LEGAL COUNSEL for the ELDERLY

Championing the Dignity and Rights of Seniors in Washington, D.C.

2019 Annual Report
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LCE Mission Statement</td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message from LCE’s Executive Director and Board Chair</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Benefits</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits Obtained</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serving Our Veterans</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPD Waiver</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting Homeownership</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule H</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stopping Evictions</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Hotline</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estate Planning</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocating for Long-term Care Residents</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Summary</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 Board of Directors</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 Advisory Committee</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 Young Lawyer’s Alliance</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Contributors</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Photo</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LCE Mission Statement

Legal Counsel for the Elderly champions the dignity and rights of Washington, D.C. elders by providing free legal and social work services to those in need—empowering, defending and protecting vulnerable seniors.
As we write this, in the middle of a pandemic, 2019 in some ways seems long ago. But reflecting upon the previous year, we both feel impressed and inspired by all that Legal Counsel for the Elderly accomplished in 2019. It was a year of firsts for both of us: Rhonda’s first full year as LCE’s Executive Director and Joe’s first year as Board Chair.

The year contained numerous notable achievements, some of which are highlighted in the following pages. The staff and volunteers of LCE helped more clients than ever before and with more complex cases than encountered in the past. Once again, we succeeded in securing a record-setting amount of benefits for those served, increasing our collaboration with pro bono attorneys, and so much more. There is significant need among DC’s at-risk seniors, but LCE is right there at the forefront—securing justice and dignity for our most vulnerable older neighbors.

LCE does many things remarkably well: advocating in and out of the courthouse with diligence and creativity, leveraging talented volunteers, conducting outreach to seniors, pursuing systemic reforms, and educating our wider community. LCE is an organization blessed with many strengths: we are trusted by our clients, respected by our colleagues in the legal profession, appreciated by our generous supporters, and relied upon by our community members to help them exercise their legal rights and protect them against those perpetrating unfairness and exploitation.

This important work would not be possible without the investment and partnership of those who believe in our mission. We are achieving great things together, thanks to the generosity and commitment of the many individuals and institutions who stand with us and all those we serve.

With gratitude,
Rhonda Cunningham Holmes, Esq.
Executive Director

Joseph M. Kolar, Esq.
Board Chair
LCE obtained almost $80,000 in retroactive Medicare benefits for one of our clients, as well as a monthly benefit of $1,699 in disability benefits going forward, three years after he applied and received a denial. LCE requested a hearing with an administrative law judge, who needing no time to consider the matter any further, immediately approved the client’s benefits at the close of the hearing.

Ensuring that seniors receive the income, benefits, and services to which they are entitled that enable them to live independently in the community.
Benefits Obtained

In 2019, Legal Counsel for the Elderly obtained a record-breaking $29,967,441.32 in benefits on behalf of our clients.
A 95-year-old widow of a World War II Veteran denied death pension benefits when she applied on her own, will now receive $319 a month for the rest of her life. In addition, LCE helped her collect a reimbursement of $5,971 for her husband’s burial, after submitting the $2,242 receipt from 1982 and negotiating that she receive present day value.

Serving Veterans and surviving spouses with specific claims before the Department of Veteran Affairs.
LCE handled a 51% increase from 2018 to 2019 in the number of cases for Medicaid beneficiaries facing reductions and terminations of their personal home healthcare services through the EPD Waiver, due to problems with a new assessment tool used to determine eligibility.
In March 2019, the Reverse Mortgage Insurance and Tax Payment program (ReMIT), launched to help struggling seniors avoid reverse mortgage foreclosures. LCE provided input and technical expertise for the legislation that led to the creation of the program. ReMIT provides one-time payments to qualified homeowners to pay property tax and insurance debts. Councilmembers realized the true cost of displacing long-time homeowners over relatively small delinquencies, after hearing about LCE’s 91-year-old client facing foreclosure over just $6,000. LCE was able to save this client’s home, and a tool to help others going forward is now available.

Protecting homeownership and defending against consumer fraud.
In 2019, we helped 261 clients complete 411 Schedule H Homeowner and Rental Property Tax Credit applications totaling $400,000 for our clients.
Our 72-year-old client had moved into a two-unit rent control building in an area of DC that today is highly sought after property. Because her building is rent controlled, her rent of $649 per month was protected from the rising housing costs. Seeking to evict Ms. J so she could charge a higher rent, the landlord claimed Ms. J was a squatter and had no legal right to the unit. LCE defended Ms. J in a jury trial, arguing that an implied contract establishing tenancy was created between the landlord and Ms. J, and the jury agreed. The complaint was dismissed, and Ms. J’s rent remains subject to rent control.

Stopping evictions and advocating for tenants through legal and social work services.
LCE participated in more than 330 community outreach events.
When our client needed repairs to her basement, she thought the lifetime warranty for waterproofing she held for 13 years would pay for the job. She called the company, but the repairs they made were inadequate, and she had to pay a plumber to do the work properly. She sent the plumber’s bill to the company for reimbursement, but received no response. She then called every month for six months, before turning to LCE. With advice from an LCE Hotline attorney, our client drafted a demand letter, and two weeks later, the company finally agreed to repay her in full.

Legal Counsel for the Elderly’s Legal Hotline provides free legal advice, assistance, and referrals.
In 2019, LCE prepared 1105 wills, powers of attorney and a variety of other estate planning documents.
Advocating for Long-term Care Residents

In 2019, the Ombudsman staff investigated 459 complaints, resolving approximately 83% to the satisfaction of the resident and/or complainant. One situation involved a nursing home resident who was about to lose his Medicaid coverage and face possible eviction from the facility. The team worked with his guardian, the facility and the Department of Healthcare Finance to have the resident reassessed, resulting in full Medicaid coverage and no eviction.

LCE’s Office of the DC Long-Term Care Ombudsman advocates on behalf of residents in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, group homes, and for Medicaid beneficiaries receiving personal aide services at home.
In 2019, more than 700 volunteers donated more than 16,000 hours.
FINANCIAL SUMMARY

FINANCIAL STATEMENT
For year ending December 31, 2019

REVENUES
Contributions, Grants & Support.............................$6,941,788
In-Kind Contributions..............................................$6,369,004
Investment Revenue and Losses (Net)......................$2,950,845
Miscellaneous.............................................................$5,010

TOTAL REVENUES ...........................................$16,266,647

EXPENSES
Program Services.......................................................$10,481,402
Management and General.......................................$2,424,690
Resource Development.............................................$229,633

TOTAL EXPENSES .............................................$13,135,725

CHANGE IN NET ASSETS ........................................$3,130,922

NET ASSETS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR...........$15,328,046

NET ASSETS AT THE END OF THE YEAR......................$18,458,968

Net assets include The Philip Friedman Consumer Protection Fund ($5,201,710), The John R. Pickering Law Student Scholarship Fund ($433,274); and The Cheryl Polydor Fellowship Fund ($328,627)
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Legal Counsel for the Elderly greatly appreciates the generous direct and in-kind support donated by AARP to advance our mission.

We also express our sincere gratitude to the following individuals, families, law firms, foundations, companies, and government agencies for their investment in our work in 2019 and for their ongoing commitment to our older neighbors in need.

These generous gifts totaling $500 or more were donated to Legal Counsel for the Elderly between January 1 and December 31, 2019. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, but if an error has been made, please accept our sincere apologies and contact Communications Manager JoAnn Mangione at 202-434-2074 so we can correct our records. Thank you very much.
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