

## **Franklin County Legal Services Celebrates Fifth Anniversary, March 2007**

In December 2001, then-Pennsylvania Bar Association President Reg Belden was on hand as members of the Franklin County Bar Association threw their financial and moral support behind the creation of a new, independent civil legal aid agency.

“I wish you luck in this new endeavor,” President Belden told the group. “A lot of people will be watching what happens here.”

That new organization, Franklin County Legal Services, celebrated its fifth anniversary on March 1, 2007. Since opening its doors at the beginning of March in 2002, FCLS has grown from one attorney working out of one room to a staff of two full-time attorneys and a part-time paralegal occupying one floor of a renovated building a block from the county courthouse.

As the staff has grown, so has its caseload; FCLS opened 600 new cases in 2006. FCLS coordinates its efforts with the other two civil legal aid agencies in Franklin County, MidPenn Legal Services (the regional legal aid program that has a local office) and the Law Offices of WIN Victim Services. WIN (Women in Need) Victim Services assists victims of domestic violence.

“A group of attorneys in our bar felt we could be doing more to provide civil legal aid to those who need it most, and they believed that given the environment at that time, starting a new, independent organization was the best way to do it,” said Franklin County Bar Association Executive Director Carolyn Seibert-Drager. “They knew that would go against the move at the federal and state levels to centralize civil legal services, but they felt very strongly about it, and the bar committed itself fully to the idea.”

The Franklin County Bar Association allocates 10 percent of its annual budget to FCLS. Over the years, individual attorneys also have donated office furniture and equipment and subsidized the organization’s rent.

A non-profit community group, Friends of Legal Services, holds a three-day used book sale each May that benefits FCLS. The agency also receives United Way funding and grants from other non-profits as well as individual donations.

FCLS is planning an open house later this spring to celebrate its five-year milestone.