
THE PEOPLE'S LAW SCHOOL COMMUNITY VIEWS

July 2002

QUEENS LEGAL SERVICES CORP.- ENSURING EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR THE PEOPLE OF QUEENS

From the Board of Directors:

RESTRUCTURING LEGAL SERVICES

By Joseph Farber, Chairperson

Last spring, I used this column to inform the Queens community of pending plans to restructure the delivery of free civil legal services throughout New York City. Over the past year, additional changes have been proposed and a great deal of time and effort has been expended to reach an acceptable agreement.

Legal Services for New York and the local programs have struggled to achieve the appropriate balance between central oversight including fiscal and administrative accountability, and local independence. For the past two years, at the behest of the National Legal Services Corporation, Legal Services for New York and its sub grantees, including Queens Legal Services Corporation, have been working toward restructuring that increases Legal Services for New York's capacity to provide oversight city wide, to coordinate and to maintain quality control of the day to day operation of the local programs.

Under the restructuring plan, while each local program would remain "independent", it would be transformed into a membership corporation. The sole member of each local program would be Legal Services for New York. As the sole member, Legal Services for New York would also have final approval over the appointment of each local program's executive director and members of their Boards of Directors. Legal Services for New York would also have the authority to review the performance of the local program's executive directors.

The goal of the restructuring is to improve the delivery of legal services to low-income residents. We at Queens Legal Services Corporation support that goal.

Continued on p. 8

Community Spotlight:

Queens Independent Living Center

By Alethea White, Student Intern

Its motto being, "Equal rights and opportunity for people with disabilities", **Queens Independent Living Center (QILC)** is an advocacy organization directed by and for persons with disabilities. Founded in 1982, following the passage of Article 23A of the NYS Education Act, and with the assistance of Goodwill Industries of Greater New York, **Queens Independent Living Center** has played a role in providing many of the accessible facilities that are often taken for granted in the borough of Queens. One example is the public transportation system that serves Queens. After successfully suing the Metropolitan Transportation Authority in the early 1980's for accessible subway construction, **Queens Independent Living Center** turned its attention to having accessible buses, however problematic it was perceived to be by bus operators. Thus, **QILC** worked to ensure that private bus companies servicing Queens put their accessible buses on the road in a usable manner. **QILC** then trained drivers in the use and maintenance of wheelchair lifts and other accessibility equipment.

With computer facilities that cater to the needs of its clients, **QILC** asserts that one's disabilities should not cause technological disparities between disabled and non-disabled persons. Supportive Housing and Peer Advocacy Programs, workshops, and information sessions on topics ranging anywhere from government benefits to independent living skills solidify **Queens Independent Living Center's** goal to "promote and pursue independent living through education and activism." Most striking is **QILC's** Independent Arts Gallery (IAG), in which many of the

Continued on p. 6

Queens Legal Services Corporation

8900 Sutphin Boulevard
Jamaica, New York 11435
Telephone: 718-657-8611
Fax: 718-526-5051

42-15 Crescent Street
Long Island City, New York 11101
Telephone: 718-392-5646
Fax: 718-937-5350

Board of Directors:

Joseph Farber, Esq., Chairperson
Howard Lane, Esq., Vice-Chairperson
Fearonce La Lande, Esq., Treasurer
Veronica Villanueva, Esq., Secretary
Caroline Davidson, Esq., Cornelia P. Edwards,
Nelson Gayle, Seymour W. James, Esq.,
Helen Mackler, Esq., Brunhilda Sanders-Lane, Esq.,
Joan Serrano-Laufer, ACSW, Carmen Velasquez, Esq.,

Executive Director:

Carl O. Callender, Esq.

Supervisory Personnel:

Kim Holten, Director of Finance
Randolph Petsche, Esq., Director, Housing Unit (Jam)
Florence Roberts, Esq., Director, Family Law Unit
Lisa Issacs, Esq., Director, General Practice Unit

Office Managers: Mary Carson & Nicole White

Staff Attorneys, Legal Assistants & Social Workers:

Consumer/UIB: Myrtle Jonas, Esq.

Education: Tara Foster, Esq., Ghita Schwarz, Esq.,

Family Law: Jana Bielski, CSW,

Rashmi Luthra, Esq., Nancy Masmela, LA,
Rachel Putterman, Esq., Debra Sambataro, Esq.

Government Benefits: Jacqueline Garrett, LA,

Dorothy Hanmer, Esq., Fernando Lebron, LA,

Ana Martinez, LA, Alice Nicholson, Esq.,

Barbara Nodarse, LA, Paula Simari, Esq.

General Practice: Sandra Bernard, Esq.,

Valerie Blackman, LA, Jessiah Holman, LA,

Adrienne Ortiz, LA, Lisa Torres, SW,

Vania Tseng, Law Grad.

Housing: Tracia Callender, Esq.,

Mayra Chalas, LA, Lissette Claudio, LA,

Tammy Collins, Esq., Amelia Gordon, LA,

Andrea Kim, Law Grad, Antoinette Lettman, Esq.,

Maurice Muir, Esq., Soo Kyung Nam, Esq.

People's Law School: Cindy Katz, Esq.

Support Staff:

Emma Anderson, Secretary
Sandra L. Arias, Staff Secretary
Samantha Barrett, Receptionist
Anyelina Cuevas, Staff Secretary
Luis Espinar, Process Server
Ramona Fequiere, Staff Secretary
Elfrida Gallardo, Staff Secretary
Migdalia Gonzalez, Intake Officer
Mohamed Khan, Process Server
Bibi Rahaman, Executive Secretary
Ana Rodriguez, Receptionist/Intake Officer
Carmen Rodriguez, Receptionist/Intake Officer

Student Interns

Alethea White, Victor Olds

From the Executive Director:

City Council and State Legislators Help Us Win The War Against Legal Services For The Poor

Carl O. Callender, Esq.

Every year, Queens Legal Services Corporation assists thousands of low-income Queens residents through direct service and referral. With only a limited number of case handling staff and a relatively small number of support personnel, Queens Legal Services Corporation completed work on more than 1,500 cases (representing more than 3,500 individuals) for the 2001 calendar year. A case is the provision of legal assistance. The number of 1,500 cases does not include the vast numbers of inquiries we receive from non-eligible people in need for whom we try to find appropriate referrals as well as those assisted through Queens Legal Services Corporation's community outreach program, The People's Law School. The number of people reached and helped through the People's Law School (often referred to as "PLS") number in the thousands, in particular for 2001 and 2002. Only when you add all these numbers together can you understand the Herculean task of being one of the largest providers of free legal assistance in the borough.

Yet, Queens Legal Services Corporation was, in the past year, able to recover back awards and settlements of nearly \$500,000 and monthly benefits totaling more than \$83,000. Additional savings for the taxpayers of Queens County include approximately \$4,614,000 in emergency shelter costs through Queens Legal Services Corporation's eviction prevention services; \$392,000 in reduced welfare costs related to family reunification and child custody and support proceedings, and another \$358,408 in state welfare assistance by obtaining and/or preserving federal benefits and unemployment benefits.

With severe cuts in state and city funding for 2002, Queens Legal Services Corporation has had to struggle to make ends meet. We worked closely with our main grantor, Legal Services for New York City (also known as "LSNY") to fight united against further cuts in state and city funding throughout the year. In early 2002, both the governor and the mayor cut the budgetary amount of funding to be provided for legal services to the poor to zero. If this had occurred, Queens Legal Services would have lost more than half of its staff. The battle required the joint effort of the staff and management of the various legal services corporation throughout the City. It also required the strength and courage of our city and state legislators. They all came up big and most of the money has been restored. The mayor, governor, and the legislators of the State and the City Council came to appreciate that providing legal services to the poor saves the city and state more money than it costs to provide. The 100% funding cut legal services proposals were muted by the fact that advocacy for the poor prevents homelessness, and family **8900**

Continued on p. 8

HIV ADVOCACY PROJECT & PERMANENCY PLANNING

By Lisa Torres, SW, General Practice Unit

The HIV Advocacy Project of Queens Legal Services Corporation assists clients who are HIV positive or who have AIDS with advice and representation in many different areas of law including housing, benefits, consumer issues and family law. It has long been understood that HIV/AIDS is a disease that impacts the whole family. Illness can be unexpected and parents have the option to make care plans in advance. For that reason we assist clients in making "Permanency Plans" for the future care and custody of their children to prepare for a time when they may be unable to care for their children due to incapacity or death. The transition that the children experience at the death or permanent disability of a parent or caregiver is tremendous, but if the parent has made decisions and preparations ahead of time on who will fulfill the role of caretaker for the child, that transition can be made much smoother.

A parent or legal guardian has the right to say who they want to care for the children if they become unable, even for a short while, to care for them themselves. It is advisable that the person notify the potential guardian and, in some cases, the court, of the decision. Frequently, parents will designate a potential guardian in a will or stand-by guardianship document. While not legally binding, these documents are a statement of the parents' wishes and can carry a lot of weight if the parent cannot speak for herself. The plan may need to change, as the children get older, so we encourage parents to review the document periodically to make sure it is still relevant.

Often, a parent may not have taken steps to arrange for future custody because they feel that there is no one to call upon to care for the children. Chances are that there are more options available to the parent than she thinks. The HIV Advocacy Project has a social worker in addition to the legal and paralegal staff to assist the client in identifying and overcoming the obstacles to future care planning. If the parent has not picked someone to care for the children, then the courts may pick someone which can cause a custody battle, an unnecessary stay for the children in foster care, or a placement with someone whom the parent does not approve.

One of the primary barriers to future care planning is disclosure. Asking someone to take care of your children if something happens to you is not easy, especially if he does not know you have HIV or AIDS. In some cases, the children may not know. Our social worker is available to address these issues.

Perhaps one of the most important messages we try to send to our clients is that making arrangements for the care and well-being of your children will not put you closer to dying. Just because you make a plan does not mean you will need to use it. You can change it if your children's needs change over the years and continue to raise your family. But, in case you cannot be there, taking steps now to make sure your children are in the right place can be a gift you give to them for the years to come.

Deciding who will care for your children can be a hard decision to make but you may have more options than you think. All the preparations you make by putting your wishes in writing will help protect your children in the future. Don't put it off. If you're not sure what to do, call our Jamaica office (718-657-8611) to talk about it. Our services are free and confidential. We can give you information on what your options are and how different choices can affect you as well as your children.

QLSC, Citibank & Neighborhood Housing Services Joint Homebuyers Seminars

June has always been a popular home buying month and to assist more Americans to achieve their dream of homeownership, President George W. Bush declared June to be "National Homeownership Month." To celebrate, Queens Legal Services Corporation, together with Citibank and Neighborhood Housing Services of Jamaica, held its first joint Homebuyer's Seminar on Saturday, June 22, 2002 at York College. Attended by many community residents interested in obtaining their first home, the seminar identified the most common barriers to homeownership, such as lack of capital for the down payment and closing costs, lack of access to credit and poor credit histories, lack of understanding and information about the home buying process, and illegal housing discrimination.

Marge Clover, Assistant Vice President of the Community Mortgage Lending Group for Citibank, provided information on the mortgage application process, the costs involved in home buying, and various mortgage products available through Citibank, to moderate income purchasers.

Erika White of Neighborhood Housing Services of Jamaica discussed the counseling programs offered to homebuyers and owners. Neighborhood Housing Services offers programs and individual counseling on Money Management, Prevention, Home Maintenance, Early Delinquency/Foreclosure. It also

Continued on p. 4

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CONFERENCE PLANNED FOR YORK COLLEGE

The Domestic Violence Law and Advocacy Project of QLSC and the Women's Center of York College have come together to hold their first joint conference. Entitled ***Domestic Violence: The Community & The Court's Response***, the conference, is scheduled for Wednesday, November 6, 2002 from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm, at the York College Faculty Dining Room, 94-20 Guy R. Brewer Boulevard, Jamaica. Laura Fishman, Director of York College Women's Studies Program, will present a historical perspective of domestic violence in our society. Representatives from The NY Asian Women's Center, SAKHI for South Asian Women, and the disabled, and lesbian, gay and transgender communities will discuss how domestic violence affects their communities and the culturally sensitive services available to assist victims. The legal implications of domestic violence, including obtaining orders of protection, prosecuting batterers, and immigration issues for victims will also be discussed. For more information on the conference or to register, call 718-392-5646 ext. 40

Second Annual Fair Housing Conference

Being secure in one's home, whether it is owned or rented, is an important factor in preserving family stability. So important that April has been designated fair housing month. Unfortunately, many Queens residents face problems that jeopardize the security of their homes and family stability. The shortage of affordable housing, landlord tenant issues that manifest the problem of high rents and poor services, predatory lenders taking advantage of elderly and minority homeowners, illegal apartment conversion, and discrimination – these are the obstacles that many Queens residents face.

On Saturday, April 20, 2002, Queens Legal Services Corporation, The New York Urban League–Queens, The NAACP–Jamaica Branch, and the Queens County Bar Association hosted their Second Annual Fair Housing Conference at York College Atrium. Topics discussed were useful to both tenants and homeowners. The conference included workshops on issues including, Landlord/Tenant Rights and Responsibilities; Low Cost Home Mortgage and Improvement Loans; Recognizing and Avoiding Predatory Lending Scams; and Illegal Apartment Conversion. Queens County Bar Association President Seymour W. James, Jr. provided opening remarks for the conference. Guest speakers included NYS Senator Malcolm Smith and NYC Councilmen Allan W. Jennings and Leroy G. Comrie. Representatives from the NYC Police Department and NYC Fire Department (who handed out free smoke detectors), the NYC Commission on Human Rights, and the Department of Consumer Affairs joined attorneys from QLSC and the private bar. In addition to the workshops, information tables, where conference attendees could ask more personal questions and pick up written materials on various housing issues, were available. Attended by over 150 people, the daylong conference was an unmitigated success. Preparations for next year's event, incorporating many of the attendees' thoughtful suggestions, are well under way.

Homebuyer's Seminar, Continued from p. 3

has programs that can assist a homebuyer with raising the Down Payment and Closing Costs needed. Neighborhood Housing Services has three offices in Queens. Its Jamaica office can be reached at 718-291-7400. Its other two offices are in Woodside and Richmond Hill.

Myrtle Jonas, Esq., Senior Staff Attorney with Queens Legal Services Corporation, warned the attendees of the growing phenomenon of predatory lending. Predatory lending refers to the practice of unscrupulous home improvement contractors, lenders and mortgage brokers who prey on elderly, low-income or otherwise uninformed homeowners and put them at risk of losing their homes. These lenders use deceptive practices such as approving loans without any real regard to whether the homeowner can actually repay it; inflating the homeowner's income; charging higher interest rates and closing costs; duplicating fees and charging for services not actually provided. Elderly African-American and Hispanic homeowners and homebuyers are targeted by these scams, as historically these communities have had a more difficult time getting home equity loans from more traditional sources, thereby creating an eager market. Queens has been plagued by predatory lenders, mainly because of the large number of one family and two family homes owned by low-income elderly.

Each week Queens Legal Services Corporation receives calls from homeowners who are at risk of losing their homes due to predatory lending practices. The sense of community, accomplishment, and joy felt on purchasing a first home should not be obliterated by the personal turmoil and neighborhood destabilization resulting from predatory lending practices. That is why Queens Legal Services Corporation, Citibank and Neighborhood Housing Services will continue to hold these homebuyer's seminars at different locations throughout Queens County. The next seminar is planned for western Queens in the fall. Call QLSC at 718-392-5646 ext. 40 for additional information on dates and locations.

Social Security and SSI Overpayments

By Cindy Katz, Coordinating Attorney, People's Law School

Due to complex eligibility criteria and other regulations regarding the payment of Social Security and Supplemental Security Income, overpayments can occur. An overpayment occurs when a Social Security and/or SSI beneficiary receives more benefits than they may actually be entitled to.

Social Security Insurance benefits overpayments can happen when the disabled or retired individual returns to work and earns above the limits set by Social Security, a mistake is made in determining whether an individual is both fully and currently insured, an adult disabled child receiving benefits on a parent's social security account marries, the disabled beneficiary's medical impairment improves and he is no longer disabled, or the beneficiary is incarcerated for one year or more.

Supplemental Security Income benefits overpayments can happen when the beneficiary, his spouse or parent with whom he lives, returns to work or receives a higher salary, there is a change in living arrangements, the beneficiary is incarcerated, hospitalized or leaves the US for 30 consecutive days or more, or the beneficiary allows their resources to exceed the applicable level (\$2000 for individuals, \$3000 for married couples).

Responsibility for repayment of the overpayment falls first on the beneficiary and his representative payee, if any. In Social Security Insurance cases, any other auxiliary beneficiaries receiving benefits on the social security account of the primary beneficiary may also be held responsible. In SSI cases, the spouse of an overpaid beneficiary can also be responsible for repayment of the overpayment, but only if both are receiving benefits as an eligible couple. If the beneficiary, or anyone else Social Security seeks to hold responsible for the repayment, takes no action Social Security can and will withhold any future payments (up to a maximum of 10% of the total SSI or concurrent benefits) until the overpayment is repaid.

Written notice of the overpayment must be sent to the beneficiary and any other person who Social Security seeks to hold responsible for repayment of the overpayment. The notice must contain the overpaid individual's rights to request reconsideration if he disagrees with any aspect of the overpayment. It must also inform the beneficiary of the right to request compromise of the repayment rate or to request waiver.

overpayment notice will delay repayment until a determination on the reconsideration is made. Otherwise, an individual has 60 days from the date of the overpayment notice to request reconsideration. A request for a personal conference can be made when a request for reconsideration is filed. This is important when the beneficiary is not sure of the cause or dates of the overpayment. It also allows the beneficiary the opportunity to present evidence that the overpayment is incorrect.

If no request for reconsideration is made within 60 days of the initial overpayment notice, the overpayment decision becomes final, and the recoupment process will begin unless a request for waiver is filed. A waiver is a release from responsibility for repaying the overpayment. It can be requested at any point in the overpayment recoupment process but will only be granted when the overpaid individual is **without fault** in causing the overpayment, and the beneficiary cannot afford to repay the overpayment or repayment would **defeat the purpose of title XVI; or be against equity and good conscience; or impede the effective or efficient administration** of the title XVI (SSI cases only) program. Filing an application for waiver will stop any recoupment efforts until an initial determination on the waiver application is made.

What constitutes fault depends upon whether the facts show that the incorrect payment resulted from an incorrect statement made by the individual which he knew or should have known to be incorrect; or failure to furnish information which he knew or should have known to be material; or, with respect to the overpaid individual only, acceptance of a payment which he either knew or could have been expected to know was incorrect. In determining fault, Social Security must consider all pertinent circumstances including the individual's age and intelligence, and any physical, mental, educational, or linguistic limitations (including any lack of facility with the English language) the individual has.

Examples of "without fault" include reliance upon erroneous information from an official source within Social Security (or other governmental agency which the individual had reasonable cause to believe was connected with the administration of benefits), retroactive increases in pay, including back-pay awards; work at a higher pay rate than realized; failure of the employer of an individual unable to keep accurate records to restrict the amount of earnings or the number of hours worked in accordance with a previous agreement with such individual; the continued issuance of benefit checks to him after he sent notice to the Administration of the event which caused or should have caused the deductions

Continued on p. 6

Social Security Overpayments, continued from p. 5

provided that such continued issuance of checks led him to believe in good faith that he was entitled to checks subsequently received.

Repayment of the overpayment will **defeat the purpose** of the benefits when it deprives a person of income required for ordinary and necessary living expenses. An individual's ordinary and necessary expenses include food, clothing, rent, mortgage payments, utilities, maintenance, insurance (e.g., life, accident, and health insurance premiums and co-pays including medicare), taxes, installment payments, and other miscellaneous expenses which may reasonably be considered as part of the individual's standard of living. It may also include expenses for the support of others for whom the individual is legally responsible (such as the parent of a child under the age of 18 or an immigrant sponsored into the US by a US citizen); If the beneficiary is dependent upon all of his current benefits to meet these needs then requiring repayment will defeat the purpose of the benefit program. In SSI cases, adjustment or recovery is presumed to defeat the purpose when the overpaid individual remains eligible for monthly Supplemental Security Income benefits.

Requiring repayment of the overpayment is **against equity and good conscience** when the beneficiary changed his financial position for the worse or relinquished a valuable right because of reliance upon a notice that a payment would be made or because of the overpayment itself; or was living in a separate household from the overpaid person at the time of the overpayment and did not receive the overpayment. The individual's current financial circumstances are not material to a finding of *against equity and good conscience*.

In Supplemental Security Income overpayment cases, when the amount of an overpayment is less than the current average cost to Social Security of trying to recoup the overpayment, requiring repayment is deemed to **impede effective administration** of the program. Currently, overpayments of \$500 or less have been determined not to exceed the cost of recovery and waivers will be granted unless there is evidence that the recipient is "at fault" in causing overpayment.

Further appeal rights attach to both the denial of reconsideration and waiver. Overpaid individuals can request hearings before administrative law judges, then Appeals Council review and ultimately commence a civil action in federal court.

For additional information and assistance with Social Security and Supplemental Security Disability Overpayments call QLSC Disability Advocacy Project @ 718-392-5646. Information can also be obtained through the Social Security Administration's website at www.ssa.gov.

QILC, continued from p. 1

Center's employees and consumers have taken much pride. Christian Valle states, "I was injured in an accident that changed my life forever. I found myself in my art, which became a tool of my expression." The IAG was intended to be, "a place where positive expressions of disability culture can thrive...we especially seek new ways to share our achievements, disappointments and personal discoveries with other persons with disabilities."

Queens Independent Living Center encourages people with any type of disability and any age to contact it for services, advocacy, and information. No referral is required. Though not restricted to such, **QILC** focuses on the residents of Queens, as its name would suggest. There are no income eligibility guidelines to qualify and services are free of charge. Services are also available to family, friends and service providers to the disabled. Technical assistance on access and employment accommodations to businesses and organizations is also available.

QILC is seeking candidates for its Board of Directors. Candidates can be self-nominated. Fancy resume or previous experience on a Board is not needed. What is needed is the desire to do everything possible to ensure that barriers, attitudes or other types of discrimination do not limit choices and options for people with disabilities.

By law, a majority of the Board (51%) must be people with disabilities. Most of **QILC's** Board members are community people who became active in disability rights or independent living when they faced a barrier due to their own (or a family member's or friend's) disability. Many Board members first came to **QILC** as a participant (consumer), then served as a Volunteer or worked on a project with Center staff. Some were staff members in the past.

QILC wants its Board members to reflect the diversity of the Queens community. Therefore it is actively seeking members who come from different ethnic, racial and cultural groups. It is also seeking members with different types of disabilities-- people who are deaf, people with learning disabilities or developmental disabilities --are not currently represented on its Board. Neither are any artists with disabilities on the Board.

Queens Independent Living Center is located at 140-40 Queens Boulevard, Jamaica, NY 11435. Call the Center at 718-658-2526 (voice) and 718-658-4720(TTY) or visit its website at www.qilc.org, where you can also link to www.worldfineart.com and view the Independent Art Gallery's most recent exhibits.

Serving the Community

Since its inception in 1968, QLSC has served the community by providing free counsel and advice and representation in areas of law most important to the Queens community. Currently, we offer assistance in the areas of housing, consumer, Social Security and SSI disability, public assistance benefits, family law/domestic violence, unemployment insurance benefits, HIV/AIDS advocacy, and education.

Services can be accessed as follows:

Housing:

(Zip Codes 11101-06, 11356-58, 11367-75, 11377-79) **Monday -Friday** *for eligibility screening* **718-392-5646**

(Zip Codes

11354-55, 11360-66, 11385, 11411-11436, 11690-97) **Mondays** *if served with court papers* **Walk in**
Monday -Friday *if served with Marshal's notice* **8900 Sutphin Blvd.**

Public Assistance: **Mondays** **10:00 am - 1:00 pm** **718-482-8133**

Social Security/SSI: **Tuesday -Friday** **first four callers** **718-392-5646**

Consumer: **1st & 3rd Wednesday** **2:00 pm - 5:00 pm.** **718-937-7542**

Unemployment Insurance: **Monday -Friday** **9:00 am - 4:30 pm** **718-392-5646**

Education: **Monday -Friday** **9:30 am - 4:30 pm** **718-392-5646**

HIV/AIDS Advocacy: **Monday -Wednesday** **9:30 am - 4:30 pm** **718-657-8611**

Family Law: **Wednesdays** **2:30 pm - 4:00 pm** **718-657-3133**

Thursdays **9:00 am -1:00 pm** **Walk in**
8900 Sutphin Blvd.

Domestic Violence: **24 Hour Hotline** **718-657-0424**

We have also created the **People's Law School**. The **People's Law School** provides classes and workshops for members and staff of community based organizations, service providers, civic and religious groups in the areas of law most often confronted by our clients. Listed below are the topics we presently offer however additional topics will be included to address emerging community concerns and, in some instances, seminars can be specifically developed to meet your group's particular needs. For further information regarding the **People's Law School** contact *Cindy Katz, Coordinating Attorney at 718-392-5646 ext. 40.*

Housing – tenant's rights, repairs, reduction in services, overcharges, code violations, Housing Court and New York City Housing Authority procedures, fair housing laws.

Matrimonial – separation and divorce, child custody, support and visitation; rights, remedies and protections for victims of domestic violence.

Family Preservation – parents' rights, foster care, family court abuse and neglect proceedings.

Government Benefits – public assistance, food stamps, Social Security and SSI disability benefits, Medicare and Medicaid, unemployment insurance.

Consumer – student loans, trade school fraud, debt collection, bankruptcy, mortgage foreclosure, home improvement fraud, utility shut off, etc.

HIV/AIDS – permanency planning, wills, health care proxies, guardianships, Division of AIDS Services disability advocacy.

Education – Title I, special education, overcrowding, discrimination

Restructuring, continued from p. 1

Only time will tell if the goals and objectives of the restructuring plan will be achieved. Regardless, Queens Legal Services Corporation remains committed to ensuring equal access to justice for the residents of Queens.

FREE LOCKS FOR CRIME VICTIMS

Established in 1979, Project Safe offers new locks for free to crime victims in all five boroughs. The program employs its own locksmiths. It also employs two advocates to answer the Project Safe Hotline, make appointments for home visits and provide crisis intervention and referrals. Nearly two thirds of the clients are survivors of domestic violence. The rest are victims of robbery, burglary, elder abuse, harassment and sexual assault. Project Safe's Hotline is 212-406-3010. It operates Monday through Friday from 9am to 5 pm. To qualify for the free locksmith services, crime victims should provide a police complaint number. In domestic violence cases, Exclusionary Orders of Protection are required for victims who reside with their batterers. Locks are changed with 24-48 hours in most cases. In addition to free emergency services, Project Safe provides preventive lock services for a small fee. Complaint numbers are not needed for this service. The Office of the Mayor of the City of New York funds Project Safe.

City and State Legislators, continued from p. 2

representation and government benefits advocacy helps the city avoid millions of dollars of spending.

New York leaders and legislators came to appreciate that refusal to provide \$3.75 million citywide to help give poor people free legal assistance could result in the City having to pay more than \$25 million to cover the cost of emergency shelters and other housing, keeping families together and avoiding costly foster care placements, and additional public assistance benefits. The clear realization was that thousands more poor people would wind up evicted, hundreds of other families would be broken up, thousands of units of affordable housing would be lost, and the homeless shelters would become overcrowded with children and adults at an enormous cost to the City and State of New York.

Much credit must be given to the staff and management of the various legal services corporations throughout the City. Special thanks must be given to the visionary leadership of LSNY and its legislative staff. The union stood tall at a very difficult hour. City Council legislators showed they have the heart of a lion. NY State legislative leadership stood toe to toe and fought hard to uphold the rights of the indigent. At a critical period in legal services the city and state resisted another strong effort to deprive its low income residents of much needed services.

People's Law School
Queens Legal Services Corporation
42-15 Crescent Street 9th Floor
Long Island City, New York 11101

718-392-5646 Ext. 40

NONPROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
JAMAICA, NY
PERMIT 812