

LAWYERS CONCERNED FOR LAWYERS

MINNESOTA'S LAWYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

INSPIRATIONAL STORIES



“[Y]ou saved my life . . . by being there when I had given up hope. The confidential, caring support I received during my crisis made the difference.”

LAWYERS CONCERNED FOR LAWYERS
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LAWYERS CONCERNED FOR LAWYERS

MINNESOTA'S LAWYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers (LCL) was launched in 1976, making it one of the oldest lawyer assistance programs in the nation. It provides confidential help to lawyers, judges, and law students who suffer from chemical dependency or mental health problems, as well as to their families, colleagues, and organizations.

LCL services include crisis response, intervention, short-term counseling, peer support, referrals to appropriate professionals and programs, and educational programming. Volunteers are an integral part of everything we do. They help us increase our effectiveness and maximize our resources.

These services promote professional satisfaction and save lives, health, careers, relationships, and law firms. They help prevent malpractice, losses to clients and the public, and improve the profession and its public image.

LCL's vital services are partially supported by funding administered through the Minnesota Supreme Court, but we rely on donations to carry out our mission to reach out and help law students and legal professionals in need and education of the legal community.

Additional funds are urgently needed to optimize our direct assistance to the lawyers who have called upon us, to expand our outreach and education and to provide help such as funds for chemical dependency treatment for indigent lawyers. Please contribute at the highest level you can afford.

LCL would like to thank the Minnesota lawyers who allowed LCL to use their stories in this brochure.

I would like to contribute to Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers at the following level:

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------|--|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor | \$ 2,500 and above | <input type="checkbox"/> Counselor | \$ 250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Barrister | \$ 1,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter | \$ 100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advocate | \$ 500 | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend (up to \$99) | \$ _____ |
- Please contact me to learn about foundation or other funding opportunities through my organization
- Please contact me regarding volunteer opportunities, educational programs for my organization or to apply for membership

Name: _____

Organization _____

Address: _____

Address 2: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

I received an LCL flyer.

Sometime around 2000 or 2001 I received an LCL flyer. I had been through a bitterly contested divorce, had become clinically depressed, and had been seriously abusing alcohol. Although still very much in denial about the extent of my problems, something deep inside told me that I should hold onto this flyer. I put it on a shelf in my office, but periodically and frequently took a peek at it.

While I was still functioning as a competent lawyer, my energy level continued to sink. I was simply moving from one self-created emergency to the next, barely meeting deadlines, and fearing client calls.

In 2003, I was preparing to try a case that I knew I wasn't adequately prepared to handle. I filed a motion seeking an extension of the discovery deadline with the conviction that, if the motion was not granted, I would have no alternative but to kill myself. I calmly settled on a plan. If the judge denied my motion, I would simply get in my car, drive south along Highway 61, wait for a locomotive to come along, and inch onto the tracks at the last minute.

The order denying my request arrived. I calmly got into my car with the firmly fixed idea that I would end my pain. As I got close to the split between I-94E and I-94W, I thought about the only remaining reasons to live: my wonderful children. The LCL offices came to mind. I was sobbing. I fell into the I-94W lanes of I-35E and drove to the LCL office.

LCL connected me with a psychologist who got me into the emergency room and an attorney who offered to assist or intervene with the court case in question. I also began attending the truly wonderful lawyer AA meetings.

As a result of my ongoing sobriety, the personal growth I've derived from the recovery program, and the strong support network I've acquired, my life has improved dramatically. My practice has expanded exponentially, as have the rewards, interpersonal and emotional as well as financial. I truly love what I do, helping people as an attorney. I now embrace life and look forward to the opportunities and enjoyment to be found in each new day.

If LCL hadn't sent out those flyers, I almost certainly would not be alive today. Thank you ever so much for being there for me and for other suffering lawyers like me.

I heard an LCL volunteer deliver a lecture about alcoholism.

I had my first experience with an LCL volunteer 25 years ago. My firm was a hard-drinking one. To a practicing alcoholic like me, a newly minted lawyer, it was perfect. But the level of drinking going on concerned a partner, and he asked an LCL volunteer to come to our annual fall retreat and talk about alcohol abuse in the legal profession.

The LCL volunteer, Bill, delivered a dispassionate, friendly, after dinner lecture about alcoholism: its symptoms and problems it causes. Many of us listening were "feeling no pain," having already had several drinks at dinner. It must have been hard for the LCL volunteer, since many of us were in the conference room with drinks in our hands as we listened. A couple of people actually went out to "freshen up" their drinks while he spoke.

I remember his warmth and humor – and the message. That lecture planted, for me, the first seeds of realization that I was, in fact, an alcoholic. I recognized the symptoms were ones I was experiencing personally. For the first time I can recall, I was uncomfortable with the fact that I drank too much.

Not much later, an employee of the firm went into treatment. After seeing her success, it was only a matter of time when I would follow. Then, I was convicted for DUI and remember actually feeling relieved because I knew what my options were and what I needed to do. This was thanks, in no small part, to the information I got from the LCL volunteer that night.

About a year after I sobered up (some 23 years ago), I called LCL to become a member and made an appointment. I am sure LCL expected to see a helpless drunk, but they found instead a drunk in recovery who wanted to give something back for what had been given to me. I've been grateful to be a part of the organization ever since.

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I heard of LCL through its work with the MSBA.

Depression and suicidal ideation have been part of my life since my childhood. However, I did not begin therapy until the age of 16. During my twenties I made at least a dozen suicide attempts. My psychiatrist was my life coach and helped me manage my depression.

When my psychiatrist died I was devastated. A new psychiatrist and a therapist saw me through more difficult times as a depressive trying to survive in a "normal" world. I became disabled by my illness and did very little, other than therapy, for five years. Spurred on by my therapist, I returned to school and chose to become a paralegal, but my passion for the law grew and I made the decision to attend law school. I continued to receive support from my psychiatrist and anti-depressant medication through law school and beyond.

My first experience as an attorney was difficult and found me with few clients and little income. I could no longer afford psychiatric care or medication. I felt very capable of managing my depression. Then, I lost my job and the world seemed to crumble. I knew there were other options to get help, but I was still determined to do it on my own.

I became acquainted with the staff at LCL through their work with the Minnesota State Bar Association. During my difficult times LCL staff approached me on several occasions offering help. I thanked them but brushed off their suggestions. Unbeknownst to anyone at LCL, I was on the verge of committing suicide. My life had spiraled out of control and I knew that I was not capable of effectively representing a client and I sought help from LCL.

The LCL staff helped arrange other resources for my clients. LCL staff made a call to arrange a therapy session. Several days later a therapist helped me find a psychiatrist to take me as a patient. LCL, through a law firm foundation grant, pays for medication management for indigent attorneys. The therapist helped me to diffuse the situation and focus on solutions to my problems.

I also began attending LCL membership meetings and actively supporting LCL when opportunities arose. The continued support of LCL staff and the membership has proven invaluable to me.