Board Profile —
APRIL A. FREDLUND

LEGAL AID WELCOMES APRIL A. FREDLUND TO ITS BOARD

When April Fredlund decided to make the Capital District her home three years ago, who could have known about the profound impact this vibrant young woman would have on the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York?

Legal Aid didn’t know then, but it sure knows now! Soon after her arrival, April joined the P.A.I Program, representing clients in bankruptcy proceedings. “A big heart and just a little time can make a huge difference,” Fredlund said in discussing the successful outcome of a case involving a client who was facing bankruptcy, in part, because of an obligation to pay for vital medical care the insurance provider refused to cover.

While April Fredlund continues to do some pro-bono work, she devotes most of her volunteer time as a member of Legal Aid’s 23-member Board of Directors.

As a board member since April, 2002, she serves on the Development Committee, spearheading the planning of the Society’s 80th Anniversary celebration in 2003 and coordinating events for the October 2002 Phoneathon fundraising drive.

“The celebration of our 80th Anniversary promises to be an event to remember,” said Fredlund, who is having fun planning the event and is hopeful that it will generate needed funding for Legal Aid. She also views the 2003 celebration as a way to heighten awareness and encourage support of Legal Aid services among businesses and individuals throughout the greater Capital District.

“April is an incredible addition to our P.A.I Panel and our Board. Her energy, enthusiasm and will to succeed are helping to energize our development campaign. Her vision of Legal Aid will help carry us well into the future,” says Lillian M. Moy, Executive Director.

According to Fredlund, Legal Aid’s growth is dependent on two important factors: continued movement towards financial independence in the face of shrinking governmental dollars, and the ability to attract and retain more attorneys to handle an ever-increasing caseload.

“Everyone should have access to our legal system, but the sad reality is ... only one out of every five people who are income-eligible for free legal representation actually get it,” emphasized Fredlund.

“No one with a life threatening medical condition is turned away

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Message from the Executive Director:

I write from our new location at 55 Colvin Avenue. If you missed our Open House last April, please feel free to give me a call and stop by any time. We’re grateful to at last be in a building worthy of our clients and our staff.

In this issue of PAI Briefs, we share some highlights of the April Open House and our May Law Day Reception at the Albany Law School. Both events were great opportunities to see old friends and share the good wishes of the day.

In addition to the move to 55 Colvin Ave., 2002 has brought us a number of new and exciting programs. Our Children’s Law Project, a partnership with the Albany Law School, brings much needed legal services to children with special education cases in Albany and Rensselaer Counties. We are actively seeking to build our services to children because we believe that ensuring that children receiving the services they need is one of the keys to moving families out of poverty. Additionally, with funding from the IOLA Fund, we are now able to provide immigration intake and referral services for clients in an expanded 16-county service area. While Legal Services Corporation regulations prohibit us from providing legal assistance other than normal intake and referral for undocumented aliens, our partner, the Legal Aid Society of Rochester, can provide full representation to clients we refer.

As a result of the New York State Planning Process, the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York will soon grow larger. Effective January 2004, the Society will assume responsibility for the service area currently served by the North County Legal Services (Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton & St. Lawrence Counties) as well as Fulton, Montgomery and Schoharie Counties. We hope to spend the next 15 months getting to know the new service area, and ironing out the logistics of serving a much larger geographic area.

If you or a colleague practice in part of our new expanded territory, please e-mail me at lmoyn@lasnyny.org or give me a call at 689-6304 so that you can help us through this time of growth and transition. Rest assured that the Society will continue to maintain a strong program of essential legal services to the low income and needy of the Capital District.

Our new public education and awareness campaign, “The Faces of Legal Aid,” is on the road. I have already spoken to the Schenectady and Albany Rotary Clubs, and hope to bring the message about how Legal Aid services changes people’s lives and strengthens our community to as many as possible. If you are a member of a civic or religious organization, I would be proud to bring “The Faces of Legal Aid” to your community group. Please let me know and we can arrange a mutually convenient time. It is critically important that everyone in our community realizes that only an estimated one out of five low-income people with a legal problem can access legal aid services. Our society would not tolerate this lack of services when it comes to essential health care; we must do all we can to ensure access to essential legal aid. This was part of the message I delivered to the New York State Bar Association’s Executive Committee at its retreat in mid-September. I know that we can count on their unwavering support for funding for civil legal services.

We are beginning to make plans to celebrate our 80th birthday in 2003. Look for details of an exciting special event some time this winter. I also hope that you enjoy as much as I have getting to know one of our Legal Aid Society alumni, Mark Sonders. Mark started off at the Legal Aid Society in Troy. His story is part of the history of the Legal Aid Society and the legal community in the Capital District.

As always, if you have suggestions for our work or programs, please feel free to contact me at 689-6304.

Sincerely yours,
Our Alumni, Our History

In 2003, the Legal Aid Society will celebrate its 80th Anniversary of serving the low income and needy of the Capital District. Our story is part of the fabric of this legal community and starts with the many lawyers and law students who have worked at the Society. Our Alumni/Our History, a column profiling Legal Aid Alumni, memorializes the Society's history, via some of our most talented attorneys and law clerks.

Mark Sonders

REFLECTS ON TIME WITH LEGAL AID

From a small office on Hutton Street in Troy, NY, Mark Sonders endeavored to right the societal injustices against the poor and disenfranchised citizens of Rensselaer County.

The year was 1974. Mark was a new attorney, having graduated from Albany Law School in 1973. Within the short span of a year, he was transformed from a student of law to a practitioner of law, charged with single-handedly directing the Troy office of the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York.

Sonders served in this capacity for three years, receiving some help from law students who shared his fervor for justice.

"As a child of the sixties, I truly believed that with energy and devotion to a cause, I could make a positive difference," Sonders recalled, "and I would like to believe that I did make life a little better for some people."

Most of Mark's legal work involved challenges against the Department of Social Services in custody matters, resolving tenant/landlord disputes to prevent evictions, protecting children in child abuse cases and ensuring that children and their families received food, shelter and other basic human services entitlements.

During his tenure with Legal Aid, Sonders credits some of his former colleagues for helping him persevere in the most challenging cases. He expressed appreciation for the support, guidance and inspiration of Joel Spitzer, Jim Martin, Paul Lichterman, Lanny Walters, and Fred Rutberg, who was his mentor as a law student and is now a judge in MA.

Genuinely committed to helping all of his clients, Sonders was dismayed that governmental bureaucracy and fiscal constraints all too often stymied his good intentions and hard work. "The legal needs of a poverty-stricken community far outweighed one's ability to help everyone who needed it."

Unfortunately, in too many instances, crisis management took precedence over judicial resolve," Sonders said.

"We did whatever we could, when and how we could, to serve the best interests of our clients," he added, noting that large caseloads, cutting through bureaucratic red tape and limited funding for Legal Aid services were a source of frustration for attorneys committed to serving the indigent.

Following his three-year association with Legal Aid, Sonders continued to practice law, and has been affiliated with the Albany-based law firm of Bouck, Holloway, Kiernan & Casey for the past 22 years. As a managing partner in the firm, Mark Sonders, is a civil litigation attorney with an expertise in negligence and product liability cases.

In reflecting on his days with Legal Aid, Sonders said, "Working for Legal Aid is a cause. For me, it represented what is basic and good in our society - the entitlement to legal representation - and it still does."

"My days with Legal Aid showed me that the gap between those that 'have' and those that 'have not' is far greater than I ever imagined then and even now.

But just because the ability to effect positive change might be limited, it shouldn't prevent us from trying."
Inaugural Law Day Reception
MAY 1, 2002, ALBANY LAW SCHOOL

Co-sponsored by the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York, Albany County Bar Association and the Albany Law School.

Left to right: City of Albany Deputy Mayor, Phil Calderon; Dean Sponsler; Hon. Anthony V. Cardona, Presiding Justice, Appellate Division, Third Department; and John Nielson, Commissioner, City of Albany Department of Public Safety.

Left to right: Michael Whiteman and John R. Dunne of Whiteman, Osterman and Hanna; and Rt. Rev. David S. Ball (retired), Episcopal Diocese of Albany.


The firm of Bond, Schoeneck & King was honored for its efforts to provide equal access to justice for all. Members of the firm on hand to receive the award were, from left to right (standing): Art Siegel, Mary Ellen Ladouceur, Carl Rosenbloom, Greg Champion, Eileen K. Smith, John Bagyi, Lillian M. Moy, LASNNY's Executive Director. Sitting, left to right: Nick D'Ambrosio and Thomas Sponsler, former Dean of the Albany Law School.
Legal Aid's Open House
APRIL 17, 2002

OPEN HOUSE
at the new offices of the
Legal Aid Society of
Northeastern New York
at
55 Colvin Avenue, Albany, NY 12206
on
Wednesday, April 17, 2002 from 4 to 7 p.m.

Please RSVP
by calling Mary Maguire
at 462-1673, ext. 307 or by
e-mail to mmaguire

Equal Access to Justice contributors, from left to right: Jeffrey Baker of Young, Sommer, Ward, Ritzenberg, Wooley, Baker & Moore, LLC; Arthur Siegel of Bond, Schoeneck & King; Robert Schofield of Whiteman, Osterman & Hanna; and James T. Towne, Jr. of the Towne Law Offices, P.C., stand in front of our new building at 55 Colvin Avenue with Hon. Anthony V. Cardona and Executive Director Lillian M. Moy.

From left to right: LASNNY Treasurer, Peter V. Coffey and Hon. Gerard Maney of the Albany County Family Court.

From left to right: Wendy Wahlberg, Managing Attorney of LASNNY's Albany office and Linda Doyle, Commissioner's Community Liaison, Albany County Department of Social Services.

From left to right: Ira Mandelker, Executive Director, Homeless & Travelers Aid Society; David Rowley and Tom Coates, Catholic Charities Housing Office; and Mary Ellen Brown of Rehabilitative Support Services, with Executive Director Lillian M. Moy.
CLE for Pro Bono Work

Last February the Legal Aid Society was approved as a pro bono CLE provider by the New York State Commission on CLE. Under the Rules, PAI attorneys can receive pro bono credit for assisting a Legal Aid Society client or assisting at a pro se divorce clinic. Our approval was granted retroactive to January 1, 2000. Under the CLE Rules, for every 300 minutes (six 50-minute hours) of pro bono legal services provided to a Legal Aid Society client, a pro bono attorney can receive one CLE credit. Up to six credits can be used during any reporting cycle, with six more carried over into the next cycle.

The Rules are somewhat different for new lawyers, but credits accrued during the initial phase of CLE requirements for new lawyers can be carried over into the new reporting cycle as well.

Elena Rich, our PAI Coordinator, will be happy to answer any questions you might have about getting CLE for your pro bono services. We're delighted to be able to offer CLE credits as modest recognition for your time and talents on behalf of our clients.

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A Special Thank-You from Elena Rich

A special thanks to Murray Carr for stepping up at the 11th hour to prevent an eviction of a family of seven.

I received this case at our Thursday afternoon staff meeting, the day before a family of seven was about to be evicted, I had only 2 hours to try to locate an attorney in Rensselaer who was willing to do an Order to Show Cause and Stay for this family to prevent their eviction the next day. This is not an easy task as most attorneys already have their schedules planned for the following day. The family needed to have the Order to Show Cause signed and served on the landlord immediately. There were attorneys in Troy who really wanted to assist but just could not fit this into their schedule.

After exhausting my list of PAI volunteers who do landlord tenant work in Rensselaer County, out of desperation I began calling attorneys in Albany County, knowing it would be asking a lot of them to drop everything, travel to Troy, get the order signed and served so quickly. Murray graciously agreed at 5:50 to do the Order to Show Cause if the client could be at his office by 8:00 that morning. Murray was successful in getting the judge to sign the Order and prevent this family from becoming homeless.

Before presenting an emergency case like this to an attorney, I usually start with “I'm looking for the impossible today” and wait for their response. Murray replied right away, “Okay, what do you have?” Murray Carr knows this area of the law very well and immediately said that the Court did not have jurisdiction over this case and an Order to Show Cause should be done. I knew by the sound in his voice that this was going to be difficult for him because there was so little time and because he had already planned for his day on Friday. Nonetheless, he took the case and saved the family from immediate eviction. A big thank you from both me and Joel Hauser, the intake attorney who received this case and was very concerned about this family being homeless. When Joel heard of Murray Carr’s success, he sent the Executive Director and me an E-mail saying that Murray’s extra effort and immediate success “had made his day.”
Thank You . . .

To Bob Provost of the Times Union and Stephen Leon of Metroland for their promotional grants publicizing the Society’s services.

Our Gratitude to United Way supporters who designate their United Way allocation for the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York. For our contributors who are State employees, our SEFA number is 50-150. Thanks for your continued support.

A Special thanks to Drew Maggard of Maggard Information Associates for producing a videotape about the Albany County Family Court for participants in our pro se child support clinics at no charge to the Society.

THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING ATTORNEYS WHO HAVE ACCEPTED CASES

DECEMBER 2001 — AUGUST 2002

ALBANY
Albany Law School 46
Frederick Altman 2
Dorothy Bruno 2
Susan Bartkowski 2
Ira Bloom 2
Daniel Centi 2
Richard Croak 2
Michael J. Cunningham 3
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Galen Wilcox 2
D. Alan Wrigley 2

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from a hospital emergency room, yet not all people with life altering legal problems have access to legal help. For example, a potential Legal Aid client may be facing the surrender of a child to a foster home following a domestic violence proceeding. Access must be blind to circumstance and everyone deserves it."

Pledging her commitment to the organization’s mission, April said, “The Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York is here to stay. In my role as board member, I will do all that I can to ensure its longevity for generations to come.”

April Fredlund is Corporate Counsel and Secretary for MapInfo Corporation, a publicly traded software company headquartered in Troy, New York. Before joining MapInfo, she practiced commercial litigation in New York City and served as law clerk to Judge Stephen N. Limbaugh, Jr. of the Missouri Supreme Court, Missouri’s state court of final appeal. April received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Washington University in St. Louis and her law degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia.

CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS:

If you would like to help make Legal Aid’s 80th Anniversary celebration a success, please call April Fredlund at 518-330-8034. All helping hands and great minds will be put to good use!