

Legal Aid for Immigrants Turns Trauma into Hope

Helping Clients Build New Lives with Legal Status



“Our clients inspire us,” says Managing Attorney Elizabeth R. Ahmadi. “They are hopeful, resilient, and eager to build new lives in the USA.”

Worcester County has a long history of welcoming immigrants, who have provided a large portion of its work force as well as new generations of Americans eager to contribute and raise families of their own.

Foundation grants have long invested in nonprofits that help immigrants, including newcomers striving to gain the safety and stability of lawful immigration status. Serving those who need to secure proper documentation is the **Ascentria Immigration Legal Assistance Program**, a unit of Ascentria Services for New Americans. The program provides free and low-cost legal services at Ascentria client centers in Worcester and Westfield.

“Foundation grants enable us to meet rising demand and keep pace with rapidly changing policies,” says Managing Attorney Elizabeth R. Ahmadi, whose team of staff

and *pro bono* attorneys serves about 1,000 low-income and indigent clients each year.

“Many seek legal status so they can obtain employment, health insurance, and housing,” says Elizabeth. “Some came here as children and don’t know their immigration status. Others may have expired visas or hold green cards and seek full citizenship.”

The program also takes about 230 humanitarian cases for such clients as asylum seekers and unaccompanied children, providing full legal

representation throughout a process that takes many years. “We have hearings booked at immigration court in 2020,” says Elizabeth. “We filed applications in 2012 that still await hearing dates.”

Yet just starting the process can transform the outlook of a traumatized newcomer. “Years ago, a medical doctor came here from Kenya to start a practice,” says Elizabeth, “but she became a human trafficking victim. Since filing for a U-visa, she’s begun looking ahead to a future here serving others.

“Our clients inspire us. Many have suffered a lot and yet they are hopeful, resilient, and eager to build new lives in the USA.”

That desire as well as unease about policy changes keeps Elizabeth and her colleagues busier than ever. “Since the election,” she says, “many green card holders have been applying for citizenship. They want the right to vote.”

Defending Newcomers Who Are Crime Victims

“In the immigration world, the news is bad, bad, bad,” says Ellen VanScoyoc, Esq., supervisor of the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project of **Community Legal Aid**, which provides legal representation to immigrants who are crime victims.

The Advocacy Project serves low-income clients for whom legal representation would otherwise be out of reach. Foundation grants enable the nonprofit to expand its caseload.

“We take on more complex cases, such as helping victims of domestic violence win asylum cases and secure permanent legal status,” says Ellen. “The grants also enable us to conduct more ‘Know Your Rights’ sessions throughout the region.

“We are grateful for Foundation support, which helps us to give vulnerable immigrants a sense of hope and stability in a very uncertain time.”

For more on recent grants contact Jonathan Cohen at grants@greaterworcester.org

CAROL L. SEAGER DISCRETIONARY FUND

Grants Will Reach Across Sectors and Decades



In 2014, Foundation Corporator and former Community Grants Committee Chair Carol Seager created the *Carol L. Seager Discretionary Fund*. This fund type enables the Foundation to make grants that respond to pressing needs and advance initiatives across organizations and sectors.

Each year, the Foundation's Community Grants Committee reviews proposals and awards grants with the goal of making the best use of each fund. Having chaired the Committee for six years, Carol brought an insider's perspective to her decision.

"I like the idea that 50 years from now, the Foundation will, through my fund, still be responding to community needs. Charity A, B, or C may or may not still exist; but my legacy will remain active in improving the region's civic life." 🍀

DR. JAMES J. CONVERY AND TRACY A. CRAIG
DONOR ADVISED FUND

Their Wedding Was the
Occasion for Giving Back

When Dr. James J. Convery, a chiropractor, and Tracy A. Craig, an estate planning attorney, married in 2009, they were well into their lives and careers. So instead of registering for wedding gifts, the couple created a donor advised fund, and invited their guests to contribute to it in lieu of gifts.

"We weren't starting out and didn't need things," says Tracy, now on the Foundation's board. "Many took us up on our request, which gave us a lot of happiness. And the Foundation makes it so easy to create a fund."

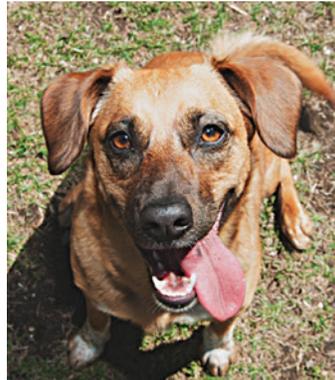


"The Foundation makes giving back so easy," says Tracy, "streamlining the whole process."

Looking ahead, Jim says, "Our fund will continue to grow, and after we're gone, we trust the Foundation to steward this money for us and put it to work for our community. We've planted a tree and people who come after us will enjoy its fruit." 🍀

WORCESTER ANIMAL RESCUE LEAGUE
DESIGNATED FUND

Caring for Animals Is
Lasting Legacy



Robert K. Massey, Jr. and his father cared about animal welfare, and this fund supports quality care in their names.

"No two days are the same here," says Allie Tellier, executive director of the **Worcester Animal Rescue League**, which each year cares for more than 1,500 stray and surrendered pets. Helping the League manage the unpredictable are annual grants from the *Worcester Animal Rescue League Fund*, created by the late Robert K. Massey, Jr.,

to honor his father, who shared his enthusiasm for animals.

"These donations go straight to providing for the well-being of animals," says Allie, "including some requiring intensive medical care."

Robert also served as a League volunteer, and shared the philanthropic spirit of his father, who helped establish this community foundation. "This fund honors both Robert and his father," says Allie. "Their legacy lives on through its grants, and they continue to support what they love." 🍀

New Initiative Promotes Culture as Community Catalyst



The Foundation has joined a new statewide venture to promote culture as a catalyst of innovation not only in the arts but also in business and civic life. As one of five community foundations, all outside Greater Boston, selected by the **Barr Foundation** to take part in its Initiative for Arts & Creativity, the Foundation began by conducting focus groups with arts organizations.

"We already enjoy a dynamic arts community," says Foundation CEO Ann Lisi, "and we want to expand creative collaborations and programming responsive to our region's changing demographics. But strengthening our arts ecosystem will take funding, including public sector investment, and a comprehensive plan."

The Barr Foundation is providing grants and training throughout the multi-year initiative. "We'll learn together," says Ann, "and build from our strengths." 🍌

BOARD TRANSITIONS



At its May annual meeting, the Foundation welcomed new board member Kimberly Salmon, Fallon Health (l) and thanked retiring member George Tetler III, Bowditch & Dewey (r).

At Jeremiah's, Neighbors Access and Grow Fresh Produce

Jeremiah's runs the largest food pantry in Worcester. Last year, its Nutrition Center served 10,600 people. But the nonprofit, now in its 35th year, looks beyond numbers to gauge its success. Jeremiah's Nutrition Center takes pride in engaging neighbors in choosing and growing fresh produce and eating healthy food.

Serving a South Worcester population of diverse ethnic traditions, the Nutrition Center offers plenty of fresh vegetables. Its partners include the Community Harvest Project, which grows the produce to order. In response to clients' dietary needs, the Center stocks gluten-and-lactose free foods.



Jeremiah's also offers nutrition education, grocery store tours, cooking classes, free dental cleanings, and a community garden with a waiting list of eager growers. "Immigrant neighbors are grateful for fresh produce," says Executive Director Janelle Wilson, "and many farmed in their homelands, so garden plots are in demand."

With a \$3,000 Foundation grant from the *Worcester County Food Bank Fund to End Hunger*, Jeremiah's added 10 beds to the garden, which is now the primary produce source of 26 households. The grant will also fund translation of education materials. "Many of our clients do not speak English," says Janelle. "Yet they enjoy our programs and develop friendships working side-by-side in our garden." 🍌



'17 Grad Changes Career to Serve Community

Until recently, Cornelius (Neil) Rogers was designing the cuisine of upscale restaurants. Now he coaches aspiring food entrepreneurs. He took this career turn after participating in **Leadership Worcester**, a program of the Foundation and the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce to develop civic leaders.

Formerly *executive chef de cuisine* of the Niche Dining Group, in June Neil became kitchen operations manager of

the **Worcester Regional Food Hub**, a nonprofit working to develop a regional economy based on healthy, locally grown food.

"Leadership Worcester expanded my relationships," says Neil. "I learned about many city resources, including the Food Hub. Its mission struck a chord."

Neil oversees its commercial kitchen and guides tenants as they launch businesses. "I've done well," says Neil. "Here, I help others create their own path to success." 🍌



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*Timothy M. Jarry, CFA, CPA,
Chief Investment Officer of
the College of the Holy
Cross, is the treasurer of the
Foundation's Board and chairs
its Investment Committee.*

Managing Foundation Assets to Preserve Intergenerational Equity

Tim describes the Foundation's approach to stewardship of its \$150 million endowment:

“**T**he Investment Committee manages the assets of the Foundation to preserve intergenerational equity. Donors make their gifts to support intended causes in perpetuity.

“The Committee is a group of civic leaders with investment

expertise and other valuable knowledge. Working closely with investment consultants Prime Buchholz & Associates, a great partner for two decades, we've assembled a team of world-class investment managers who take great pride

in generating competitive returns on behalf of the Foundation.

“The Foundation distributes 3.9% of its endowment every year as grants. We aim to earn at least what we spend plus inflation.

“Since the 2008 crash, the market's gone straight up. We've been happy to participate in this ascent; but it can't last. Long-term asset allocation targets are the most effective way to get the results we need, with some investments offering downside protection in the event of market correction.

“The Foundation's assets include its people, not just funds. CEO Ann Lisi and her team run a first-class Foundation. Its board and staff bring together a lot of very talented individuals who are dedicated to advancing our region.” 🌱

Have you named the Foundation as beneficiary of a bequest, a trust, or a retirement plan? **Join the Acorn Society** so that we may be certain to understand and carry out your intentions. **Call Kelly Stimson at 508-755-0980 Today!**
