

Making a Lasting Gift Available to All

We have all seen placards mounted in hospitals, universities and various non profits that acknowledge the generosity of a family foundation or philanthropist.

With the establishment of the Legal Aid Legacy Fund, the opportunity to leave a philanthropic legacy to fund legal services is no longer only the privilege of the wealthy. Legal Aid's Legacy Fund, due to be launched in the upcoming year, enables all of us to be philanthropists no matter how large or small our estates.

For many of us, the choices we make for the distribution of our estate is the final opportunity to leave a legacy for our loved ones and our cherished values. Likewise, many legal services and community organizations aspire to establish an endowment fund.

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The Legal Aid Society was one of only six non-profits chosen to participate in the Community Foundation of the Capital Region's new Legacy Partnership. Kristen Frederick, the Foundation's Director, notes that "The Legacy Partnership Program supplies hands-on expertise in the form of an adjunct staff member to help capture dedicated future gifts for Legal Aid. The endowment that will develop as a result of these efforts over time will help them plan their future wisely and provide a continued source of income to them for perpetuity."

Keith St. John, an attorney for the state and a former LASNNY staff attorney, is the first person to make a legacy gift. St. John, who sits on the LASNNY board and is a former Community Foundation board member, was the catalyst for the program. "I believe that the Legacy Partnership Program is important because of the ability it affords people—long on community interest, but short on immediate financial resources—a

meaningful opportunity to be philanthropic and supportive of critical, unmet community needs," he said. He explained that with the support of a Community Foundation asset specialist, a donor can "rest assured knowing that his or her long term goal of community investment can be realized with the assistance of a committed and professional staff."

St. John is organizing the program together with the LASNNY board and LASNNY's Deanne Grimaldi. "This is a wonderful program because there is no pressure. We sit down over coffee, tell you about what the work we are currently doing, and how the Legal Aid Legacy Fund works. Then our Executive Director leaves, and you make the decision with your family," said Grimaldi. "Regardless of whether a donor chooses to support us in this new way, we still get to talk about the dynamic work we are doing in their community."

St. John, who has a strong commitment to pro-bono work, said ensuring that LASNNY had a reliable revenue source has long been among his top priorities.

"I hope my gift serves as a catalyst for others who might otherwise not realize their ability to make a charitable

contribution to Legal Aid because of their financial circumstances," the 49-year-old Cornell Law School graduate said. "I'm hopeful this sort of philanthropy gives the Society a more secure financial footing to ensure the

Thanks to Key Bank for their support of the Legacy Partnership

delivery of much needed legal services and access to equal justice for all people, regardless of socioeconomic background or status."

The Legal Aid Legacy Fund has yet to be officially launched—but LASNNY will be making an announcement in the coming months and offering informational sessions, said Grimaldi.

Legal Aid matters because...

"...there are many in our community who wouldn't find their way without their knowledge, expertise and guidance."

Mary Seeley, Equinox, Inc.
(Executive Director)

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