

MILWAUKEE JUSTICE CENTER

MJC



ANNUAL REPORT

2013

MILWAUKEE
COUNTY
COURTHOUSE

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENTS

Welcome to the 2013 Annual Report of the Milwaukee Justice Center. The following pages describe, in numbers, photos and client stories, how the MJC is fulfilling a vital public service mission in the Milwaukee area.

Thousands of our fellow citizens face civil legal problems but are unable to afford private lawyers to help them, or do not qualify for publicly-funded legal aid under current economic guidelines. Compounding the problem, the severe budgetary pressures on existing legal aid organizations mean that approximately 80% of those eligible for free legal services cannot obtain them.

Many of those people come to the Milwaukee Justice Center at the Milwaukee County Courthouse for help navigating the civil legal maze. And beginning in 2013, the MJC's Mobile Legal Clinic began travelling to sites far from the courthouse, providing brief legal advice and family forms assistance. In five full years of operation, the MJC and Mobile Legal Clinic have assisted



Beth Hanan
MBA President



Francis Deisinger
MBA Foundation
President

almost 43-thousand unrepresented persons. Based on 2013 performance, for every dollar spent on the MJC through charitable contributions, the community received more than \$10.70 of value in the form of volunteer legal help.

We are grateful for the success of the MJC to date, but it is not time to sit back. For the MJC to continue to help the thousands of civil litigants it does, the MJC needs your financial support. When lawyers and other citizens support the MJC, they reaffirm the principle that meaningful access to justice, regardless of economic circumstances, is a civic necessity.

And so, it is our honor to ask for your help in assuring that meaningful access to justice remains a reality in our community. Your donation to the Milwaukee Justice Center not only helps serve the basic civil legal needs of some of the most vulnerable in Milwaukee County, but also tangibly improves the effectiveness and efficiency of our court system for the benefit of the whole community. Please contact Jim Temmer, Executive Director of the Milwaukee Bar Association at 414-276-5934, or send your contribution to the Milwaukee Bar Association Foundation, 424 East Wells Street, Milwaukee, WI 53202. You can also contribute simply by going to the MJC's website at www.MilwaukeeJusticeCenter.org.

LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of the MJC,

During the September 2013 Marquette law student pro bono training, Attorney Mike Gonring (Quarles & Brady) shared comments that deeply resonated with the MJC staff:

"In the access to justice field, we have to dream big because the problems are so large. 99 times of out 100, we know that the dream will not come true, but sometimes it will."

Reflecting upon the events of the past year, we recognize that 2013 was a remarkable year in which many of our MJC dreams came true! With the support of our dedicated partners—Marquette University Law School, the Milwaukee Bar Association, and Milwaukee County—the MJC embarked on a year of transformation.

- The MJC welcomed the addition of three valuable staff members whose contributions allowed us to make great strides in our work.
- In February 2013, the MJC moved away from the windows into larger, temporary space in G-9, created a more effective environment for volunteers and clients to interact.
- With the support and partnership of the Foley Inns of Court, the MJC expanded brief legal advice services in May 2013 to include the Family Law Brief Legal Advice Clinic.
- In May 2013, several MJC partners presented at the annual ABA Equal Justice Conference on the MJC's successful, collaborative approach to providing legal services in Milwaukee. Despite Wisconsin being only one of four states that does not fund civil legal services, thousands in Milwaukee County received assistance with their legal questions. The MJC is a national model of what is possible when multiple organizations contribute and cooperate to address the increasing gap in accessing the legal system.
- The 3rd Annual Run for Justice in June 2013 included the largest number of participants in the Run's short history.
- The Milwaukee Justice Center Mobile Legal Clinic "rolled out" its innovative services in the fall and was named as one of the "Big Ideas of 2013" by the Milwaukee *Journal-Sentinel* in December.
- After delays resulting from the July 2013 Courthouse fire, the renovations to G-9 began in November 2013. The clinic space and staff offices moved to higher floors in the Courthouse. We are grateful to Chief Judge Jeffery Kremers and his staff for their generous use of courtroom and conference room space for our services.
- Finally, we continued to have the passionate commitment of our volunteers. Over 420 people contributed their time and talent in 2013, a record high number of volunteers for the MJC. We know that all of our dreams remain idle if we do not have the volunteers to implement them. Whether you contributed one hour or fifty hours, we sincerely thank you!

As we approach 2014 and the developments that the new year will bring, we are grateful for our partners, our donors, our volunteers, and all who have believed in and contributed to the development of our success. Together, let's continue to dream on!

Dawn R. Caldart, J.D.
Executive Director
Milwaukee Justice Center

Milwaukee Justice Center Committee

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Janelle Schmidt
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MEET THE MJC

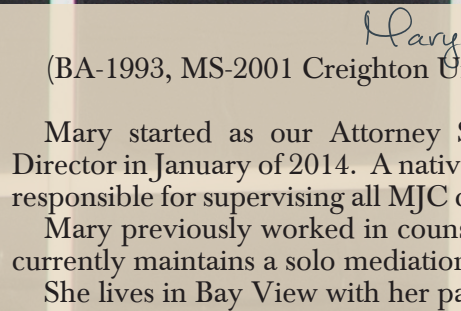
SNAPSHOT OF 2013



Dawn R. Caldwell **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**
(BS-1988 Purdue University, JD-2001 Marquette University)

Dawn has been Executive Director of the Milwaukee Justice Center since 2009, previously having been a partner at First, Albrecht, & Blondis, and as the Legal Services Director of the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin.

Dawn develops and implements programs for the MJC, supervises some of our brief legal advice clinics, and works with the MBA on fund development. She lives in Shorewood with her husband and two daughters.

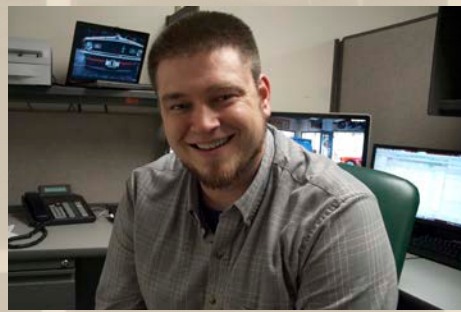


Mary Ferwerda **LEGAL DIRECTOR**
(BA-1993, MS-2001 Creighton University, JD-2011 Marquette University)

Mary started as our Attorney Supervisor in 2013 and became Legal Director in January of 2014. A native of Yankton, South Dakota, Mary is now responsible for supervising all MJC clinics, including the Mobile Legal Clinic.

Mary previously worked in counseling and education administration, and currently maintains a solo mediation practice specializing in family law.

She lives in Bay View with her partner, Rob, two dogs, and a cat.

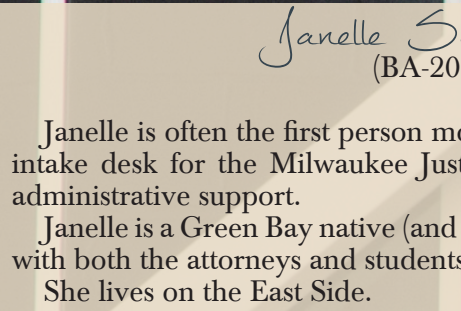


Justin A. Hetzger **NETWORK TECH SPECIALIST**
(BA-2004 Illinois State University, MA-2010 Indiana University)

Justin originally came from the broadcasting and news industry, having served as a newscaster for WTMJ-AM, a TV producer in Madison, and an Adjunct Instructor for the Indiana University School of Journalism.

He's now both the go-to guy for making all the technology in the MJC work, and for getting the word out about our activities in print and online.

Justin, a Hoosiers fanatic, lives in Saveland Park with his wife and son.



Janelle Schmidt **CLERICAL SPECIALIST I**
(BA-2010 University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee)

Janelle is often the first person most MJC clients meet. She supervises the intake desk for the Milwaukee Justice Center clinics, as well as providing administrative support.

Janelle is a Green Bay native (and *huge* Packers fan), and she enjoys working with both the attorneys and students.

She lives on the East Side.



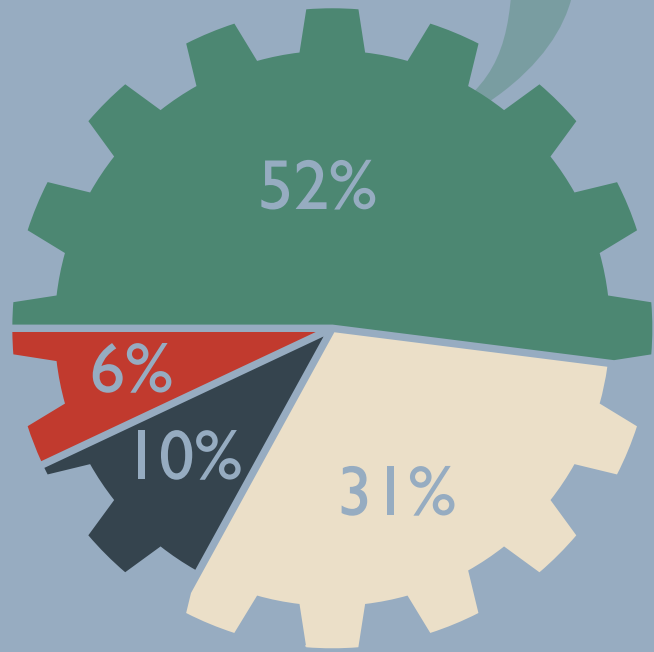
Number of Volunteers: **420**
Number of Pro Bono Hours: **9,405**
Average Hours per Volunteer: **22.4**
Value of Volunteer Service: **\$909,825**

TOTAL CLIENTS HELPED:

10,102

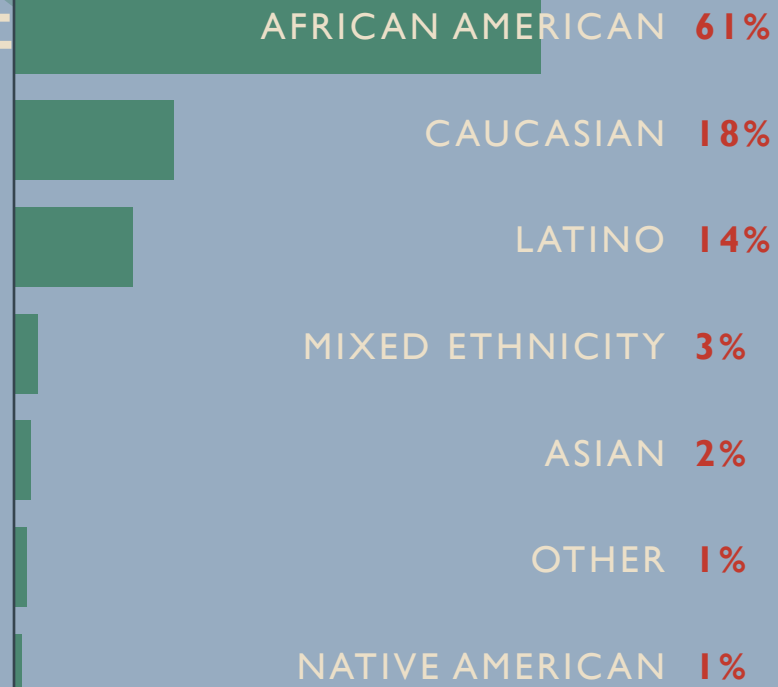
BY THE NUMBERS

HOUSEHOLD ETHNICITY



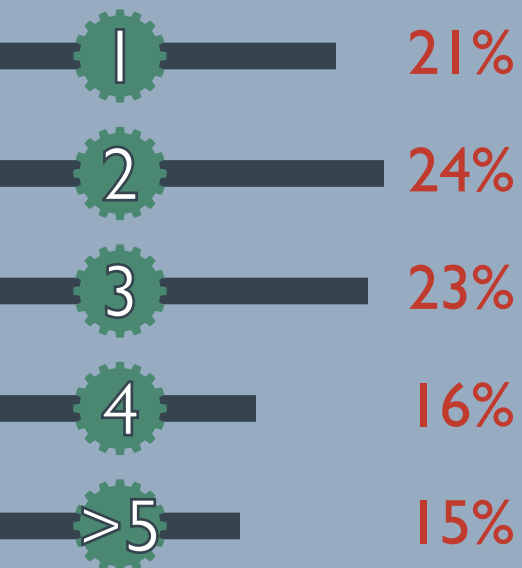
\$0-\$1,000 52%
 \$1,001-\$2,000 31%
 \$2,001-\$3,000 10%
 \$3,000+ 6%

Milwaukee County Monthly Median: \$ 3 6 0 1
 State of Wisconsin Monthly Median: \$ 4 3 0 0

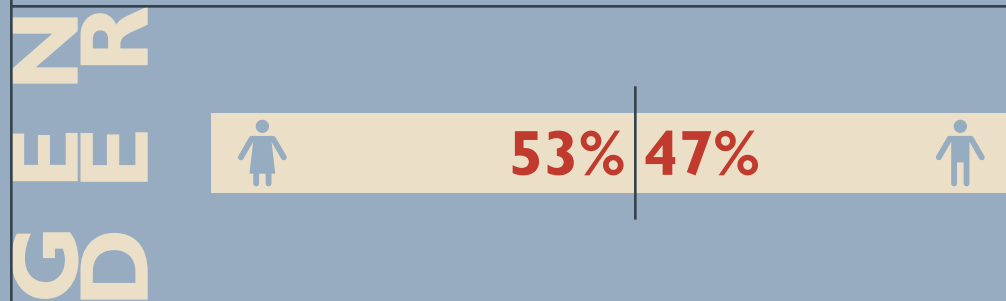


AGE	Males		Females	
	%	Count	%	Count
<24	12%	1,212	36%	3,528
25-34	27%	2,673	17%	1,665
35-44	27%	2,673	17%	1,665
45-54	9%	882	9%	882
>55	9%	882	9%	882

HOUSE SIZE SERVICES PROVIDED

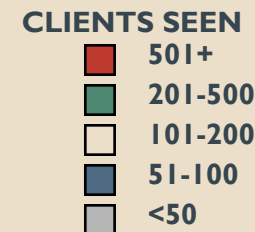
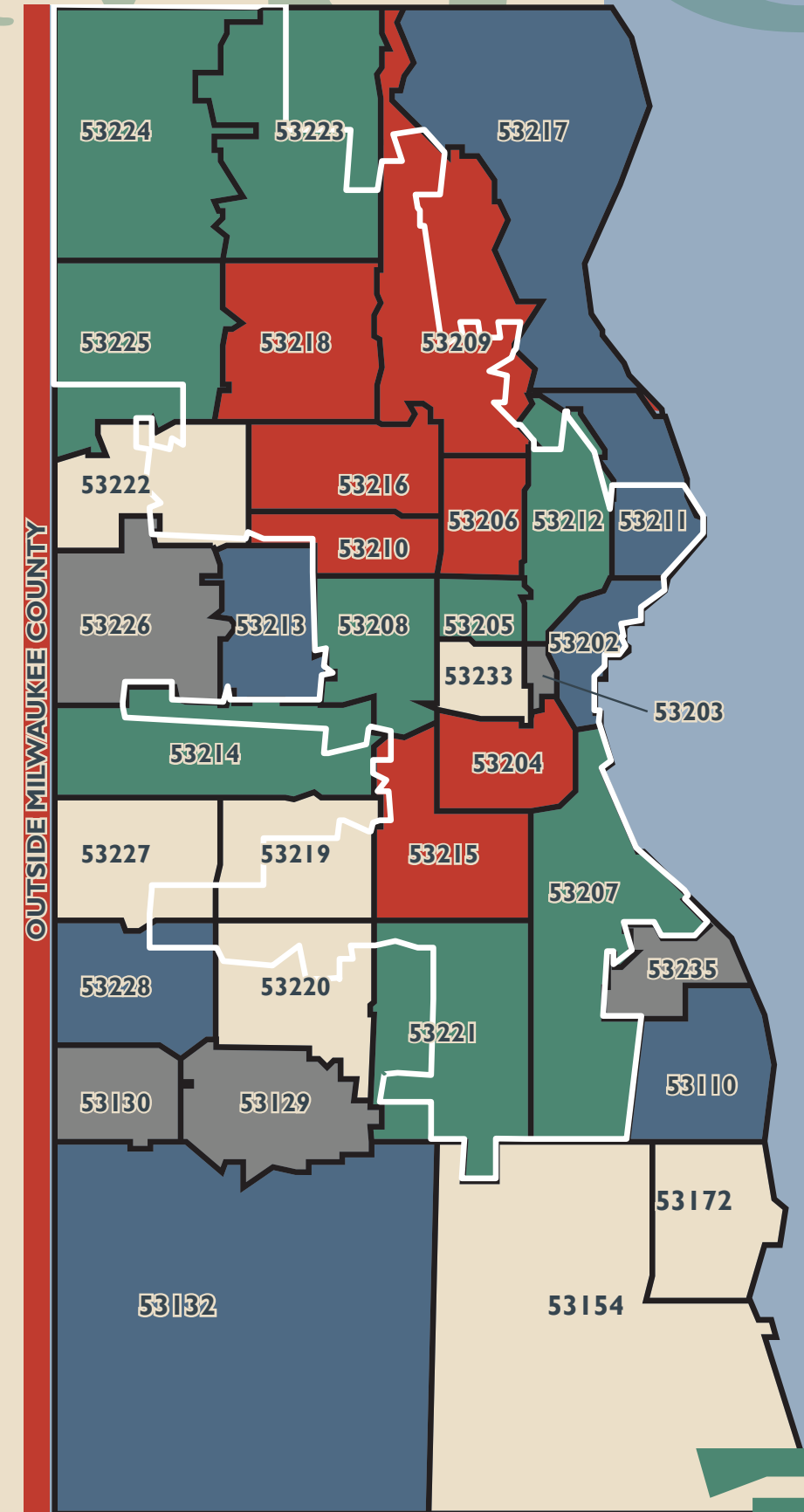


Walk-In Clinics	6,917
Brief Legal Advice	2,186
Divorce Appointments	999



CLIENT LOCATION DATA

ZIP	NUMBER	vs 2012
53110	99	+1.0%
53129	26	-36.6%
53130	24	-4.0%
53132	63	-3.2%
53154	116	+4.5%
53172	132	+13.8%
53202	78	-11.4%
53203	14	-12.5%
53204	526	+11.4%
53205	243	+14.1%
53206	650	+15.2%
53207	215	+13.2%
53208	489	+12.4%
53209	834	+24.7%
53210	527	+12.8%
53211	60	-17.8%
53212	424	+0.7%
53213	95	+55.7%
53214	279	+17.2%
53215	619	+3.2%
53216	583	+3.2%
53217	61	+7.0%
53218	824	+28.0%
53219	197	+11.3%
53220	128	-4.5%
53221	257	+15.8%
53222	178	+2.3%
53223	338	+14.6%
53224	260	-2.3%
53225	390	+9.2%
53226	46	-2.1%
53227	109	+2.8%
53228	64	+56.1%
53233	132	+10.0%
53234	8	-27.3%
53235	36	-23.4%
Outside	561	+19.1%



CLIENT'S VOICES

Diane, a retired kindergarten teacher from Milwaukee's North side, lost her husband in 2003. Together, they lived in the home that he purchased with his previous spouse. Though he kept the home in the divorce, the ex-wife did not remove her name from the deed as required.

When Diane's husband passed, he willed the home to her, but she experienced difficulty in accessing information about probate and finding a resolution on her own. "The Milwaukee Justice Center was the only place that could really help me," Diane said.

Diane came to the MVLC where she consulted with Atty Gregg Hermann, who did extensive research to find the answers and assisted Diane in completing the correct forms. She was then able to have the deed placed solely into her late husband's name, which allowed the home to pass to her nearly 10 years after his death.

Since then, Diane has remained in the home and has been able to pay nearly the full mortgage balance. "I came out okay, thank goodness," Diane said. "Now, I'm going to have a dinner and have the kids and grandkids come over to celebrate paying off the house!" ●

The Milwaukee Justice Center was the only place that could really help me.



Twanda
Silver Spring

Twanda, from the Silver Spring neighborhood, had a difficult day at the Milwaukee County Courthouse before arriving at the MJC. A mother of four boys, three of whom have special needs, Twanda spent almost 6 hours in the courthouse asking questions and going to different offices before finding the MVLC on a Thursday afternoon. "I probably lost a good five pounds from today," she said.

Twanda was trying to remove a person from her home and, when asking for advice, was told everything from calling the police to filing a



Linda & Molly
Whitefish Bay

Linda and Molly found themselves in an unusual situation with their landlord. They complained that their landlord insisted on some uncharacteristic terms from these two tenants, including charging \$100 for a new lightbulb and demanding they clean the landlord's buildings—even ones in which they did not reside. Further, Linda and Molly say the landlord tried to "bully" them into renewing the lease, despite the landlord's unsatisfactory efforts at upholding his responsibilities.

"One thing [the landlord] said was that



Diane
Rufus King

restraining order. Finally, after talking with the volunteer attorney at the MVLC, she learned that it was a simple matter of eviction and received assistance with the filing process.

Twanda spends her days taking care of her children's needs and has much to do at home everyday. She says she certainly does not have a full day to spend at the courthouse and that she was glad, finally, to have the right answers to her problem.

"They were really good. They really helped me, and explained everything really well," Twanda said. "They listened and paid attention." ●

we're supposed to use a shower curtain against a glass block wall," Molly said. "And now says, since we didn't use it, that there is water damage."

Linda, an industrial athletic trainer for a major Milwaukee-area manufacturer, and Molly, a student earning her master's degree in Education Tech, both came to the MVLC without knowing if anything could be done. They were provided a list of options to pursue which helped them feel more secure in their living situation.

"We came in thinking we were going to get some basic answers," Molly said, "but, we got some real guidance." ●



Shanda
Maple Tree

Shanda had been paying fees to her condo association for years. In exchange for what she paid, the association was to maintain the buildings, pay the water bill, and pay other city fees. But, she says that the association did not fulfill their responsibilities and left maintenance issues unaddressed.

"Our roof needs fixing," Shanda said. "Our bedroom ceiling is coming in. Something is leaking in the garage and when it falls on the car, you can't

wash it off."

Then, in late fall, Shanda's learned of additional problems. She received a letter from the city saying that it had not received payments from the association in more than a year and were suing her for almost \$1500. She only had seven days to respond and did not know what she should do. The MJC volunteer attorneys informed her of how to handle the situation.

"The lawyers were very helpful," Shanda said. ●



JoAnn & Anthony
Clock Tower Acres

Anthony recently lost his mother after a battle with Alzheimer's disease. During her illness, he lived in her home and took care of her before she was moved to an assisted living facility.

"It's hard knowing someone for so long, and to see them go downhill like that," Anthony said.

As the estate was distributed, he

noticed that the trustee charged him and his partner, JoAnn, for rent and water during the time they stayed in his mother's home. Anthony and JoAnn then came to the MJC for assistance.

"We're really satisfied with the help with got," JoAnn said. "I think it makes us feel better knowing that if the trustee doesn't respond to us, that there's something we can do." ●

"[The MJC volunteers] were smart and knowledgeable lawyers. They gave great advice, and were pleasant to talk to. Thank you very much for having this service for people like myself."

Curtisa
Old North Milwaukee

"I really enjoyed my experience. I felt that I was handled with respect and compassion about my circumstances. I would recommend my family to come to receive accurate advice. Thank you very much."

Roxanne
Fairfield

"I received honesty and good, one-step answers on moving me in the right direction."

Shea
Cooper Park

"[The MJC volunteers] were excellent listeners, and very helpful to [our estate case]. Every word helps when you have to 'go at it alone.'"

Walter
Greendale

"I'm not nervous anymore, and I'm very pleased. The people were very patient with me. I'm also happy with the one-to-one attention and respect."

José
Walker's Point

"This is a wonderful service to the community. The resources you have are just amazing."

Harilyn
St. Francis

VOLUNTEERS' VOICES



Chad Richter
O'Neil, Cannon, Hollman,
DeJong & Laing SC

Mark Darnieder
Marquette Law 3L

When Chad Richter (O'Neil, Cannon, Hollman, DeJong & Laing S.C.) and Mark Darnieder (Marquette Law School 3L) met their first client on an early March afternoon MVLC, they were unaware of the complexity in what appeared to be a simple "Surplus Funds" question.

The client stated a \$10,000 claim that initially appeared to be a clerical error. However, the claim and proceeds were confirmed after Chad and Mark talked with the city Treasurer's office. As they

Melita Biese spent the better part of twenty-seven years as a litigator with Murphy & Prachthauser, specializing in medical malpractice and catastrophic personal injury claims. After she retired in 2007, she decided to continue using her talents in service to others.

"I've had a fabulous career and have been given so very much in so many ways," Melita said. "I felt it was my time to give back."

Melita has been a regular volunteer at the MVLC at the MJC, helping clients through difficult periods in their lives.

"One of the earlier cases I helped with involved a Milwaukee Public Schools teacher. She lent a secretary at her school \$3,000 and never got repaid," Melita said. We were able to get

continued, the process became more challenging. The client's name was very common, making it difficult to discern the client's claim from other, similar claims. When the correct case was identified, a total of seventeen defendants were named on the action. Thus, a simple motion became a more complicated filing. However, after completing all the legwork, phone work, and paper work, Chad and Mark were able to move the client forward in the process.

her through all those little steps."

She said that many of the cases at the MJC involve similar cliental-hardworking people who find themselves in difficult situations. She also said her time in the MVLC helps to keep her skills sharp, requiring her to explore areas of the law that she had not practiced previously.

"Lawyers are addicted to the feeling of giving," Melita said. "This is a great outlet for that."

Melita can be found every other Thursday afternoon giving back by sharing her experience and expertise with the MJC. ●

"In the end, it was a mess that had two lawyers and a law student scratching their heads, but we were able to help and I feel really good about it," Chad said. "We're pretty confident the motion is going to go through and significantly help the client."

"I think this really reinforced why the Milwaukee Justice Center has value," said Mark. "I can imagine the people trying to do this themselves and spinning their wheels." ●



Melita Biese
Murphy & Prachthauser (Ret.)



Nick Zepnick
Foley & Lardner, LLP

Though the Milwaukee Justice Center staff and volunteers try to pair client needs closely with attorney specialties, in late fall a most fortunate pairing occurred between Foley & Lardner attorney, Nick Zepnick, and a client who was seeking legal advice from the MVLC.

Zepnick talked with a local college student and cancer survivor who had developed her own small business providing photos for cancer patients. Her business was growing smoothly, until she found that another person had been using her successfully trademarked slogan in their business.

The slogan was being used by a salon owner with whom the client previously attempted to partner in her business endeavor. "The [salon owner] meets with her and talks with her about her cancer," Nick explained. "She wanted to partner with him, but then he started doing makeovers for women with cancer, kicked her out, and started using her slogan."

The slogan was also used by a product the salon owner carried. But, Zepnick said that trademark law provided the client the clear ability to use her slogan.

"She was very inspiring. You can't help but empathize with her. And, she's getting ripped off by some guy she's trying to partner with," Nick said. "We don't usually work on a lot of stuff in IP that tugs on your heartstrings." ●

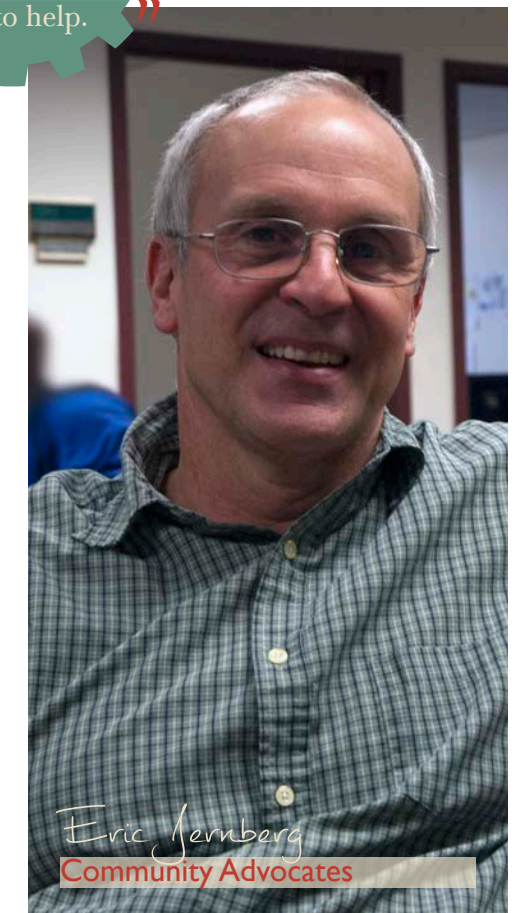
Eric Jernberg has spent the last 20 years assisting homeless and low-income individuals to solve difficult housing problems as part of his work at Community Advocates. He helps to place up to 50 families per month into housing. When he's not at the office, Eric can often be found at the MJC every Thursday afternoon offering assistance on a number of housing issues.

"I get to see people face-to-face here," Eric said. "Ninety-eight percent of what I do at the office is over the phone. There is just a whole different interaction with people face-to-face."

He explained another difference between his daily work and his volunteer work is that, at the MJC, he has helped people successfully end tenancies, including evictions. At Community Advocates, in contrast, he often helps individual to begin the eviction process.

"Ten percent of evictions have extenuating circumstance where a settlement can be negotiated," Eric said. It is within those extenuating circumstances where Eric enjoys providing assistance in his volunteer role at the MJC. ●

"In the end, it was a mess that had two lawyers and a law student scratching their heads, but we were able to help."



Eric Jernberg
Community Advocates

"It feels good helping real people with real problems."

Andrew Wronski
Foley & Lardner, LLP

"Each case is so different and there is always something new to learn. There are still so many questions to ask, and experiences to have."

Julia Westley
Marquette Law School, 2L

"The MJC reminds me on a weekly basis why I am going to law school."

Amanda Toonen
Marquette Law School, 2L

"My favorite part about volunteering at the MJC is knowing that I am actually helping people with their problems."

Morgan Galusha
Marquette Law School, 1L

"I like knowing I'm helping people through what is normally a long and difficult process."

David Falk
Marquette University, Senior

"I really enjoy the people I work with and I enjoy helping the people the MJC assists. It continues to be a great learning experience."

Taylor Claudon
Marquette University, Senior

"Helping those who are denied access to the justice system has been my favorite experience so far at the MJC."

Steven Graziano
Marquette University, Senior

MJC5K RUN FOR JUSTICE



Gold Sponsors

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- Foley & Lardner LLP
- InStep Physical Therapy
- Michael Best & Friedrich, LLP
- Milwaukee Bar Association
- Milwaukee County Parks
- The Mission River Band
- O'Neil, Cannon, Hollman, DeJong & Laing, SC
- Quantum LS
- Quarles & Brady LLP
- SP Video

Silver Sponsors

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- Reinhart, Boerner, van Deuren SC
- Rosenberg Consulting Services, Inc
- Uptown Ford Lincoln
- von Briesen & Roeper, SC

MJC5K at a Glance...

- Temp: 70°
- Runners: 169
- Miles Ran: 525
- Sponsors: 20
- \$ Raised: \$8,440

Seventy degrees, sunny skies, a light, pleasant breeze off of Lake Michigan, and 191 participants all combined at Milwaukee's Veteran's Park on the evening of June 19 to support the Milwaukee Justice Center.

The Third Annual Milwaukee Justice Center MJC5k Run for Justice included 169 racers, a new record turnout, supported by 22 race volunteers, and raised nearly \$8,500 on a Wednesday evening. This nearly doubled what was raised in 2012. The five kilometer course began on the Oak Leaf Trail along the lakeshore, and returned to the lake.

A new record completion time was set by overall champion Carl Holborn (O'Neil, Cannon, Hollman, DeJong & Laing SC), posting a 17:29

time, beating 2012's best mark by thirteen seconds. The run also saw its first new women's champion since the event began in 2011, with a 22:14 time posted by Melissa Blair (also of O'Neil Cannon). [Kadie Jelenchick (Foley & Lardner LLP) had been the women's champion in both 2011 and 2012.] The Bero Group received the MJC5k Team Spirit Award.

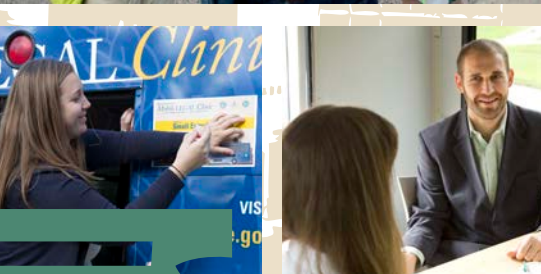
The Mission River Band, comprised of several MBA foundation members, provided live music throughout the event. Big Bay Brewing Company donated refreshments for participants and volunteers.

Preparation is already underway for the Fourth Annual Milwaukee Justice Center MJC5k Run for Justice. Circle your calendar on Wednesday, June 18, 2014. We'll see you there! ●



Photos Courtesy: Tom Caldart

MJC MOBILE LEGAL CLINIC



The Milwaukee Justice Center took to the streets of Milwaukee beginning in late September and has received much positive attention and provided significant service with the innovative Mobile Legal Clinic.

The Milwaukee Justice Center Mobile Legal Clinic, a project of Marquette University Law School and the Milwaukee Bar Association was made possible through the efforts of Frank Daily (MU Law, '68) and Julianna Ebert (MU Law, '81) to honor the many years of pro bono service provided by their friend and fellow Quarles & Brady partner, Michael Gonring, (MU Law, '82).

"Mike had a vision of a bus which could reach people unable to get to the courthouse or other locations offering free legal services," Julie Ebert said. "Frank and I worked with Mike and other dedicated people at the Justice Center, Law School and Milwaukee Bar to make Mike's vision a reality. Frank and I could not think of a better way to honor Mike's commitment to pro bono work. The Mobile Legal Clinic will inspire today's lawyers—and tomorrow's—to follow Mike's example of providing pro bono legal help to people in need. As Marquette lawyers, we are excited about the contributions

the Mobile Legal Clinic will make to our community."

Utilizing the popular and effective Marquette Volunteer Legal Clinic model, the Mobile Legal Clinic offers the services of volunteer attorneys, aided by law students. They provide brief legal advice on a variety of civil legal matters. The clinic also provides family forms assistance.

The Mobile Legal Clinic is believed to be the only project of its kind in Wisconsin and is one of a few similar projects in the nation. The clinic began its initial service at the John C. Cudahy YMCA in the city's northwest corridor. In the subsequent months, the clinic has partnered with the Woodlands Housing Development, the Parklawn YMCA, and the Milwaukee County libraries to offer additional options for brief legal advice and referrals.

In its first months, the MJC Mobile Legal Clinic garnered local media attention from Fox 6 News, which attended the opening clinic in September, the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel, which published both print and video pieces, and the Milwaukee Post. Stories also have been published by Marquette University's student newspaper, The Marquette Tribune, and the local Neighborhood News

publication on two occasions.

Importantly, the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel identified the Mobile Legal Clinic as one of the "Big Ideas of 2013" in its December 2013 story, placing the new clinic in the ranks of other cutting-edge Milwaukee and Wisconsin based project, including UW-Madison's Ice Cube Neutrino Laboratory at the South Pole, the Medical College of Wisconsin's genomic sequencing treatment clinic, and the Global Water Center along the banks of the Menomonee River in Walker's Point.

"In the access to justice field," said Mike Gonring, "we have to dream big dreams because the problems are so large. Ninety-nine times out of 100 the dream will not come true because of lack of resources, but sometimes it will. The model of a mobile legal clinic is one of those things that folks involved in access to justice issues dreamed about for years. I am very grateful to Frank and Julie for ensuring that it actually will happen, and I look forward to the work that Marquette Law School and the Milwaukee Bar Association can do through the Milwaukee Justice Center's Mobile Legal clinic."

The Mobile Legal Clinic furthers

the MJC's mission to increase access to justice by the creation of new and effective means to serve the underrepresented communities in Milwaukee County.

"The Milwaukee Bar Association is thrilled to see the reach of the Milwaukee Justice Center expand to persons who otherwise might not be able to seek out legal advice or referrals for their current legal difficulties," said Beth Ermatinger Hanan, president of the Milwaukee Bar Association and a partner at Gass Weber Mullins. "Confident of the strong sense of volunteerism among our membership, we expect that a number of MBA members will volunteer once a month with the Mobile Legal Clinic. The enthusiastic contribution by dozens of Marquette law students each semester in working with MJC clients not only helps ease the anxiety of these clients, but reenergizes the practicing lawyers who supervise them. Together with Marquette University Law School, the MBA is eager to 'hit the road' with the MJC's Mobile Legal Clinic." ●



VOICE FROM THE BENCH

“I think this is huge,” Judge Maxine A. White, Presiding Judge of the Milwaukee County Circuit Court’s Family Division said. “With the Mobile Legal Clinic and the structure of the clinic here in the courthouse, the MJC is huge for us.”

With twenty-one years on the bench, including two three-year terms in the Family Division (both times appointed as presiding judge), Judge White knows a good idea when she sees one.

“I think the first realm of huge success with the MJC is having a more satisfied court staff,” Judge White said, remarking on the difference she has noticed in family court in her two rotations in the division, one before and one after the development of MJC. “When people walk in the door, the staff are the greeters, and the ones having to try to accommodate. The MJC has now provided answers to a lot of the parties’ questions before they get here.”

Judge White also remarked on the difference she has experienced not

just for court staff, but for the judges themselves. She said that family court assignments used to be undesirable for judges during rotation periods. But recently, she has seen an increase in applications among judges for Family Division openings, and attributes some of that change to the MJC. She was one of those applicants before being appointed to her current assignment.

“In the past, the court would be wracked with trying to figure out what’s missing [from a *pro se* litigant’s filing],” Judge White said. “Now, the guidance the MJC provides cuts down on the rescheduling of a lot of matters...and the stress on the courts of *pro se* litigants has been lessened.”

She also said that she is not the only one who believes that the presence of the MJC has reduced stress. Fellow Family Division judges are unanimous in that view.

Although the stress of a high *pro se* case load are reduced, the number of overall filings and appearances in family court, she says, are up. But that’s not necessarily a bad thing.



The Hon. Maxine A. White and Clerk Nyla Kimble



“The MJC is the biggest symbol I know of access to justice in the State of Wisconsin.”

“I think something we cannot measure is that we had an opportunity to address that litigant,” Judge White remarked. “They may not have had a case, but I’m hoping my conversation with them may have had an impact on how they perceive their case.”

Not only does Judge White believe the MJC to be beneficial to both the courts and the litigants themselves, but also to the legal profession as a whole.

“The sheer number of lawyers devoting their time to the Milwaukee Justice Center helps our profession. We have those numbers of students and volunteer lawyers kind of raising the flag above our profession as a service,” she said. “The MJC is the biggest symbol I know of access to justice in the State of Wisconsin.” ●

MVLC FAMILY LAW ADVICE CLINIC



Atty. David Karp (Karp Law Offices, Foley Inns) and Tristan Dollinger (Marquette 2L) assist a client in family clinic.

Family law has long been a key area of service for the Milwaukee Justice Center. Now, with a new partnership between the MJC, the Marquette Volunteer Legal Clinic (MVLC), and the Leander J. Foley, Jr. Matrimonial American Inn of Court [Foley Inns], the MJC provides family-based legal advice in addition to its usual forms assistance on a daily basis.

Until the implementation of this new, cooperative clinic, all legal advice services were provided only twice per week for two hours at a time. Now, with the support of the Foley Inns and the MVLC, additional times for legal advice have been added Monday through Wednesday from 1:30-3:30pm. This brings the MJC’s ability to serve family law clients in Milwaukee County to five days per week for ten hours total.

“We have gotten very positive feedback from our members,”

Foley Inns president Atty. Rebecca Millenbach, Esq. (Nelson & Davis LLC) said. “I cannot exclaim enough how wonderful it is to have the instant gratification of helping someone with a legal issue.”

Not only will the added services benefit Milwaukee County residents and litigants, it’s also aimed at helping the Milwaukee County court system.

“We are anticipating fewer motions and DeNovo reviews will be filed because clients will be advised on the law,” MJC Executive Director Atty. Dawn Caldart said. “We want to help clients make assessments on the merits of the motion.”

Another benefit is to Marquette Law School student volunteers.

“It is an opportunity for those law student volunteers interested in family law to delve more deeply into the area and develop professional connections,” MJC Legal Director

Atty. Mary Ferwerda said.

Currently, clients are only seen for this clinic through a referral. Initially, only MJC volunteers, consulting with a clinic supervisor, are making those referrals. However, the goal is to encourage Family Court Commissioners, Judges, the Sojourner Family Peace Center, and other, off-site MVLC clinics, to refer clients to the new Family Law Advice service.

“I would like to see more of our members take part in this outreach program,” said Atty. Millenbach. “As president of the Leander Foley Inns of Court, I plan to make strong recommendations at every meeting that our members get involved. Part of being a member of the American Inns of Court is committing yourself to a community outreach program.” ●

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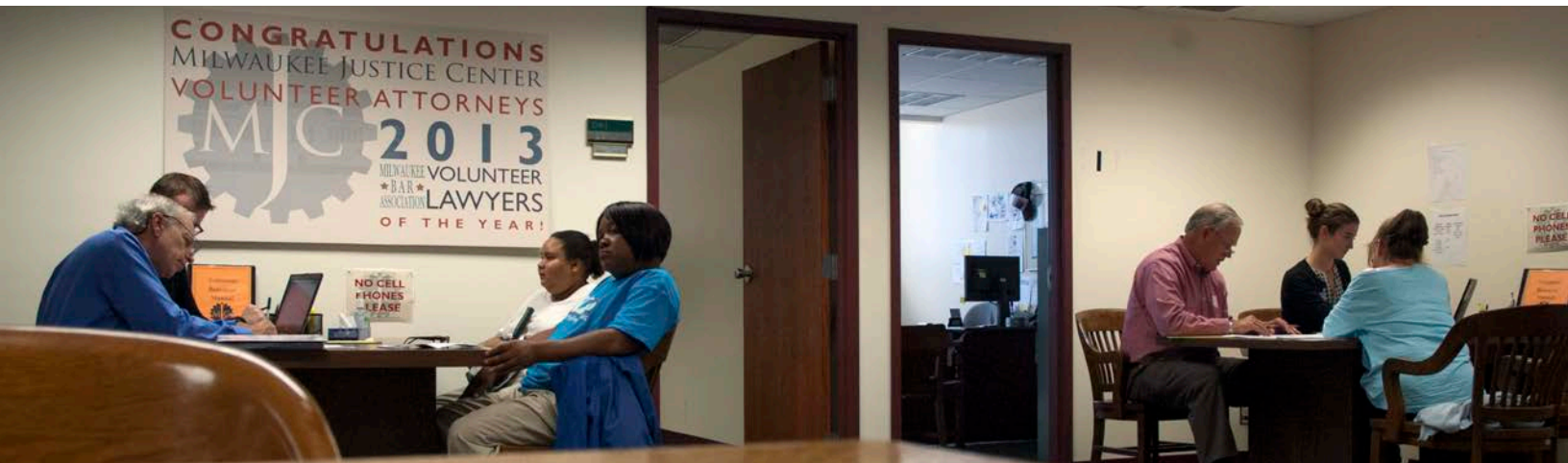
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