



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Budget Cuts Create Shortages, Increase Workloads for Oregon Legal Services** *Equal Justice Works Fellow Fills in the Gap at the Gorge*

WOODBURN, OR—June 3, 2003—Recent funding cuts to Legal Aid Services of Oregon (LASO) have impacted the quality of LASO's current services to Oregon's low-income population by decreasing the number of staff to provide services.

The Columbia Gorge, a fertile fruit-producing valley along the Columbia River that each year during harvest attracts thousands of workers from California and as far south as southern Mexico, has felt a gap in legal services for the most needy populations. While outreach was conducted several times a year in the Gorge, the workers who remained and settled in the nearby communities of The Dalles and Hood River had to travel to LASO offices in Pendleton and Oregon City to obtain low cost and free legal services.

Starting last fall, LASO began to fill the gap at the Gorge with the addition to staff of Equal Justice Works Fellow Marisa Mandujano. LASO was awarded the two-year fellowship by the Washington, D.C. based public interest law organization specifically to expand services, establish offices and resume consistent outreach to farm workers in the Gorge.

Mandujano, a recent graduate of Willamette University College of Law in Salem, OR, is the granddaughter of farmworkers who migrated from Texas to California. After graduating from George Fox University in Newberg, OR, Ms. Mandujano went on to obtain her law degree and hoped to better serve the Latino community and educate the public about the law. During her fellowship, Mandujano will provide services in the Columbia Gorge to farmworkers who need it and are limited from

traveling outside of the area. She also hopes that her presence in the community will establish an awareness on the part of the workers and the community concerning the workers' legal rights.

*Editor's Note: Marisa Mandujano is in the Gorge on Tuesdays. Farmworkers with legal problems in this area can either go to the Oregon Child Development Commission on 1300 W. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, The Dalles (next to Casa Lomas apartments) between the hours of 1:00 and 4:00 p.m. or they can go to Mid-Columbia Community Action Council on 205 Oak Street #4, Hood River (across the hall from the Legalization Project) between the hours of 4:30 and 7:00 p.m. For further information please call 1-800-662-6096.*

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Legal Aid Services of Oregon (LASO) is a non-profit organization that provides legal help in civil cases to low-income Oregonians. In addition to serving the general low-income population, LASO has three statewide programs that provide services to farmworkers, representation on Native American issues, and community development assistance to non-profit organizations.

Equal Justice Works, formerly the National Association for Public Interest Law (NAPIL), leads the country in organizing, training and supporting public service-minded law students and in creating summer and postgraduate public interest jobs. Through more than eight million dollars in annual donations from prestigious law firms, corporations and foundations, Equal Justice Works funds law students and lawyers in programs that bring justice to millions of low-income persons and families.