



IN APPRECIATION OF

SHELDON H. ROODMAN

As a pioneering and successful lawyer, a skillful and entrepreneurial legal services executive, and a national leader, Sheldon Roodman leaves an enormous legacy.

In the late 1960s, Sheldon Roodman was part of a creative and exciting group of lawyers at Community Legal Counsel on Michigan Avenue in Chicago, whose mission was to provide legal representation and counsel to grass roots community organizations. Like so many during that era, he jumped into the civil rights movement with the hope and belief that equal justice was achievable through law. These talented, energetic and committed young civil rights lawyers, working with client groups such as welfare rights and tenant organizations, filed cases that over the long term converted the administration of public benefits from a system fraught with arbitrariness and delay to one based on the rule of law. Sheldon filed and litigated one of the most important of those cases, *Edelman v. Jordan*. This case resulted in a broad victory in the U.S. Supreme Court that established the right of applicants for aid to the aged, blind and disabled to have their applications acted upon within a federally-established time frame, a precedent that reverberated across the nation to impose similar requirements on the states and counties for all public benefits programs.

As the legendary long-time executive director of the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago (LAF), Sheldon guided this program to national renown, steering through a series of political and financial challenges, while building an array of funding sources to buttress the always-volatile federal Legal Services Corporation grant. As the result of his steady efforts, LAF's budget grew to \$13 million, with more than half coming from other public and private sources. It is a measure of LAF's reputation that it receives hundreds of applications from



across the country for its lawyer positions. Annually the program provides first-rate representation to 30,000 clients throughout the Chicago metropolitan area, through its five general intake offices and its nearly twenty special focus projects.

Over thirty years of leadership, he provided careful and astute leadership but he never compromised LAF's mission to ensure that all Chicago-area residents have access to a lawyer regardless of their ability to pay. He did not retreat from a case or cause out of concern that it would produce political fallout. He never failed to act with anything but integrity in the pursuit of equal justice under law. And to the end of his tenure, he retained the same youthful enthusiasm for initiating a new project, still nurturing an environment at LAF in which the best talent wants to be there, to grow and learn so as to do the best work for a client community whose needs are immense and constantly changing. To recognize and perpetuate his accomplishments, the LAF Board established the Sheldon Roodman Law Student Fellowship.

Sheldon also brought his talents and energy to the national legal services community in many ways, and especially as a long-time member of the Board of Directors of the Management Information Exchange (MIE) which he helped create. As a key voice at MIE, he helped executive directors and other program leaders across the country balance the interests of needy clients, their various staff constituencies, their boards of directors, the donor community, the Legal Services Corporation, the organized bar, and others. Through his example and his national leadership, he helped shape several generations of legal services leaders.

Thank you, Sheldon!