Meeting the Moment
FIGHTING FOR JUSTICE DURING A PANDEMIC
2020 MID-MINNESOTA LEGAL AID BOARD

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DEAR FRIENDS,

It’s been quite a year. Thank you for your support as we have adjusted to not only a virtual office environment and new ways of doing our work, but also to a constantly spinning wheel of executive orders, court challenges, injunctions, and entirely new legal problems.

Throughout the year, we saw the disparate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities, whether by overt discrimination or unintended consequences. At Legal Aid, we’ve prioritized a racial equity lens as we stand with our clients to find the stability and support needed more than ever.

It was a year of internal change and striving for accountability as an organization. It was a year for listening, for stepping out of our offices and into the community, and for immediate and creative response to needs as they arise. The stories in this year’s Annual Report reflect our efforts to be flexible and to center the power of partnership.

Our Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic switched gears quickly to help hundreds of Minnesotans navigate the IRS website and get their stimulus checks to stabilize their finances. We launched a new Justice Bus — funded by a CARES Act grant — to provide mobile outreach in greater Minnesota. Our Immigration unit and Disability Law Center continued to work on behalf of some of our community’s most vulnerable members. And, in this time of high need for stable homes, our Housing unit addressed illegal evictions and fought for the civil rights of unhoused Minnesotans living in parks.

Flexible funding from donors like you helps us shift resources quickly, adapt to emerging community needs, and respond to the moment. It was a year of unpredictable challenges, from the pandemic to the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder. The spike in unemployment, loss of in-person services at schools and agencies, and the fallout from rapid changes and uncertainty have shaken everyone’s stability.

We thank you for standing strong and steady in the community with us, our partners, and our clients.

Drew Schaffer, Executive Director
In April of 2020, many people saw $1,200 pop up in their bank accounts as the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) started distributing Economic Impact Payments (EIP). However, it wasn’t that easy for millions of people with low or no income who didn’t have a bank account on file with the IRS.

Karon Baldwin hadn’t thought to apply for an EIP until someone suggested he call Legal Aid’s Low Income Taxpayer Clinic (LITC) to see if he was eligible. Baldwin had been recently released from prison and wasn’t sure where to start. Xue Bai, a third-year law student at the University of Minnesota who clerks with Legal Aid, took his case.

“I wouldn’t have been able to do anything without her,” Baldwin says. “After 24 years everything is different. I didn’t know much about setting up an email account and she helped me figure it all out.”

**PIVOT TO GUIDANCE ON STIMULUS PAYMENTS**
Aisha Servaty, Assistant Supervising Attorney and Director of the LITC, decided in April to see if LITC could be helpful for people who needed to apply for EIPs. In the first week, she and one other LITC attorney saw over 80 intakes, far more than they could handle. The entire Consumer Law unit started working on the cases, and other units across Legal Aid pitched in as well. In the end, Servaty trained more than 35 MMLA staff, pro bono attorneys, and law clerks (including Bai) to help with the EIP work.
“I wouldn’t have been able to do anything without her,” Baldwin says. “After 24 years, everything is different. I didn’t know much about setting up an email account, and she helped me figure it all out.”

On September 24, 2020, a court decision ruled that currently and recently incarcerated individuals were eligible for EIPs. The decision was quickly followed by an appeal, and mixed messaging from the IRS confused the process. Servaty scrambled to stay on top of each change and communicate accurate information not just in the Twin Cities, but throughout Minnesota.

“I’ve been so touched when I hear people say they don’t believe they’re eligible, or don’t think they deserve it,” says Bai, who helped a number of incarcerated people. “I tell them, as long as they have a Social Security number and did not and were not required to file a 2018 tax return, they’re eligible.”

REMOVING BARRIERS
Servaty worked with community organizers, the Department of Corrections, and various agencies and services to connect with people who needed the payments most and were least likely to access them on their own. A telephone pop-up clinic at the Capitol Ridge Hotel in Ramsey County served unhoused individuals with lawyers walking them through the non-filer tool over the phone.

“There are many barriers for non-English speakers, unhoused people, incarcerated individuals, and the really poor community,” Servaty explains. “They need a phone, computer and internet access, electricity, and they need to call within set hours. Our priority was to eliminate as many barriers as possible.”

STANDING WITH CLIENTS THROUGH THE PROCESS
LITC helped over 550 people with their EIPs. For some, it was confirming eligibility or giving advice. But for most, LITC walked them through the entire process, followed up to be sure their application was accepted, and interfaced with the IRS when necessary.

Flexible funding from donors and grants was critical to cover LITC’s additional workload. Legal Aid’s ability to shift resources to the LITC team meant that hundreds of thousands of dollars were delivered to the intended recipients.

Karon Baldwin was one of the 200 recently or currently incarcerated who were helped by LITC. The personalized help he received from Bai made a huge difference.

“She was right on time, and she followed up and let me know everything was on track,” Baldwin says. “I took a lot of college courses in prison, and this payment will help me get a good start without having to ask so many people for help.”
Caught in Immigration Chaos: Miguel’s Story

Miguel*, a student at Wellstone International High School, had been a Legal Aid client for two years when he was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). His recent approval for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) triggered the detention. Legal Aid’s Immigration unit worked quickly, filing a motion to re-open an in absentia order that was the basis for his arrest.

“That detention was odd and horrible,” says Staff Attorney Lisl Zamora. “Miguel was barely an adult and still in high school. Even when the order was rescinded and the reason for picking him up no longer existed, they didn’t release him.”

A VICTIM OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING
Zamora filed papers to allow a bond, helping secure Miguel’s release after a few months. SIJS is a designation for juveniles who have been abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent. When Miguel traveled alone from Guatemala to Texas at the age of 15, his uncle put him to work 60 hours per week in heavy construction. An order to appear in court was mailed to his uncle’s address, but Miguel never saw it. He moved to Minnesota to live with his cousin.

Once Miguel was informed of the order, he cooperated with law enforcement to investigate the human trafficking in Texas. Zamora filed a T-Visa for him in June of 2019, which, if approved, would give him permission to remain in the United States legally.

“I am scared about being sent back to Guatemala,” Miguel said in his affidavit. “I have nothing and no one there. Here in Minnesota, I have more support. I have learned a lot of English since I arrived, and I want to continue school and learning and make a better life for myself.”

HARSH ENVIRONMENT FOR IMMIGRANTS
Miguel is one of Legal Aid’s many clients who were adversely affected by the harsh environment for immigrants, particularly communities of color, over the past four years. Travel bans, new public charge rules, increased filing fees, threats to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), as well as office closings had an immediate effect upon individuals and their families.

When the United States Citizenship and Immigration (USCIS) office closed in the spring, immigration courts remained open and ICE continued to arrest and detain immigrants like Miguel. When facilities stopped allowing visitors due to the pandemic, Legal Aid struggled to maintain contact and clear communication with their detained clients.

“We found it increasingly difficult to handle the rapid changes and mixed messages from USCIS,” Supervising Attorney Alison Olson Cox explains. “A disturbing statement on the USCIS website stated they wouldn’t honor the court’s decision regarding DACA because they didn’t want to help ‘criminals.’ Over the past four years, we’ve seen more indications of USCIS blatantly refusing to comply with court orders.”

NEW FEES TO SEEK ASYLUM
In August of 2020, USCIS released news of a change to fees — including increases of 200% and more — which would have an enormous impact on Legal Aid’s clients. The United States became one of only three countries in the world to charge people to apply for asylum. Many of Legal Aid’s clients had cases in progress, and the entire organization made a coordinated effort to process over 100 applications before the fees were scheduled to jump. That fee raise, like many other immigration changes, began to work its way through the courts.
“Immigrants are being pummeled, and disparate treatment toward communities of color is the norm,” Olson Cox says. “We bring statistics and studies documenting that disparate treatment into the public conversation and into the courtroom. The immigrants we represent have a right to have their experiences heard, and a right to use the law the way it’s meant to be used.”

FAVORABLE OUTCOME FOR MIGUEL

As lawsuits are filed, injunctions issued, and cases make their way through the courts, Legal Aid attorneys continue the daily work of defending clients and protecting their rights. In October, Zamora helped Miguel file for his green card and work authorization. His T-visa was approved in January of 2021. Now 21 years old and protected from removal, Miguel continues his studies and hopes to become a U.S. citizen.

“Miguel is one of the sweetest people I’ve ever met, so polite and accepting of how long things take,” Zamora says. “To finally have something work out for him makes me really happy.”

*Name changed to protect client identity
Thanks to COVID-19 funding from the CARES Act, Legal Aid is spreading justice faster (hopefully!) than the novel coronavirus. A justice bus will be hitting the roads of central Minnesota in early Spring 2021, and legal kiosks are being installed throughout the 20-county service area.

The obstacles rural Minnesotans face when seeking legal help have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Legal Aid once had offices in Cambridge, Little Falls, and Marshall, but funding has not been sufficient to keep those offices open. When the offices closed, case numbers in those areas dropped. It’s more difficult to maintain community relationships and trust without a physical presence.

Transportation is always an issue in rural areas. Limited public transit options come with high exposure risks, making it even harder for those living outside of urban centers to see a lawyer. The justice bus will be dedicated to the more rural parts of Legal Aid’s service area.
MOBILE LEGAL HELP
“Removing barriers to justice in rural communities, that’s always been a personal goal,” says Ann Cofell, Deputy Director of Legal Aid’s St. Cloud and Willmar offices. “The justice bus will travel on regular outreach rotations, so residents in rural areas can rely on scheduled visits from the mobile justice team.”

The bus is a retrofitted van owned by Legal Aid. It’s a small mobile office with a computer, copier, printer, fact sheets, and other informational documents that will help Legal Aid’s staff serve Minnesotans through the pandemic and long after.

“We’ll partner with other events where people are already gathered,” Cofell says. “I can see the bus pulling up to libraries, community centers, Pride festivals, Juneteenth celebrations, and health fairs. Once the weather gets nice, we’ll set up tables outside the bus with lawyers and information.”

COMMUNITY-BASED KIOSKS BROADEN ACCESS
The justice bus and a new statewide network of 250 legal kiosks will bring legal offices into high need areas, connecting with clients through trusted community partners. The kiosks will be in designated areas in community-based settings such as courts, agencies, and non-profits.

Each kiosk is fully accessible to people with disabilities and includes various communication technologies, such as terminals for direct communication with attorneys and advocates. Clients will be able to consult directly with legal experts and participate safely in virtual legal proceedings, overcoming financial, technological, and transportation barriers.

ON-THE-SPOT LEGAL COUNSEL
One of the 250 kiosks is located at Anna Marie’s Alliance, a St. Cloud shelter that provides women and children experiencing domestic abuse a safe place to stay, along with resources to escape the abusive situation. Kim Salitros, Manager of Shelter Services, is excited to bring legal expertise directly into the shelter on a daily basis.

“We women and children often arrive late at night,” Salitros explains. “We provide a 45-day stay, but there’s so much to do during that time — healing from trauma, figuring out next moves, scheduling a meeting with a lawyer, and more. We can now provide legal services immediately, connecting a woman with Legal Aid on the first morning. Legal guidance can be part of her planning from the start.”

The kiosks and the justice bus will form a widening circle of safe physical locations for both rural and urban Minnesotans to access legal services. The network will mitigate the social and economic effects of the pandemic for thousands — especially the disproportionate numbers of people of color, people with disabilities, and seniors who have suffered under COVID-19.
In August of 2020, Shaunie* broke her lease and moved her family to safety. With the help of a domestic violence advocate, she provided her landlord with the complete documentation that entitles a domestic violence victim to legally break a lease without penalty.

Rather than supporting a vulnerable tenant, the landlord held her accountable for rent payment and penalties. Despite Shaunie showing homicidal text threats and police reports to the property manager, he accused her of filing a fake form. He charged her nearly $12,000 and threatened to send her outstanding balance to collections.

“I felt like I was being railroaded for thousands of dollars for protecting myself,” Shaunie explains. “I followed all the rules and did the right thing, and they wanted me to pay $12,000 within two weeks. I pay rent by myself. I can’t afford collections taking a percentage out of my check.”
Shaunie contacted Legal Aid for help, and her case went to Wells Fargo Attorney Abigail Cerra and Legal Assistant Lashandra Marcellus-Swayzer of the Wells Fargo Eviction Prevention Project. The Project is part of Legal Aid’s pro bono program, managed by Pro Bono Coordinator Colleen Daly.

NEW PRO BONO PROJECT
“Our capacity is dependent on the number of volunteer attorneys willing to take cases rather than specific funding,” Daly says. “This gives us flexibility. Throughout the pandemic, my goal has been to figure out what help people need right now, and how to get that help to them.”

Stable housing is always a critical concern, exacerbated by COVID-19. It’s difficult for an unrepresented tenant to successfully negotiate with landlords or to prevail in housing court. Legal Aid’s Housing unit takes many cases but doesn’t have the resources to help everyone who qualifies. In 2020, the Wells Fargo Eviction Prevention Project was created to help fill that gap.

Cerra, a former Legal Aid employee, worked with Daly and the housing attorneys to develop the partnership. The goal of the Project is to negotiate settlements with landlords or find legal defenses the client can use to substantially reduce the amount owed. Shaunie’s case was a perfect fit.

“Shaunie had all the documentation in place,” says Marcellus-Swayzer. “In Minnesota, tenants in domestic violence situations don’t have to be victimized and stay in an unsafe place. She did the right thing by removing herself from the situation.”

APPLYING A RACIAL EQUITY LENS
Daly, who formerly worked as a housing attorney, has seen that a majority of Legal Aid’s housing clients are people of color who end up in substandard housing. A strong racial equity lens is a critical component of the pro bono program’s approach to advocacy, and Shaunie’s predicament speaks to the need for community collaboration, education, and a strong support structure for volunteers.

“I started to feel like the landlord thought I was just another Black person trying to get out of paying money,” Shaunie says. “That’s how I felt they looked at me when they realized I was breaking my lease.”

RESOLVING THE INJUSTICE
In a typical pattern, the landlord did not back off until Cerra and Marcellus-Swayzer stepped in to support Shaunie’s defense. Building off the research and self-advocacy Shaunie had done on her own, they were able to intervene with the landlord and keep the matter out of collections. Shaunie only had to pay a small, legitimate fee, and she avoided a hit to her credit score. That was essential for her ability to rent in the future.

“I want lawyers and community members to know that a person could be following the law, doing everything right and still have a problem that requires a lawyer’s help,” Cerra says, “This case is a perfect example. Shaunie was very strong. She was protecting her child, she was following the law, and still she was having problems.”

The Wells Fargo volunteers, trained in housing law by the Legal Aid housing team, took five cases in 2020, and continue their work in 2021. Daly coordinates the intake of clients and provides support as needed.

“I’m thankful for Legal Aid and for the team that worked on my case,” Shaunie says. “If we feel in danger, that’s what the law is here for. They stood behind the law and I appreciate it. I also appreciate the patience, the time, and the act of listening. That was key for me, and I’m so grateful.”

*Name changed to protect client identity

“Shaunie was very strong; she was protecting her child; she was following the law; and still she was having problems.”
Supporting the Rights and Self-Advocacy of Young Adults with Disabilities

Chloe Nicol is a self-advocate with disabilities who helps Legal Aid’s Minnesota Disability Law Center (MDLC) spread the word to other youth with disabilities about their rights and the resources available to them. She has volunteered with the Mankato office, and was recently featured in Disability Rights and How to Vote, a video produced by MDLC’s Into Adulthood project.

“Nobody knows what you need more than you do,” Nicol says. “You’re the best advocate you could have for yourself. Especially in the disability community it’s important for everyone to advocate for themselves so their needs get met and they have a better life. I think that’s good advice for everyone, not just people with disabilities.”

INTO ADULTHOOD
That outlook is the driving force behind Into Adulthood, a project that seeks to support young people with disabilities as they transition into adulthood. Assistant Supervising Attorney Kristina Petronko has taken the lead on this project, joined by Legal Assistants Cate Cavalier and Hanne Goetz, and Staff Attorneys Beau RaRa and Kelsey Mize. RaRa and Mize divide their time between MDLC and Legal Aid’s Youth Law Project, bringing a wide range of experience working with youth.

“For youth with disabilities, navigating state and county systems has never been easy,” Petronko says. “We want to provide them with the entire spectrum of information they need. We also want them to understand that MDLC is not just about bringing lawsuits. We can bring professional legal tools when needed, but we also provide self-advocacy skills and information.”

MDLC views housing, education, employment, and vocational rehabilitation as pieces of the same puzzle for youth moving toward independence. Into Adulthood’s collaborative process, seeks creative ways to inform young people of their options.

“It’s important to have as many information sharing avenues as possible,” Nicol notes. “Everyone learns differently, and it makes sense to provide different formats.”

Youth also have wide disparities in access. Some have phones and others don’t. Some have parental support and others are homeless. Black and Native students, who are disproportionately diagnosed with emotional behavioral disorders, tend to have less access to in-person services from schools. In recognition of differences and disparities, the project produces resources in multiple formats, including podcasts and videos.

PROVIDING COMPREHENSIVE RESOURCES
“The youth we work with are often so focused on their immediate needs, they don’t have time to sift through every resource that’s out there,” says Mize. “We put together all of the information in one place in a variety of formats, so youth can access that as a starting point.”

Rather than presuming what youth and their advocates might need, Into Adulthood takes an attitude of humility, with a careful focus on listening and learning their way into relationships. They seek to partner with self-advocates and with youth-serving groups, including Trans- and Native- serving organizations.
“I began to see value in myself once I started studying disability rights,” Nicol says. “Often as a community we get dismissed or devalued by various groups. It's important to realize your own value and advocate for yourself.”

“The disparities that already existed have been magnified by the pandemic,” RaRa says. “I worked with a young Native client on an eviction case who didn’t have good technology at home and didn’t know where to start. Her case came to us through a community partner. Without representation, she would have been facing the risk of going to court in person and possibly becoming homeless.”

PROMOTING SELF-ADVOCACY
The goal is to build self-advocacy, empower youth to stand for their rights, and back them up when they need support or legal representation. The project has inspired MDLC to brainstorm creative ways to partner with youth, lift their voices, and get the message out to others.

“I began to see value in myself once I started studying disability rights,” Nicol says. “Often as a community we get dismissed or devalued by various groups. It’s important to realize your own value and advocate for yourself.”
Public parks were the best housing option for many unhoused people in the Twin Cities in 2020. Even when space in public shelters was available — which was rare — they were a hazardous option in a pandemic. More than 300 of the 3000+ unhoused people in the Twin Cities made their homes in urban outdoor spaces.

This year was Henrietta Brown’s first time living in a tent in public space. On a September morning before dawn, she was awakened by bright lights in her face. Law enforcement shook Brown’s tent and told her she had 30 minutes to get out.

Brown grabbed her purse and a blanket. The officers threatened arrest when she went back for more items. She watched as her tent — with her birth certificate, application for medical assistance, and personal belongings — were thrown into the garbage.

“The whole experience was so traumatizing,” says Brown. “I wasn’t really awake, it was cold, raining really hard, and I had no notice. I couldn’t understand why police didn’t realize that what camp residents have in our tents is all we have.”

Brown and others who were evicted that morning received help from ZACAH, a non-profit that supports Minnesotans facing poverty and displacement from their homes. ZACAH paid for a Super 8 hotel room for Brown in the following weeks.

**FIGHTING BACK**

Brown joined eight others who had been evicted from their tent homes, along with ZACAH, in a class action suit against the City of Minneapolis, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and Hennepin County. The suit, filed by Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid and the American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota, alleged that the park board, city, and county violated the constitutional rights of the plaintiffs and others living in the parks by destroying encampments with little or no notice, bulldozing people’s shelters, and trashing their personal belongings.

“It’s good to fight back,” Brown says. “Nobody deserves or wants to be treated the way I was. If I see something wrong, I’m going to speak up — especially when it comes to the elderly, the disabled, or the homeless.”

When advocates who work with the unsheltered homeless community contacted Legal Aid for help, the housing team began an investigation immediately. The challenges involved in working with unhoused individuals during a pandemic were great. With no mailing addresses or reliable access to cell phones and electricity, face-to-face meetings were essential.

Staff Attorney Rebecca Stillman traveled between camps to build relationships with residents while navigating the difficulties of doing this in a pandemic. Her daily presence meant that she knew the people, was familiar with the camps’ day-to-day functions, and often witnessed events as they transpired.

**“ON THE GROUND” LEGAL ADVOCATES**

“I was there on the ground,” says Stillman, who was later able to identify inaccuracies in the defendants’ brief. “It upset our clients to hear defendants say things that weren’t true to their experience. When they asked how that could happen, I didn’t have a good answer. But we are doing our best to represent them and their experience.”

Similar cases have been brought in other cities and states. Legal Aid has chosen to focus this suit on due process and privacy rights, noting the troublesome intersection of these evictions with Governor Walz’s executive order placing a moratorium on evictions.

“Most of these folks have been consistently mistreated by a network of systems that do not serve them, resulting in a cycle of homelessness,” Stillman
reflects. “They’re subject to outrageous stereotyping. Stories about encampments leave out important details, like how tents are people’s homes, with decorations and personal belongings, just like anyone’s home.”

“Working with Rebecca has been great,” says Brown. “She’s been very informative, and I know she cares. She’s a good listener, and she’s competent. That’s what you call a winning lawyer in my book.”

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE
Legal Aid hopes to hold the city, park board, and county accountable for their actions. The sweeps have exacerbated the problems of an already vulnerable — and disproportionately Black and Indigenous — population. Legal Aid seeks to ensure the civil rights of every individual, regardless of their resources or lack thereof, are protected.

“We’re at an unprecedented moment with the dilemma of unhoused residents,” says Stillman. “We are clearly unequipped — structurally, physically, or emotionally. Rather than treating people without housing as ‘public safety threats,’ we should be working on ways to welcome them into our community as neighbors.”

“Nobody deserves or wants to be treated the way I was. If I see something wrong, I’m going to speak up — especially when it comes to the elderly, the disabled, or the homeless.”
Anna Marie’s Alliance honors individuals that have supported the mission of non-violence for women and children and displayed a commitment to ending domestic violence. This year, the Peacemaker award was presented to Ann Cofell, Deputy Director of Legal Aid’s St. Cloud and Willmar offices.

"If I had to describe Ann, I’d describe her as being quiet, yet powerful with her voice. She lends her voice to those who can’t always speak for themselves," says Kim Salitros, Manager of Shelter Services at Anna Marie’s Alliance.

Cofell has been practicing with Legal Aid for over 40 years. In addition to managing two offices, she represents clients, mentors young attorneys, and has established a number of critical community partnerships, including one with the Stearns County Domestic Violence Court.

"For four decades, Ann has been an incredible leader in the world of justice-seekers in Minnesota," says MMLA Executive Director Drew Schaffer. “Her dedication to people in the communities we serve is unrivaled, and her longstanding advocacy for survivors of crime and violence has set the highest of standards for this work at MMLA and beyond. I feel so fortunate and privileged to work with Ann and to learn from her every day."

HCBA 2020 Excellence Award
The Hennepin County Bar Association (HCBA) honors bar members for their service to the local legal profession, the community, and the association. Luke Grundman, Managing Attorney of Legal Aid’s housing unit, was awarded a 2020 HCBA Improving Access to Justice award for expanding access to full representation cases for clients in need. Grundman also protects civil rights of clients for low-income tenants under the federal Fair Housing Act and the Minnesota Human Rights Act in both state and federal courts.

Grundman, who has shepherded the housing unit through a doubling in attorneys and support staff, led a complex civil lawsuit against Hennepin County’s slumlords, argued an appellate case involving access to justice for low-income tenants, and delivered comments to the Minnesota Supreme Court on proposed amendments to the Minnesota Rules of General Practice regarding the representation of corporations in housing court matters.

“Luke is one of the finest, scrappiest litigators we have fighting for clients,” says Deputy Director Greg Marita. “His work is infused with a smoldering passion for justice and sense of moral outrage that our clients are so often denied it. His tireless advocacy inspires our Housing unit staff and reminds us all why we do this work.”

Bernard P. Becker Advocate Award
The Bernard P. Becker Advocate Award is presented to a non-attorney legal aid staff member for outstanding service in the legal services field with commitment to providing legal services to low-income and disadvantaged clients. This year’s award recognizes Pam Manthei’s committed, long-term service to the community, providing excellent legal help to low income and disadvantaged Minnesotans.

Manthei, a legal advocate in Legal Aid’s St. Cloud office, helps clients with housing, guardianship, health care, and financial exploration.
McGuire’s demonstrated ability to exchange ideas with other generations to improve products, services, and the workplace.

McGuire is an assistant supervising attorney in Legal Aid’s St. Cloud office and has worked with the Stearns County Domestic Violence Court (DVC) for five years. DVC tracks recurring domestic violence felons and provides wraparound legal services for their victims and children. McGuire graduated college with a degree in sociology, and after several years of working beside lawyers, she believed she could help people better as a lawyer herself. She clerked for a judge who dealt with felony level domestic violence and found her calling. An “Empowered women empower women” sign hangs in her office, and she feels the best part of her job is helping clients gain safety.

“Pam is an amazing advocate for her clients,” explains Deputy Director Ann Cofell. “She advocates with landlords and with service providers, but she also advocates with our staff — to be sure that we are doing everything possible for our clients.”

“5 UNDER 40”

St. Cloud Times named Sarah McGuire as one of five business leaders in central Minnesota under the age of 40 who is making an impact in both her career and community. The honor recognizes McGuire’s compassion, and her skills benefit the people she serves.

BERNARD P. BECKER “LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE” AWARD

The Becker Legacy of Excellence Award was presented this year to Litigation Director Galen Robinson. The award recognizes a career-long commitment to excellence in the legal services field, with diligence in providing skilled legal representation for low-income and disadvantaged clients.

In his decades at Legal Aid, Robinson has been a fierce advocate for his clients. For example, Brayton et al v. Pawlenty et al, one of the many successes in Robinson’s distinguished legal career, resulted in a Minnesota Supreme Court decision prohibiting the governor from using unallotment to defund entire programs. The case established important legal principles, but more important to Robinson, it protected vulnerable Minnesotans from having their food and nutrition program decimated.

“Galen has given his whole career, now in its fourth decade, to Legal Aid’s mission and the clients we serve,” says Deputy Director Greg Marita. “Through his days as a staff attorney excelling in consumer and housing law, his time managing our Minneapolis Southside office, and now as a litigation director, Galen has inspired excellence in others and demanded it from himself. He brings his fierce intellect, maddening attention to detail, and unabashed loquacious nature to bear on every project, large and small. Through it all, he has shown us — clients, colleagues, and supporters — a generosity of spirit as large as his ponytail is long.”
## FINANCIALS

### REVENUE & EXPENDITURES | 2020

#### REVENUE

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**TOTAL** $16,756,752

#### EXPENDITURES

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<td>Administration</td>
<td>1,820,988</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal Services Advocacy Program (LSAP)</td>
<td>540,282</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Support</td>
<td>804,923</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>372,974</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL** $16,091,619

### CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEETS | 12.31.20

#### ASSETS

**CURRENT ASSETS**

- Cash and Cash Equivalents: $6,618,001
- Client Escrow Funds: 35,387
- Receivables:
  - Grants and Contracts: 2,334,508
  - Pledges and Other: 230,336
- Prepaid Expenses: 41,936

**TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS**: $9,260,168

**PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT, at cost**: $2,018,673

Less Accumulated Depreciation: (471,603)

**TOTAL PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT (NET)**: $1,547,070

#### OTHER LONG-TERM ASSETS

- Funds Held by Community Foundation: 3,115,794

**TOTAL OTHER LONG-TERM ASSETS**: 3,115,794

**TOTAL ASSETS**: $13,923,032

#### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

**CURRENT LIABILITIES**

- Accounts Payable: $894,052
- Client Trust Deposits: 35,382
- Accrued Expenses: 504,885
- Grant Advances: 1,355,957

**TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES**: 2,790,276

**NET ASSETS**

- Net assets without donor restrictions: $7,442,829
- Net assets with donor restrictions: 3,689,927

**TOTAL NET ASSETS**: 11,132,756

**TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS**: $13,923,032

---

### REVENUE

- Court Awarded Attorney Fees: 0.8%

### EXPENDITURES

- Poverty Law: 63.2%
- Disability Law: 14.8%
- Administration: 11.3%
- LSAP: 3.4%
- Fundraising: 2.3%
- State Support: 5.0%
- Federal: 16.7%
- Local: 5.8%
- LSAC: 9.7%
YOU CAN HELP EXPAND OUR REACH

The number of Minnesotans seeking legal assistance continues to rise. Your support — whether through sharing your time or making a monetary donation — makes it possible for us to meet increasing demands and provide much needed assistance for Minnesotans struggling to meet their basic needs. When you contribute to Legal Aid, you contribute to a stronger community. You remove barriers and make justice possible. You change lives for the better.

We hope you’ll consider a contribution based on what works best for you. Consider these options:

**Make a monetary donation.** Any amount allows us to provide invaluable help to people in need. Visit our site at mylegalaid.org/donate to make an online donation, or contact our office to discuss your contribution.

**Extend your legacy with planned giving.** Making a planned gift to Legal Aid ensures that your passion for justice will be part of your legacy, leading by example, for others to give back. Learn more at: mylegalaid.org/support-our-work/giving.

**Volunteer.** If you are an attorney, you can share your talents directly with clients in need. To learn more visit mylegalaid.org/support-our-work/volunteer.

**To learn more** or seek assistance, contact us via email, phone, or the web.

  mhugdahl@mylegalaid.org
  612-746-3744
  mylegalaid.org/donate

Legal Aid makes every effort to properly acknowledge each of our donors. If we have misspelled or omitted your name, please let us know, by calling 612-746-3709. We will correct it in future publications. An asterisk (*) indicates deceased.
FOUNDATIONS
AND SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS
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Bentson Foundation
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Catholic Charities of New Ulm Diocese
CentraCare Health
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Family Housing Fund
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James H. Binger Center for New Americans
The Minneapolis Foundation
Minnesota Justice Foundation
Minnesota State Bar Foundation
Morgan Family Foundation
Otto Bremer Foundation
Pohlad Family Foundation
Ramsey County Children's Mental Health Collaborative
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Share Our Strength
Skadden Fellowship Foundation
Stevens Square Foundation
Wells Fargo Foundation

THE LANE SOCIETY
($75,000–$500,000+)
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The Pat and Tom Grossman Family Fund
Robins Kaplan LLP

CHAMPIONS OF JUSTICE
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Norman Perl
Stinson LLP

PILLAR
($25,000–$49,999)
Fox Rothschild LLP
Lathrop GPM Foundation
Maslon LLP
Moss & Barnett, A Professional Association
Schwegman Lundberg Woessner
Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP
Winthrop & Weinstine, P.A.
Warren D. Woessner and Iris C. Freeman

BUILDER
($5,000–$9,999)
Attorney at Law Magazine
Best & Flanagan LLP
Kathleen Blatz and Greg Page
Carlson Caspers
Michael V. Ciresi
Lorraine Cofell
Steven and Amy Culbert
DLA Piper LLP
Linda J. Gallant
Karla Gluek
Greene Espel PLLP
Hogan Lovells US LLP
Larkin Hoffman
Ann Marie Hirsch and Eugene M. Link
Medtronic, Inc.
Christine L. Meuers
Minnesota Lawyers Mutual Insurance Company
Erik and Karen Nelson
Rick Solum
UnitedHealth Group
Richard and Lynn Voelbel
Peter and Kimberly Walsh
Wells Fargo & Company
Allison Woodbury
Zelle LLP
Zimmerman Reed LLP

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($2,500–$4,999)
Affiance Financial — Steve and Sheri Lear
Best Buy Co., Inc.
Jeffrey Bouslog
Catholic Area Faith Community of Jesus our Living Water
Karen Charlson and Matt Williamson
Ciresi Conlin LLP
Lydia Crawford
Jodie Crist
DeWitt LLP
Gregory Dyer
Dykema Gossett PLLC
Eckland & Blando
Douglas and Susan Elsassy
Brian Felton
Tom and Deb Frishberg
Goetz & Eckland P.A.
Jim and Sharon* Hale
Halunen Law
John and Cynthia Hart
Hellmuth & Johnson
Eric Janus and Carolyn Chalmers
Bob and Andrea Kircher
Mary L. Knoblauch and Martin A. Carlson
Dorrie and Scott Larison
BY THE NUMBERS

CASES CLOSED | AREA OF LAW

8,301 cases closed

Preventing homelessness 23.1%
Keeping families safe 11.5%
Working toward citizenship 11.2%
Economic stability 27.7%
Disability Law 9.3%
Protecting consumers 4.2%
Tax law 7.9%
Other 3.5%

LEADERS IN GIVING
($1,500–$2,499)
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Chris Bercaw
Tom Berg
Bertelson Law Office, P.A.
Steve and Jenni Bruess
Andrew M. Carlson
Michael and Jessica Cockson
Jan Conlin and Gene Goetz
Kevin Conneely
Amy Conners
Eric Cooperstein and Katie Oberle

Lighthouse Management Group, Inc.
Littler Mendelson P.C.
Anne Lockner and Brian Bernat
Andrew Luger and Ellen Goldberg Luger
John and Kris Mandler
Michael C. McCarthy
Daniel W. McDonald
Robert McLeod
Mitchell Hamline School of Law
Keith Moheban
Morgan Family Foundation
Nichols Kaster, PLLP
Tonja M. Orr
Pauly, DeVries Smith & Deffner, L.L.C.
William Z. Pentelovitch
Tom and Betsy Pfeifer
Piper Sandler Companies
Paul H. Ravich
Ravich Meyer Kirkman McGrath Nauman & Tansey, P.A.
Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation
Patrick J. Rooney
Andrea and Jim Rubenstein
Rust Consulting and Kinsella Media
Allen Saeks
SDK CPAs
David and Marina Schlesinger
Steve Schumeister
Schwebel, Goetz & Sieben, P.A.
Rachhana Srey
Susan Stabile and David Drueing
Michael P. Sullivan, Jr.
Target Corporation
Thom Ellingson, PLLP
Barbara Y. Welke and William R. Welke
Steven Wells and Jane Scallen
Matthew Woods
Julian C. Zebot
Rachel Zimmerman Scobie
PROJECT CARE, MLA’S HEALTH CARE NAVIGATOR PROGRAM, CONDUCTED

68

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

CONNECTING WITH

4,467

PEOPLE.

This includes our Facebook Live series which has three presentations monthly, one in English, one in Somali, and one in Spanish.

Joseph Dixon III
Sam Ellingson and Sam Khoroosi
Larry D. Espel and Cynthia M. Hasselbusch
Fafinski Mark & Johnson, P.A.
Mike Fargione
Jeanne M. Forneris
John Geelan
John and Joanne Gordon
Joe Green
Gregerson, Rosow, Johnson & Nilan, Ltd.
Brian Grogan
Cathy and Mark Haukedahl
Henson & Efron, P.A.
June Hoidal
Jake Holdreith
Hunegs, LeNeave & Kvas
Timothy Kelley and Tove Kooda
Katherine Kelly and Benjamin Zibble
Maureen Kucera-Walsh
Julie and Barry Landy
Chris Larus
Katherine A. Lawler
Ashleigh Leitch
Ed Levin and Nancy Miller-Levin
Accredited Investors Wealth Management
Sam and Sarah Lockner
Missy Marx
Timothy C. Matson
Sara Gullickson McGrane
Millennium Pharmaceuticals
Matching Gift Program
Lee Mitau and Karin Birkeland
Cyrus Morton
Keith Nelsen
Michael and Jane Nilan
Alexandra Olson
John Orenstein
Pentair
Sharon Roberg-Perez
David and Pam Rochlin
Betsy Schmiesing

Ronald James Schutz
Steven and Ellen Segal
Matthew Shors
Smith, Gendler, Shiell, Sheff, Ford & Maher, P.A.
Brock Specht
Christina Szitta
Tewksbury & Kerfeld, P.A.
Aaron Thom
Tom Tinkham
Twin Cities Business
Mavis Van Sambeek
John R. Wald and Marianne T. Remedios
John Wertz and Margie Schlangen
Penny Wheeler
Zamansky Professional Association

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($500–$1499)

3M
Aafedt, Forde, Gray, Monson & Hager, P.A.
Robert P. and Roberta L. Abdo
Shari and Ryan Aberle
John Albanese
Joseph Alexander and Bridget Manahan
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Apple, Inc.
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Baillon Thome Jozwiak & Wanta LLP
Mary Bang
Barna, Guzy & Steffen, Ltd.
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Ann Cofell
Lisa Cohen
Alison Colton
Conlin Law Firm LLC
PLANNED GIVING

Legacy for Justice

We thank the following people who made gifts to Legal Aid through estate planning. Planned gifts offer a way to support Legal Aid in its second century. If you made a planned gift, let us know so we can show our appreciation.

Anonymous
Stephen Befort
Bruce W. Blackburn*
Patricia Bloodgood and Christopher Cleveland
Jeff Brockmann and Shane Swanson
Stephen Bubul
J. Martin (Marty) Carlson
Rebecca A. Chaffee
Jan Conlin and Gene Goetz
Thomas J. Conlin and Kathleen Marron
Laura and Benjamin Cooper
Eric Cooperstein and Katie Oberle
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Hon. James and Katherine Dehn
Joe and Genie Dixon
James E. Dorsey and Dee Gaeddert
Jeff H. Eckland
Jim and Joy Erickson
Jim Farrell* and Barb Farrell
Michael and Mary Feichtinger
Frederick E. Finch
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The Deanne and John Greco Charitable Fund of the Lutheran Community Foundation
Susan and Michael Grimes
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Janice M. Symchych
Tom Tinkham
Richard and Lynn Voelbel
Warren D. Woessner and Iris C. Freeman
Brenda Wolfe
Rebecca Palmer and Lloyd Zimmerman

*Deceased
## BY THE NUMBERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASES CLOSED</th>
<th>OFFICES</th>
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<tr>
<td>DLC 9.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Willmar 6.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Cloud 40.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minneapolis 41.1%</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Pro Bono 2.9%</th>
<th>St. Cloud 40.7%</th>
<th>Minneapolis 41.1%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DLC 9.3%</td>
<td>Willmar 6.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Memoriam Tamia Cramer

Legal Aid mourns the loss of staff member Tamia Cramer, 1959–2020. When Tamia first interviewed for a position as a legal assistant at Legal Aid’s Cambridge office in 2002, she said, “I know hiring can be tough, but there’s no other person who will work harder or do better at this job.”

“We hired her,” says Deputy Director Ann Cofell. “And she was correct.”

Cramer was originally hired to help develop a collaborative project with the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. She built strong relationships with the tribal court and community centers and took on creative tasks and ideas that expanded the project beyond the original vision.

In 2005, Cramer was promoted to Supervising Legal Assistant. When the Mille Lacs project ended and Legal Aid’s Cambridge office closed, Cramer moved to Legal Aid’s St. Cloud office. She eventually became a paralegal in senior law, an outreach specialist, and coordinator of the Domestic Violence Court (DVC) Project. She traveled throughout central rural Minnesota, working with clients, educating the public, and building relationships.

“Tamia was very happy with the work she did with the Mille Lacs Band and proud of her DVC work,” her husband Michael Finnegan says. “It sounds simplistic, but she was happiest when she could help people.”

Cramer certainly succeeded in that. In her 18 years at Legal Aid, she helped over 8,000 people. If Legal Aid couldn’t take someone’s case, she always tried to find other avenues.

“She never complained,” Cofell remembers. “She handled challenging clients so professionally and was always looking at what she could do better. Tamia was selfless in the workplace, offering to share an office when we had a space crunch. She always kept a positive attitude, and we will miss her greatly.”

“Tamia explained everything really well. She was the best. The world needs more like her.”
—Legal Aid Client
MMLA SERVED

19,003 ADULTS AND CHILDREN IN 8,301 HOUSEHOLDS.
## LAW FIRMS GIVING TO THE FUND
Legal Aid is grateful to the following law firms supporting The Fund for Legal Aid at the level of $300 per lawyer in 2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Firm Name</th>
<th>Firm Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Ostlund</td>
<td>Maslon LLP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baer &amp; Louwagie P.A.</td>
<td>Merchant &amp; Gould P.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballard Spahr LLP</td>
<td>Moss &amp; Barnett, A Professional Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bremer Law, P.C.</td>
<td>Popham Law Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conlin Law Firm LLC</td>
<td>Ravich Meyer Kirkman McGrath</td>
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<tr>
<td>DLA Piper LLP</td>
<td>Nauman &amp; Tansey, P.A.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dorsey &amp; Whitney LLP</td>
<td>Robins Kaplan LLP</td>
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<td>Eckland &amp; Blando</td>
<td>Schwegman Lundberg Woessner</td>
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<td>Smith, Gendler, Shieff, Sheff, Ford &amp; Maher, P.A.</td>
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<td>Felhaber Larson Foundation</td>
<td>Stinson LLP</td>
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<td>Greene Espel PLLP</td>
<td>Van Dyck Law Firm</td>
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<td>Zelle LLP</td>
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<td>Zimmerman Reed LLP</td>
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<td>Mackenzie Law Office</td>
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</table>

Legal Aid is grateful to the following law firms with more than 50% of lawyers making individual gifts in support of The Fund in 2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Firm Name</th>
<th>Firm Name</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Nilan Johnson Lewis PA</td>
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<td>Popham Law Office</td>
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<td>Forsgren Fisher McCalmont</td>
<td>Robins Kaplan LLP</td>
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<td>DeMarea Tysver LLP</td>
<td>Schwegman Lundberg Woessner</td>
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<td>Greene Espel PLLP</td>
<td>The Law Office of Josh Jacobson, P.A.</td>
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<td>Gustafson Gluek PLLC</td>
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<td>Jones Day</td>
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Karen Beckman
Sonja Beddow
Alexander J. Beeby
Marvin Beekman
Stephen Befort
Toni A. Beit
Ginny Belden-Charles
Nathan Bemboom
Joni and Patrick Bennett
Jan Bensen
Eli Bensignor
Jess Berg
Maureen Kane Berg
Amy Bergeron
Charles Berquist
John F. Beukema
Joan Bibelhausen
Eli Biel
Eric Biel
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Frank Bliss
Nancy Blomgren
Carolyn and Stuart Bloom
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota
Joshua Bobich
Chelsea Bodin
Lukas Boehning
Monica Bogucki
Paul E. Bohnsack II
William Borchers
Gayle A. Borchert
BY THE NUMBERS

CASES CLOSED | RACE

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<td>Latin X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-racial</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>300</td>
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</tbody>
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Hon. John W. Borg
Mary E. Borgh
Bruce Borglum
Bard Borkon
Courtland Borle
Gene and Jane Borchoff
Tash Bottum
Jeff Bangsberg and Anita Boucher
Carolyn Boudreault
Scott Bourdeau
Della Boutrous
John and Kim Bowden
Debra Bowers
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Maureen Brady
Aimee Brantseg
Hon. Diane Bratvold
Kathy Bray
Maria Brekke
Caroline Bressman
Virginia Breyer
Peter Brickwedde
Diogenes Brito Vargas
JoAnn and Abby Brogden-Johnson
Michael and Tara Broich
The Brookes Family
Patricia Brophy
Aaron Brown
Dana Brown
Eric Brown
Hugh Brown
Rashanda Bruce
Meredith Bruster
Luke Bunge
Chelsea Bunge-Bollman
Hannah Burchill
Robert Burger
Ann Burkhart
Courtney L. Burks
Liz Burnett
Michael G. Burton
Saphira Bushinski
Rosemarie Reyes Butler
Erin Byom
Ezekiel Z. Byrd
Joyce Byrd
Darnell M. Cage
Rachel Calgaro
Gregor Calhan
Linda and Edward Calhan
Sam Calvert
Loran Calvin
Tyler D. Candee
Olivia Cares
Clayton Carlson
Thomas D. Carlson
Carpenter Law Firm PLLC
Louise Carpentier
David J. Carrier and Subia F. Beg
Hon. Phillip C. Carruthers
Anabel Cassady
Jason R.S. Cassady
Theodore Castillo
Thomas Caturia
Ava Cavaco
Delwayne Center
Abigail Cerra
Akira Cespedes Perez
Grace Chanin
Stephanie Chen
Carol Chomsky and Steven Liss
Lisa Chou
Kate Christensen
Jim and Sandy Christenson
Heidi Christianson
Timothy J. Christman
Megan Christner
Michelle Christy
Anu Chudasama
Hon. Margaret H. Chutich
David Cialkowski
James Hayden Clark III
Tarryl and Doug Clark
Sarah Clarke
Mark Clear
Hon. Edward J. Cleary
Lauren E. Clements
Tim Coakley
Kathy Cobb
Tom Coben
David and Stephanie Cofell
Jeanne Cofell and Patrick Dwyer
Rebekah Cohen
Deborah Cohen and Dan Goldner
Bradford W. Colbert
Clara Coleman
Susan M. Coler
Jenny Colich
Kelvin D. Collado
Emily Collins
Rory Collins
Edith Conekin-Tooze
Kate Conerton
T.J. Conley
Erin Conlin
Riley Conlin
Ryan Connell
Aleida Conners
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J. Kevin Costley
Patrick Courtemanche
Renee Courtney
Prentiss Cox and Marisa Katz
Robert A. Craig
Amanda Crain
Richard Crispino and Mary Suilmann
Nicole Flaherty Cropper
Caroline Crouse and Josh Leopold
Andy Crowder
Janna Crowley
ASSOCIATES’ CAMPAIGN

Thank you for a record-shattering year!

If there was ever a year that Legal Aid needed an extra boost of support, this was it. The associates came through with over $126,000. We’re so grateful for this flexible funding, and to the team of 81 captains from 61 firms who pulled together for justice in 2020.

TOP DONATING FIRMS

The Associates’ Campaign carries out a friendly competition to benefit Legal Aid’s clients. Firms are grouped by number of associates and compete for the top spots. Robins Kaplan LLP was again the engine that drove the Campaign, bringing in over $14,000 with a single-firm record of 10 Emerging Leaders.

This year’s top-donating firms in each category are:

35+ Associates
Robins Kaplan LLP

21-34 Associates
Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP

12-20 Associates
Nichols Kaster, PLLP

7-11 Associates
Best & Flanagan LLP

1-6 Associates
Gustafson Gluek PLLC

100% PARTICIPATION

Thank you to the associates from the firms with 100% participation in the 2020 One Hour of Sharing Associates’ Campaign.

Anthony Ostlund Baer & Louwagie P.A.
Barna, Guzy & Steffen, Ltd.
Bassford Remele, P.A.
Best & Flanagan LLP
Ciresi Conlin LLP
Cozen O’Connor
Eckland & Blando
Felhaber Larson
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Our clients spoke more than 23 languages, with the majority of non-English speakers speaking Somali or Spanish.

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MMLA attorneys provide legal advice and brief services to many of our clients. ABOUT 3500 CLIENTS A YEAR RECEIVE FULL REPRESENTATION FROM 60 ATTORNEYS — AVERAGING 65 CASES PER WEEK.
MMLA HELPED APPROXIMATELY
402
PEOPLE COMPLETE THE NON-FILER TOOL TO ACCESS THEIR STIMULUS CHECK AMOUNTING TO APPROXIMATELY $482,400 IN STIMULUS PAYMENTS.
Going Viral

Last spring, the COVID-19 pandemic brought most of Legal Aid’s outreach efforts to a screeching halt.

Meanwhile, Minnesotans still needed to know their rights and find accurate legal information. Legal Aid turned to Facebook (FB) Live to continue providing information and self-advocacy support to the community.

Aisha Servaty, Supervising Attorney and Director of Legal Aid’s Low Income Taxpayer Clinic (LITC), kicked off Legal Aid’s new FB Live tool in April of 2020. In a 23-minute presentation, she broke down the CARES Act and COVID-19 stimulus payments, with information about the non-filer tax tool and deadlines. She also reviewed the services provided by LITC and fielded questions from the public.

“Facebook is a social media platform that taxpayers tend to be familiar with,” says Aisha Servaty. “It’s a good way to reach out and make people aware that they’re not alone and that information and resources are available.”

In September, Legal Aid’s St. Cloud office started an ongoing series: Because Your Health Matters: The Expected, the Unexpected, and Everything in Between, in English, Spanish, and Somali. Topics covered so far have included Coverage for COVID-19, Affordable Care Coverage, and MNSure Open Enrollment.

In October, Minnesota Disability Law Center Attorney Justin Page provided voting information in a FB Live session called Voting Rights for Individuals with Disabilities. December brought a FB Live introduction to presentations from the Willmar office focused on senior law topics such as Medicare and Power of Attorney.

In 2021, Servaty will be hosting a new LITC series in time for tax season. The goal is to equip taxpayers with the necessary information to advocate for themselves and ensure their tax returns are prepared correctly.

“Live, virtual streaming gives taxpayers an opportunity to bring questions and get answers,” Servaty says. “People can also watch the videos later and still get the information. In some ways it’s actually better than traditional in-person education and outreach because it eliminates barriers such as time, location, and language. We want to make sure Minnesotans know the LITC exists and is able to help them.”
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INTAKE AND PHONE CALLS DURING THE PANDEMIC WHEN THE PHYSICAL OFFICE WAS CLOSED

APRIL THROUGH DECEMBER

58,961
A 50% increase year over year.
Legal Aid Annual Report
2020

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