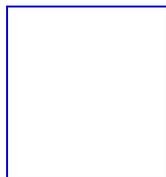


**RHODE ISLAND
LEGAL SERVICES, INC.**

**ANNUAL REPORT
2012**

Balancing the Scales of Justice

Rhode Island Legal Services, Inc.
56 Pine Street, Suite 400
Providence, RI 02903



Low Income Taxpayer Clinic Secures \$53,952 in Refunds and \$247,173 in Reduced Tax Liability



Elizabeth Segovis, LITC Director

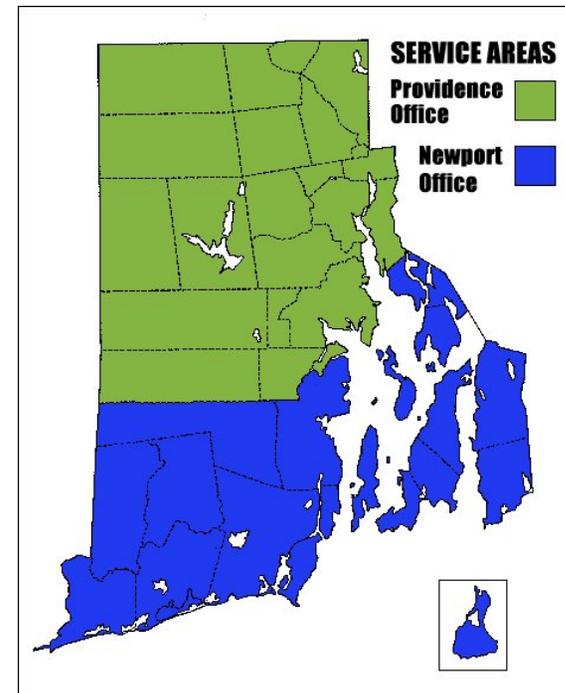
The Low Income Taxpayer Clinic (LITC), began in early 2003 with funding from the Internal Revenue Service. Attorney Elizabeth Segovis, the qualified tax expert, continues to serve as Clinic Director. The goal of Rhode Island Legal Services' LITC is to assist low-income Rhode Island taxpayers, including those for whom English is a Second Language, to obtain fair and equitable treatment in disputes with the Internal Revenue Service, and favorable resolution of their controversies with the IRS. In 2012 alone, the LITC secured the return of \$53,952 in refunds and reduction in tax liability of \$247,173.

Outreach specialist Juan Lopez has been the primary outreach advocate for the ESL program component since its inception. He organizes community legal education and trainings on tax issues for ESL clients, and screens RILS' clients for eligibility using a screening questionnaire developed by the LITC staff. In addition, LITC staff collaborate with the Volunteer Lawyer Program to recruit participating attorneys and tax experts for referral of tax controversies, and participation in tax clinics, and provide direct legal representation in over 100 tax matters and controversies.

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Charles Wilson, Technology Consultant

The Kresge Foundation supports the launch of RILS Holistic Legal Assistance Network with a \$600,000 grant over three years

This innovative project, the Holistic Legal Assistance Network (HLAN) will establish an interdisciplinary team of legal, financial and social service providers. The team will assist 600 families over a three year grant period in resolving their legal problems and establishing financial stability.



Sandy Ambrozy, Program Officer, Kresge Foundation

Holistic Legal Assistance Network clients benefit from the interdisciplinary association of a social service provider working with the legal service provider to address their complex legal and social needs and to resolve their problems. RILS has determined that the relationship of the legal and social service provider is best facilitated by the presence of a social worker on staff at the legal service provider.

In addition, the Holistic Legal Assistance Network is greatly enhanced from the collaboration of a financial services advisor. This expands the traditional model based on the collaboration of legal and social service providers. Through the collaboration of a financial advisor such as Capital Good Fund, clients participating in HLAN are presented with not only the opportunity of resolving pressing legal and social problems but also the opportunity to improve their long term financial wellbeing. The project will operate beginning in January, 2013.

Rhode Island Legal Services Welcomes New Finance Officer Tiffany Cardillo

Rhode Island Legal Services' Finance Officer, Tiffany Cardillo, graduated from Johnson and Wales in 2011 with a Master's Degree in Accounting. She received her Bachelor's Degree from the University of Rhode Island in 2007. Tiffany also volunteered with the IRS' Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA).

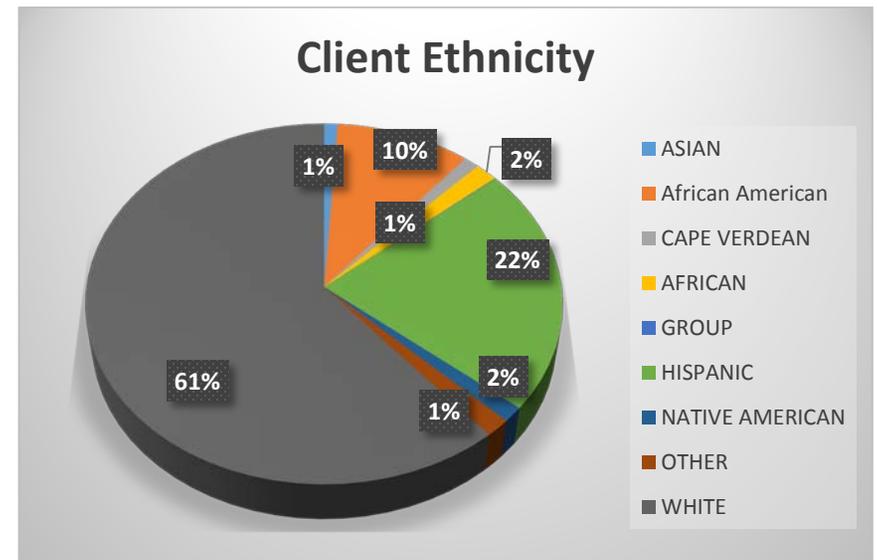
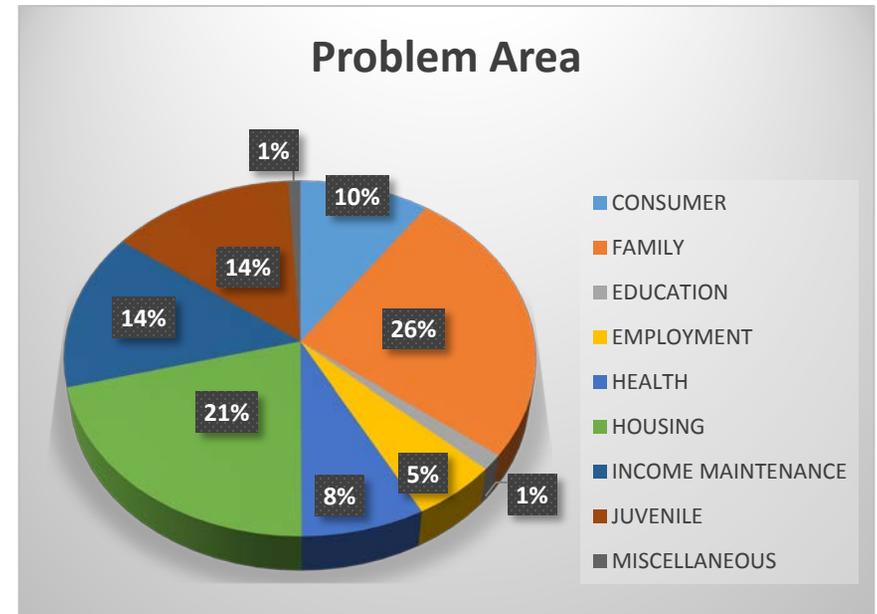


Tiffany Cardillo

Clinic. At the VITA site in Pawtucket, Tiffany taught other volunteers how to prepare basic tax returns.

While in college, Tiffany worked at Friendly's Restaurant where she worked her way up to a management position. As a manager, Tiffany managed the store operations, staff and cash. She also managed inventory control and analyzed store budgets and product variance reports. Prior to her employment at RILS, Tiffany worked at NeoGraft Technologies as a temporary Accountant. Her job duties included: processing accounts payables; payroll; auditing employee expense reports; reconciling credit cards and bank accounts; and assisting with audit preparation.

As the Finance Officer, Tiffany, prepares working budgets for the entire organization, payroll, accounts payable and receivables, and prepares records for the Circular A-133 Audit.



6,071 Closed Cases in 2012

Consumer:	520 Cases
Family:	1,367 Cases
Education:	76 Cases
Employment:	287 Cases
Health:	414 Cases
Housing:	1,118 Cases
Income Maintenance:	765 Cases
Juvenile:	739 Cases
Miscellaneous:	49 Cases
Volunteer Lawyer Program:	713 Cases

Rhode Island Bar Association's Volunteer Lawyer Program Receives Rhode Island Legal Services' Equal Justice Award



President Michael R. McElroy

Rhode Island Legal Services, Inc. honored the Rhode Island Bar Association's Volunteer Lawyer Program (VLP) with an annual Equal Justice Award for the VLP's outstanding pro bono legal aid. Bar President Michael R. McElroy accepted the award on behalf of the Bar.

Rhode Island Legal Services spends an amount equal to at least 12.5% of its Legal Services Corporation Basic Field Grant on private attorney involvement sub-granting IOLTA funds to the Rhode Island Bar Association to administer the Volunteer Lawyer Program (VLP). The purpose of the VLP is to provide pro bono legal assistance to those who cannot obtain representation on their own or through other existing agencies, as well as to increase private attorney involvement in the delivery of legal assistance to the poor.

Attorneys participating in the Volunteer Lawyer Program provide clients with a full range of services, from advice or consultation with an attorney, to appeal to the Supreme Court of the State of Rhode Island. The cases that they handle are within the substantive areas that have been declared a priority by Rhode Island Legal Services.

Education Law Advocate Veronika Kot: working to derail the Schoolhouse to Jailhouse Pipeline

Out of District Placement for a Child with Severe Language Based Learning Disability. A child with a severe learning disability had been neglected by a school district and no specialized supports or services had been provided for several years. The District only became concerned when the child finally started acting out. However, the District's response was largely punitive, with frequent suspensions and detentions. With RILS representation of the family, the district agreed to an independent neuropsychological evaluation by a bilingual expert in Massachusetts. That report indicated that the child had a severe language based learning disability and was years behind. Under pressure from RILS, with the support of this evaluation, the District agreed to a placement for the child in a specialized private school designed for children with dyslexia. In the year since the placement, the child has made excellent progress, is finally learning to read, and the parent reports he is a "changed and happy child." His depression and anxiety have resolved and his behavior problems are gone.



Veronika Kot, Esq.

MISSION

Rhode Island Legal Services provides high quality legal assistance and representation to low-income individuals and eligible client groups for the purpose of improving their economic condition and overall wellbeing by protecting and enforcing legal rights, stabilizing the family unit and communities where clients live, promoting self-reliance, ending domestic violence, preventing homelessness, affording dignity to all people, and reaching out to groups with added burdens on their ability to access the civil justice system.

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PROGRAMS OF RHODE ISLAND LEGAL SERVICES

- ❖ *Low Income Taxpayer Clinic:*
- ❖ *Consumer Debt Group:*
- ❖ *Family Preservation Project:*
- ❖ *Education Law Project:*
- ❖ *Responsible Parent Project:*
- ❖ *Community Lawyering :*
- ❖ *Safe Family Project:*
- ❖ *Volunteer Lawyer Program:*
- ❖ *Rhode Island Senior Legal Assistance Network:*
- ❖ *Housing Law Center*
- ❖ *Public Benefits Group*
- ❖ *Foreclosure Prevention Project*

Appropriate Services for a Truant Child. A high school age child had repeated 8th and 9th grade and was failing again. She began to refuse to go to school, and was charged with truancy while the parent was facing charges of educational neglect, despite her best efforts to work with the school district and to get her child to attend. RILS intervened and secured psychiatric reports. These revealed multiple mental health diagnoses, and the child was finally and belatedly identified as in need of special education. After several tries, an appropriate placement was located, which combined small classroom settings for academic programming and vocational training opportunities in the larger vocational high school. The teen has been successfully attending school, passing classes and is highly motivated to graduate from high school.

School-Based Support for Transgender Teen. A transgender teen who had been hospitalized multiple times due to depression and suicide attempts was not receiving educational support at school or in the home or hospital. The school was also lacking in understanding and support of his gender identity issues. This led to panic attacks in school, with incidents of passing out on school premises, school avoidance and discipline. With RILS advocacy, his 504 support plan was strengthened, tutoring and other opportunities for credit recovery were put in place, and the youth transferred to another school where more personalized services were available. He is now expressing for the first time that he feels accepted for who he is and is able to accept himself.

Attorney General Kilmartin Grants Rhode Island Legal Services \$1.57 Million to Support Two-Year Foreclosure Prevention Project



Attorney General
Peter F. Kilmartin

To assist low and middle income families facing foreclosure, on November 20, 2012, Attorney General Peter Kilmartin announced a two-year, \$1.57 million grant to Rhode Island Legal Services (RILS) to fund the Foreclosure Prevention Project.

The Foreclosure Prevention Project grant is funded through the National Mortgage Settlement between the five largest mortgage service providers and attorneys general nationwide. Under the terms of the national mortgage settlement, the State of Rhode Island, at the direction of Attorney General Kilmartin, received a direct payment of \$8.9 million to help fund consumer protection and state foreclosure protection services.

With the grant, RILS expects to help stop, prevent, or delay the foreclosure of approximately 1,800 homes each year. Rhode Island Legal Service's direct representation includes assisting homeowners facing foreclosure in bankruptcy court, providing housing and foreclosure prevention counseling, negotiating directly with lenders on loan modifications and principal reductions, and filing lawsuits against predatory lenders.

"Many Rhode Islanders facing foreclosure cannot afford to hire a private attorney to advocate for them against the mortgage service providers or represent them in legal proceedings," said Attorney General Kilmartin.

"Rhode Island Legal Services has a long tradition and an excellent reputation for providing effective legal assistance and representation for those less fortunate. The Foreclosure Prevention Project will enable RILS to add the staff resources needed to refocus efforts on this critical legal problem confronting many homeowners."



In order to meet the rising demand for legal assistance to homeowners facing foreclosure, RILS will implement four key strategies designed to have the most impact in assisting at-risk homeowners to avoid foreclosure, including: pre and post foreclosure litigation; loan modification; post HAMP enforcement; and major impact litigation including bankruptcy when appropriate.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to assist distressed homeowners facing foreclosure and to provide them with the legal assistance necessary to prevent the loss of their home and the myriad of other problems that accompany every foreclosure," said Robert M. Barge, Executive Director of Rhode Island Legal Services. "RILS has the unique ability to reach those communities most affected by the foreclosure crisis and we look forward to working with housing counselors, community organizations and other agencies that are working to mitigate the foreclosure crisis."

In recent months, Attorney General Kilmartin met with several housing organizations to solicit proposals for grants to assist Rhode Island homeowners facing foreclosure. It is anticipated that more grants funded through the National Mortgage Settlement will be announced in the coming weeks.