



Using data-driven advocacy to improve the lives of low-income citizens

In a bruising economy, League speaks up for low-income citizens

Battered by another year of a poor economy and high unemployment, the ranks of Michigan’s low-income families grew as more struggled to meet daily needs. The Michigan League for Human Services played a pivotal role in bringing advocates together to work on vital state and federal issues that affect vulnerable residents of Michigan. Among the accomplishments, the League:

- Rallied groups to oppose proposed Medicaid regulations that would have hurt children with special needs and adults with disabilities;
- Joined other advocates to successfully fight a freeze on the state Earned Income Tax Credit. The credit will be in place as low-income workers file their tax returns early in 2009;
- Pulled two dozen prominent groups together to call for an end to some tax loopholes rather than cut services;
- Reported that the Michigan Fair Tax proposal would have triggered massive cuts in state services;
- Brought statewide attention to the needs of low-income workers with widely read Labor Day and Financial Aid reports;
- Advocated for increased food stamp benefits through the federal Farm Bill and to reauthorize SCHIP, the federal health care program for low-income children;
- Worked with advocates statewide to call attention to the national Kids Count report on the high number of juveniles in custody in Michigan; and
- Helped spread the word on the need for low-income households to file for their economic stimulus payments.



WILX-TV interviews President & CEO Sharon Parks about income inequality

EXPANDING OUTREACH

- More than 500 media reports about the League’s work or quoting the League were tracked over a 12-month period, ranging from a Detroit public affairs television show, to an Upper Peninsula radio talk show, to the New York Times.
- Guest commentaries have appeared in the Detroit News, the Detroit Free Press, the Traverse City Record-Eagle, the Grand Rapids Press, the Port Huron Times Herald, the Lansing State Journal and the Ann Arbor Business Review.
- An electronic newsletter was launched mid-year and now goes to more than 900 subscribers.
- The League jumped into new media to reach younger audiences with the launch of a Facebook page.
- The League was also on the road making 37 presentations to about 1,300 people from small policy groups to large conferences.
- Staff produced more than 100 written communications on policy—reports, press releases, public comments and letters to policymakers.

Change of leadership



ANN MARSTON retired in May 2008 after 14 years of leading the League as president and CEO. During Ann’s tenure, the League cemented its relationships with national projects, including the State Fiscal Analysis Initiative, Kids Count, and the Working Poor Families Project. In addition, Ann was a national leader in the nonprofit sector.

SHARON PARKS, vice president for policy and a 30-year employee of the League, was promoted to president and CEO and **LARY WELLS**, executive assistant to the president, was promoted to the newly created position of chief operating officer.

Photo: Ann Marston and League staff

Remembering Denise Cadreau



The Michigan League for Human Services lost an important friend on Sept. 8, 2007, when Denise Cadreau's life was cut short after a fall from a bicycle. In life, Cadreau was a committed labor leader who cared deeply about the needs of low-income people.

Denise grew up in Saginaw, and earned a degree in literature and a master's degree in labor relations from Michigan State University. She was political and legislative director for the

Service Employees International Union before becoming political director of the AFL-CIO.

In her memory, her family asked that donations be made to the League. The donations allowed the League to continue its advocacy on behalf of low-income citizens at a very critical time in Michigan's history as state unemployment led the nation and the needs of low-skilled workers grew.

Kids Count in Michigan

Kids Count in Michigan tracks the well-being of children from birth through their teen-age years. Filled with demographic information and trends in health, education and poverty, the *Kids Count in Michigan Data Book* provides data to guide policymakers to improve the lives of children.

The project, housed at the League, is part of a national network supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Michigan's Children is a project partner.

"Policymakers at the state and local levels, as well as citizens and advocates, need information that shines a light on the environment surrounding children and their health, security and ability to learn," said Jane Zehnder-Merrell, the project director and a senior research associate at the League.



Photo: Sharon Parks and Jane Zehnder-Merrell, left, meet with Grand Rapids Press editorial board members Monica Scott and April Johnson

Individuals

Joan Abbey
Michael Addonizio
Mary Aikey
Ben Baldus
John Ballard
Mark Bertler
Donald & Mary Brown
Lisa Burlingame
Alicia Burnell
Delois W. Caldwell
Kyle & Juliann Caldwell
Jim Carpenter
Judy Carty
Maria Chickering
Toby Citrin
Tom Clay
Rob & Diane Collier
Patricia Conway
Leslie Curry
Molly Dean
Doug Drake
Robert Emerson
Mary Ettinger
Dale Fickle
Sherry Franklin
Larry Good
Karl Gregory
Knud Hansen
Dale Hein
Susan Herman
John Hooper
Janette & Joseph Jerrold
Donald E. Jones
Shirley Jones
Phyllis Killips
Glenn Kossick
Marquerite Kowaleski
Richard & Ann Kraft
Joyce Ladenson
George Lafkas
Bob Lathrop & Carol Linteau
Robert Lovell
James Lunday
Alice MacDermott
Steve Manchester
Ann Marston
Olivia Maynard & Olof Karlstrom
Kenneth McCaslin
Mable Meites

Carol Meyers
John & Debbie Mellein
Susan Miller & Allen Batteau
Steve F. Morykwas
Glenn Nelson
Margaret Nielsen
Craig Nobbelin
Dennis Paradis
Robert Paramo
Grant Parker
Sharon Parks
Cynthia Paul
Edward Pawlak
Lana Pollack
Peter Pratt & Linda Headley
Kay Randolph-Back
Jim & Jane Richardson
George Rouman
David Shaltz
Kim Sibilsky
Terri Stangl
Kathleen Straus
Robert Swanson
Margaret Talburtt
Marianne Udow-Phillips
George Van Antwerp
Joseph J. Walker
Ellen Weaver
Lary Wells
David & Beverly Wiener
Amy Winans
Marjorie Ziefert & Chuck Kieffer
Ruth Zweifler

Organizations

Association for Children's Mental Health, Inc.
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Coalition on Temporary Shelter
Detroit Area Agency on Aging
International Union - UAW
Martin Waymire Advocacy Communications
Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health
Michigan Public Transit Association
Michigan State AFL-CIO
Peckham
Public Policy Associates
Region 1-D, UAW
St. Margaret of Scotland Parish
St. Michael Parish

Board Members



LYNN JONDAHL,* executive director of Michigan Prospect

“Thanks to the League, data-supported information is included in the public policy discussion of the economic circumstances facing Michigan’s most vulnerable residents. Through League efforts, advocates have come together in a common commitment to build a stable, fair and adequate revenue base on which to create the kind of state we want.”

GEORGE VANANTWERP,** Van Antwerp & Beale Publishers

“The people of Michigan have benefited in countless ways for almost 100 years from the research, analytical, and advocacy work of the Michigan League for Human Services with its dedicated staff. We cannot praise them enough!”



ROBERT W. SWANSON,** retired director of the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth

“Data-driven advocacy is critical as we battle Michigan’s ongoing structural deficit and the worst economy since the Great Depression. Choices are difficult and options limited, but we can count on the League to provide the credible data on both fiscal and social policy that will help move us in a positive direction.”



“The importance of the work of the League is magnified in these trying times and that is why it is so important for the groups represented on the Board to continue to advocate for those who cannot advocate for themselves.”

— **SCOTT BIRDSALL**, International Union UAW Representative

“The Michigan League for Human Services exemplifies the Jewish tradition of ‘tikkun olam’ (repairing the world). In partnership with the League, the Michigan Jewish Conference has been able to further its deeply rooted tradition of providing a voice for those who are poor, disabled, elderly and/or unable to adequately represent themselves.”

— **SUSAN R. HERMAN**,** director, Michigan Jewish Conference



MARSHA KREUCHER,** CEO of Community Action Agency of Jackson, Lenawee, and Hillsdale

“The issues of poverty and social justice now gaining national attention have always been important to the League, making this respected organization uniquely prepared to help drive public policy and social change in Michigan during these tough economic times.”

KARL D. GREGORY, Ph. D., distinguished professor emeritus, Oakland University

“As a person who has been active in efforts to promote civil rights and to improve the lot of lower-income groups most of my life, I was most gratified to serve on the board of the Michigan League for Human Services. MLHS’s advocacy and research for ‘the least of these’ is not only well done, it is informative to decision-makers.”



KIM SIBILSKY, executive director of the Michigan Primary Care Association

“I believe that the League is the only organization in Michigan capable of setting a truly ‘round table’ in support of low-income families and in promoting social justice for all. The round table allows advocates from many disciplines and areas of focus to come together with one voice.”

MARGARET TALBURTT, executive director of the James A. & Faith Knight Foundation

“The Michigan League for Human Services drives public policy with honest, respected data. Our state is fortunate to have such a thoughtful advocate for social change.”



OTHER BOARD MEMBERS:

- **DELOIS WHITAKER CALDWELL**, retired president and CEO of Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit;
- **DIANE C. EMLING**, faculty, Northwestern Michigan College;
- **MARK GAFFNEY**, president of Michigan State AFL-CIO;
- **MARTHA GONZALES-CORTEZ**,** CEO of Hispanic Center of West Michigan;
- **CYNTHIA PAUL**, legislative director, SEIU Michigan State Council; and
- **SHARON PARKS**,** MLHS president and CEO.

*Board Chair

**Executive Committee

Invest we must

In June, I was pleased and honored to be named the League's CEO and president. The League's staff is a dedicated and extremely talented group and our mission—using data-driven advocacy to improve the lives of low-income citizens—is more relevant than ever in this deeply troubled economy.

What I didn't know at the time was what an extraordinarily difficult time we would be facing as a state and a nation by the end of the year. As I write, Michigan's unemployment still leads the nation and will continue to rise, and economists are predicting that 2009 will be the hardest year most of us have witnessed in decades. Some are comparing our times to the Great Depression, with Michigan at the epicenter of the crisis.

Income is down and more families are living below the poverty line. Home foreclosures are up. One in every five Michigan residents receives some sort of public assistance. Our safety net is stretched to the breaking point.

As we make difficult choices with our public investments, we must focus on the families who are struggling against all odds to make ends meet. The League will be fighting to restore the state's fiscal health, strengthen the safety net, find ways to reposition our work force for the jobs of the future, and remind policymakers that the effects of childhood poverty last a lifetime. Instead of asking, "Can we afford to?" when weighing the cost of programs, the League will ask, "Can we afford not to?"

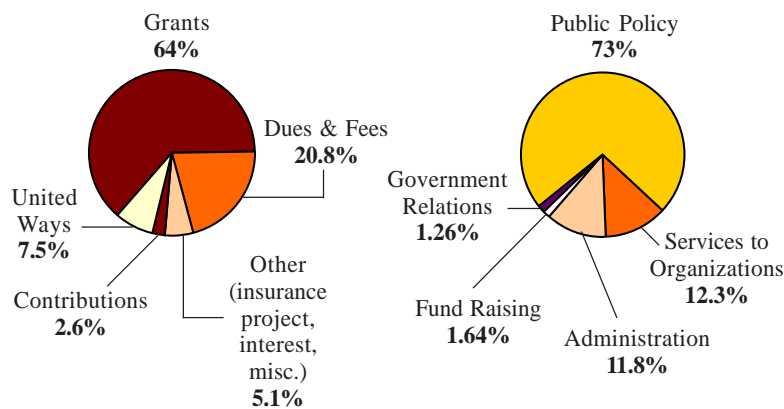


Sharon Parks
President and CEO

Sources of Funds and Expenditures—FY 2007-2008 (unaudited)

Sources of Funds – \$1,245,693.29

Expenditures – \$1,161,986.15



League staff

- Jackie Benson, Secretary
- Jacqui L. Broughton, Planning/Research Associate
- Paul Diefenbach, Data Manager
- Dale Fickle, Senior Planning/Research Associate
- Jan Hudson, Senior Planning/Research Associate
- Phyllis Killips, Administrative Secretary
- Tillie Kucharek, Secretary
- Mary Logan, Secretary
- Sharon Parks, President and CEO
- Judy Putnam, Communications Coordinator
- Peter Ruark, Planning/Research Associate
- Ben Wells, Insurance Associate
- Lawrence Wells, Chief Operating Officer
- Jane Zehnder-Merrell, Senior Research Associate & Director, Kids Count in Michigan

OUR MISSION—To help low-income people achieve economic security.

OUR WORK—The League is a nonpartisan, nonprofit statewide policy group that uses data-driven advocacy to improve the lives of low-income citizens.

OUR MEMBERS—More than 1,500 individual and organizational members from business, labor, human service professions, faith-based organizations and concerned citizens.

OUR HISTORY—The League began in 1912 as an “independent association of citizens interested in the health and welfare of Michigan.”

OUR SUPPORTERS—The Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Council of Michigan Foundations, the Economic Policy Institute, the Ford Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, the McGregor Fund, The Skillman Foundation, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

HOW TO HELP

Donate online or send tax-deductible donations to the Michigan League for Human Services, 1115 South Pennsylvania Avenue, Suite 202, Lansing MI 48912-1658. For information on membership, go to www.milhs.org.

Affiliations

The League is affiliated with the State Fiscal Analysis Initiative, the Economic Analysis and Research Network (EARN), and the national Kids Count network.

