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MFY Honors Pro Bono Volunteers

NEW YORK, NY, October 16, 2002—MFY Legal Services, Inc.’s Board Chair, David G. Keyko, announced today at MFY’s 2002 Scales of Justice Awards Breakfast honoring pro bono volunteers and community partners that “MFY’s Board of Directors has decided to give up federal Legal Services Corporation (LSC) funding and will thus be freed of the 1996 restrictions that the federal funds placed on all of our legal work including barring MFY from helping New York’s undocumented immigrants.”

MFY’s decision was made after months of discussions and in the wake of Legal Services of New York City’s (LSNY) ultimatum to New York City’s neighborhood based legal services programs to become a LSNY subsidiary – a single member corporation under LSNY – by year’s end. After trying to negotiate a compromise with LSNY, MFY decided that it could not accept LSNY’s single member proposal. MFY and LSNY will now discuss how to divide up the programs recognizing that MFY will not be receiving any LSC funding. MFY Executive Director Lynn M. Kelly stated “MFY will concentrate on growing its highly effective citywide programs including the Mental Health Law Project, the Adult Home Project and the Low Wage Worker Project free from the burdens the federal restrictions placed on our ability to use all the tools that lawyers should have available to help clients, including class actions.” MFY is also now able to provide services to undocumented immigrants in its traditional service areas including Chinatown, the Lower East Side and East Harlem who could not be helped under the restrictions imposed by the LSC.

MFY’s Adult Home Project was instrumental this year in helping to bring attention to the adult home industry. MFY’s efforts include a lawsuit against an adult home for abusing its residents by subjecting them to unnecessary prostate surgery in a Medicaid kickback scheme. This led to an investigation by The New York Times and ultimately the series “Broken Homes” in the spring of this year. MFY helps over 1,000 seriously and persistently mentally ill people each year.

MFY has provided high quality legal services since 1963 when it began as the legal arm of Mobilization for Youth. MFY celebrates its 40th anniversary next year as the first community based legal services practice in the nation.

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