

Welcome to Memphis Area Legal Services' Website

A CASE FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Memphis Area Legal Services, Inc. (MALS) entered its fifth decade with the same commitment and determination that inspired 30 members of the legal profession in the wake of Dr. Martin Luther King's death to coalesce around a shared vision to establish an organization whose single purpose was to provide a means by which the legal problems of the poor could be addressed.

Today, MALS continues that tradition of "excellence in legal advocacy," as a non-profit, public service law firm committed to provide the highest quality legal assistance possible to the most vulnerable residents of our community. MALS has a staff composed of experienced, or as some may say "seasoned," advocates with legal skills honed over decades who are complemented and inspired by a cadre of young and capable advocates and staff who are similarly committed to affording access to our justice system.

Even with a dedicated staff, it cannot meet the overwhelming demand for legal assistance today. The challenges are more acute because the widening of the "justice gap" is exacerbated by the economic woes of our time. The recent census reveals that more than 57 million individuals live at or below the poverty line, representing more than a 14 million increase since the 2000 Decennial Census. Our research confirms that the county-by-county census poverty figures in Shelby, Tipton, Lauderdale, and Fayette counties, comprising MALS' service area, have increased to over 204,000, a 31 % increase over the last decade.

The worsening situation of poverty presents a challenge not only to MALS but to our community as a whole, most especially the legal community. It is crucial that

MALS' staff, board and volunteers communicate MALS' mission and its importance to this community with clarity so that community appreciates MALS as the vital resource it is.

We at MALS are very appreciative of the outpouring of support of our volunteers and contributors in 2011. The 2011 Campaign for Equal Justice exceeded its \$325,000 goal and reached an unprecedented milestone of raising over \$350,000. We thank George "Buck" Lewis and the Campaign Cabinet for its tireless efforts. Even that amount is not enough. We had to cut expenses, predictably, in the personnel area. We are down 10.5 full-time equivalent positions caused by a loss of over \$300,000 entering 2012 fiscal year, largely due to nearly a 20% reduction in federal funding. Consequently, your support in 2012 through your volunteerism (pro bono) and gifts are more crucial today than ever. We need to double our goal to \$600,000 to make up for the lost revenue and bring revenue stability. While MALS appreciates the economics of the times, we question the logic that the most vulnerable members of our community – individuals with limited income, largely women and children, the elderly, and the disabled should bear the brunt of such decisions.

We thank you, our supporters, who softened the blow and impact in 2011. In 2012, your support is being called on once again to preserve in real terms the cornerstone of our democracy– "equal justice under law."

What can you do? Please volunteer your time willingly and generously contribute to the campaign. To give a tax-deductible gift, select "Contribute Now" at the top of the page. Again, welcome to our website. We hope you find it informative and leave with a

better understanding of the various activities and important services we provide our community.

Thank you!