix of industry, municipalities and citizen/environmental groups. He served as lead counsel for the Friends of Hudson in proceedings opposing the proposed St. Lawrence Cement plant in Columbia County. In that capacity, he was successful in preventing the plant from obtaining the necessary permits and the company eventually withdrew the application. He also served as lead attorney for Develop Don’t Destroy Brooklyn, a large citizens group opposed to the Atlantic Yards Project in Brooklyn.

Jeff joined the board of LASNNY in 1998. Among his most memorable experiences is the merger of LASNNY with North Country Legal Services. Jeff says this process “was very stressful as it became a question of whether LASNNY would survive this process and in what form.” He credits “the incredible efforts of our staff and the unselfish cooperation of long-time board members of NCLS” in making the merger work. On a personal level, Jeff states, “I learned a lot about how to merge organizations and boards of directors.”

Jeff views his role as board president as that of “caretaker of what has already been achieved as well as supporting the growth and continued success of LASNNY.” He believes

that the board of directors must strike a balance between close involvement with the organization and micro-management. “During my time on the board, I feel that I have been most useful as a sounding board for management issues and providing

an additional perspective from the private bar. One of my primary goals has been to increase the salaries for attorneys so that we can attract and retain young attorneys and thereby provide our clients with quality legal

A Match Made in Heaven

Glinnesa D. Gailliard, a 2007 graduate of Albany Law School, was looking for an opportunity to work as a public interest lawyer to promote homeownership among low-income people. Lillian Moy, Executive Director of the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York, Inc., circulated the Equal Justice Works Fellowship notice to Albany Law School with the hope of attracting a student “with a good idea for an Equal Justice Works project that would respond to an unmet need in our community and would complement the core legal services we provide.” After learning of the program from the law school’s Career Center, Glinnesa applied with a proposal called “Owning is Power.” The mission of her program is to assist low-income residents obtain and maintain home ownership. Glinnesa’s proposal earned her a two-year fellowship and an opportunity to work with LASNNY to achieve her mission.

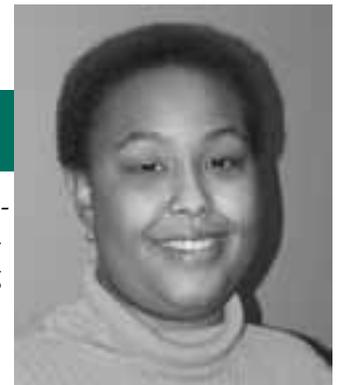
The Equal Justice Works Fellowships

Legal Aid Society Board of Directors

Jeffrey Baker, Esq.	Cathy Lawrence
John Caffry, Esq.	Ann Leigh
Gene Chatterton	Michael Levato, Esq.
Eleanor DeCoursey, Esq.	Timothy Morrison, Esq.
Richard Gardner, Esq.	Sandra Robinson
Stephen Johnston, Esq.	Keith St. John, Esq.
E. Stewart Jones Jr., Esq.	Andrew Schrader, Esq.
Karen Kenison	Paula Slater-Hurd
Ronald J. Kim, Esq.	Sherri L. Vertucci, Esq.
Amelia M. Klein, Esq.	Joyce R. Zeitler, Esq.

services. One of the ways we have moved toward that goal is increasing fund-raising through the local legal community.”

Jeff is following the lead of former board president Peter Coffey, expanding the Justice for All Campaign to encourage law firms to commit to an annual contribution to LASNNY.



Program creates partnerships among public interest lawyers, nonprofit

organizations, law firm/corporate sponsors and other donors in order to afford underrepresented populations effective access to the justice system. LASNNY has joined with the law firm of Greenberg Traurig, LLC to fund Glinnesa’s fellowship. Through the Greenberg Traurig Fellowship Foundation, Greenberg Traurig serves as the largest single sponsor of Equal Justice Works Fellowships in the United States.

Glinnesa currently provides legal assistance with home closings and foreclosure prevention and defense. While giving Glinnesa the opportunity to further her “Owning is Power Program”, her fellowship has helped LASNNY offer new services and timely respond to the critical need for such assistance in the Capital Region and surrounding area.



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Last chance to donate

JUSTICE FOR ALL

Campaign
ends February 14!

Gift envelope enclosed

Guardians of Justice wanted

no prior superhero experience necessary

In 2008, the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York will celebrate 85 years of service, and its impact during that time is immeasurable. An organization on which so many depend must assure longevity. It's a big responsibility. To meet our future needs, we have established The Legal Aid Legacy Fund, an endowment to provide known income for the future. Honoring the incredible power of legacy gifts, donors to the permanent endowment fund will be known as the "Guardians of Justice." And since red capes and supernatural powers are not prerequisites, everyone has the potential to be a hero. *Everyone.*

The Guardians of Justice will be made up by those "many quiet supporters who have LAS in their hearts," says Amy Klein, chairperson of the board's Legacy Partnership Committee. "Even

those who may not consider themselves wealthy have the ability to make a significant difference", she says, "through a future gift: bequests of cash or property, life insurance policies, retirement plans, annuities and trusts."

The Legal Aid Endowment Fund is held in perpetuity at The Community Foundation for the Capital Region. Thanks to the Foundation, LASNNY will utilize their gift planning resources as well as an adjunct staff person to help supporters discover the many benefits of having an estate plan. Mindy Derosia, will serve as an extension of the LAS staff, helping Legal Aid supporters find a way to enjoy their lives to the fullest, provide for their family and still be able to reach their philanthropic goals. "This is the best type of giving, because it speaks straight to the donor's desire to have

Leave a Legacy of Justice

The Legal Aid Endowment Fund

Housed at the Community Foundation for the Capital Region

a lasting impact on their community. We just plant the seeds and provide the tools to allow anyone the opportunity to make the greatest gift of their lifetime", says Mindy. For more information about how you can design your own Legacy, contact Mindy Derosia, at 518-446-9638.