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Update on N.J. parish-based legal services for the poor project

by Tom Gallagher

NCR Today

A year ago, I wrote an *NCR* Mission Management story about Msgr. Bob Meyer's legal aid clinic he started at his parish, Sts. Peter and Paul, in Hoboken, N.J., which is part of the Newark archdiocese. The Waterfront Project Inc. has been a big success in helping the poor.

Now, an update from *The Hudson (N.J.) Reporter*:

A relatively new Hoboken-based charity, the Waterfront Project, provides legal aid to people who otherwise couldn't afford it. It has saved tenants from unfair evictions and helped seniors battling business rip-off. The group hasn't gotten much publicity in the past, but now it has a new champion who wants to raise awareness and funds for the organization.

Former Mayor David Roberts has become involved and is hoping to raise money through a promotion at his Mexican restaurant, East L.A., and through other venues.

Since Roberts decided not to run for re-election in 2009, he has been keeping busy with several projects. He learned of the Waterfront Project from Msgr. Bob Meyer at St. Peter and Paul's Church. Now he is hoping more people can get involved.

Louis Scarpa, director of development at the church, explained, "Elizabeth Caraballo, a lawyer and the legal clinic director, and Msgr. Robert Meyer founded it. They realized

there was a need for a legal clinic in Hoboken. About 10 percent of Hoboken is below the poverty level. We have a unique situation in that many of our parishioners are attorneys. Msgr. Bob is a practicing attorney. Having the vision of an attorney-priest, and the people in the pews who are lawyers, and people around us who need us, it created a perfect storm."

The results have been gratifying. "We helped a woman in her late sixties who spoke little English, a woman of modest means," he said. "We helped her in a consumer dispute. She was being taken advantage of unfairly. Her furniture was never delivered. We helped her get her \$1,000 back. We helped a group of 98 persons who were being evicted unfairly from their apartments in Hoboken."

Read the full story.

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