



LEGAL AID  
CHICAGO

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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# AIDING PEOPLE *together*

EQUAL  
JUSTICE  
STARTS  
HERE



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# DEAR *friends*,

## AT LEGAL AID CHICAGO, WE BELIEVE

that people should not be denied equal justice simply because they cannot afford a lawyer. Legal Aid Chicago enables our at-risk clients to obtain adequate housing, employment, health care, education, personal safety, and other basic necessities through the legal system.

Legal Aid Chicago not only wins cases (although we do have a 95% success rate). Legal Aid Chicago also helps change our clients' lives, by aiding people *together*, through ensuring equal justice for all. (More about the "aiding people *together*" theme in a moment.)

Our work is about keeping a family in their home and off of the streets; securing earned public benefits for Veterans to help them get back on their feet; protecting a mom and her children from an abuser; protecting a senior from losing her home to a financial scam; and obtaining an Individualized Education Plan for a special needs child, so the child can be successful in school. And when we help one individual, we invariably are helping all the people who interact with that individual, including the community in which they live. This is why we are committed to this work, and why **aiding people together** is the theme of this year's annual report.

The team at Legal Aid Chicago consists of over 230 employees: including over 110 attorneys, 69 paralegals, and 50 support staff. Legal Aid Chicago has seven practice groups with expertise in virtually every area of poverty law. Our staff takes a multi-disciplinary approach to identify the legal issues that must be resolved to fully address our clients' challenges. We also have social workers on staff who can help clients with counseling, make referrals to address non-legal problems, and assist with advocacy for our clients. Our team also has many critical partners, including the community groups who refer clients to us, who identify issues of concern for their community members, and with whom we work to develop services to address those concerns, among other partnership efforts.

Our approach is holistic. Sometimes winning a single case can help a client meet a serious challenge, like stopping an illegal eviction. But often the client's challenge has multiple facets, necessitating a multi-faceted response. For example, a client may need help obtaining appropriate medical treatment, but if the housing condition that caused the problem is not corrected, the health problem will persist. Or a protective order might be necessary to keep a mother and her child safe from domestic violence, but the child also needs an Individualized Education Plan to succeed in school.



In 2022, we served over 20,000 clients and their families. The total financial value of the outcomes we achieved for our clients dramatically increased, from \$18M in 2021 to \$27M in 2022. These financial outcomes included increased assets of \$7.1M (such as protecting a home from foreclosure); increased income of \$18M (such as applying for and receiving food stamps and other public benefits); and decreased debt of \$2.2M (such as eliminating debt incurred by an abusive spouse). Notably, our team also worked on many cases where the value of the outcomes cannot readily be quantified, such as cases where we secured protective orders to stop domestic violence or obtained Individualized Education Plans to help children with special needs. Our housing practice addressed the most cases of any group, due in part to the end of the eviction moratorium and ongoing repercussions from the pandemic; it was followed closely by our expungement/sealing and our public benefits practices.

In the following pages, you will read about:

- ✓ How Legal Aid Chicago addresses the critical civil areas of poverty law through our legal work (and seven practice groups), our diverse partnerships and community partners, and other special initiatives;
- ✓ Real-life examples of people we have helped in the past year;

- ✓ Our geographic impact and specific demographics of the people whom we assist;
- ✓ Our ground-breaking Medical Legal Partnership with the University of Chicago;
- ✓ A well-deserved Volunteer Spotlight on David Yen, who was a staff attorney here from 1987 until his retirement in 2013, and who in the ten years since his retirement has been volunteering with us; and
- ✓ A new section debuting this year: **In Our Own Words**, where you will hear directly from our staff in their own words about what makes Legal Aid Chicago such a special organization and what particularly resonates with them about the work that we do.

With this report, we invite you to learn more about our people, our work, and our clients. If you already are a supporter, thank you! We hope you will see in this report that your contributions have been effectively utilized.

If you are not yet a supporter, we hope you will consider joining our mission to provide equal justice for all to thousands of our neighbors throughout Cook County and the Chicagoland community.

Thank you, in advance,

**LEFT TO RIGHT:** John N. Gallo, Chief Executive Officer & Executive Director, Robert Kriss, Board of Directors, Co-Chair, and Megan Poetzel, Board of Directors, Co-Chair.

# OUR *impact* 2022 Organizational Statistics

**14,300+** Individual legal matters handled  
(includes brief advice as well as extended representation).

Hours of direct case activity logged on individual client cases.  **122,760+ HOURS**

Total number of individuals impacted (including clients and their families). **22,400+** 

**\$27,329,000**   
Total financial impact in increased assets, increased income, and decreased debt.

**\$19,000**  
Average financial impact per client.



**1,000+** Individuals whose health was improved by accessing health and nutrition benefits, including Medicaid, SNAP, etc.



**3,000+** Criminal records expunged or sealed  
(including both juveniles and adults).

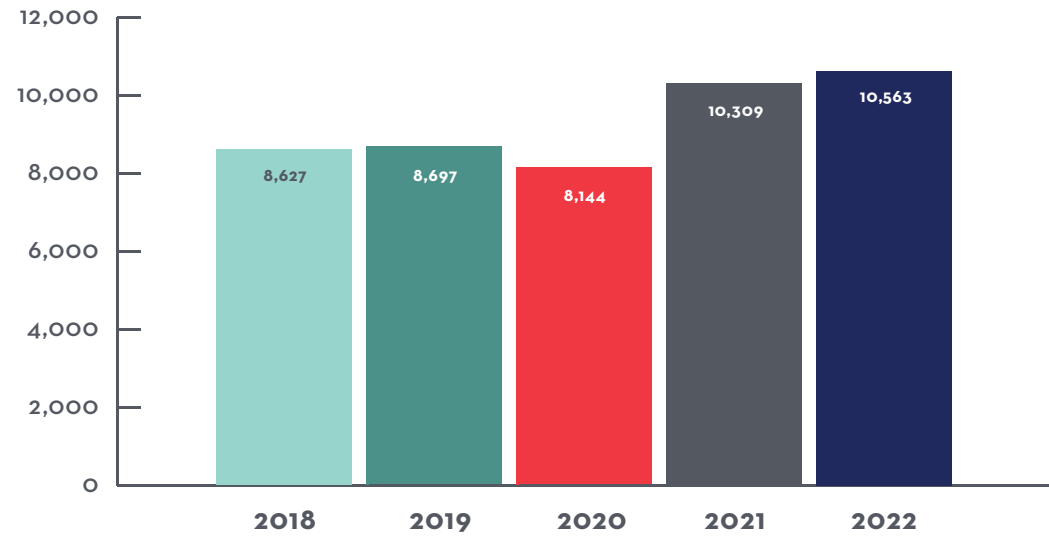
**1,000+ PEOPLE** who avoided homelessness by avoiding eviction/foreclosure or obtaining/retaining subsidized housing.

**183** Orders of Protection obtained or modified for survivors of sexual and domestic violence/abuse.





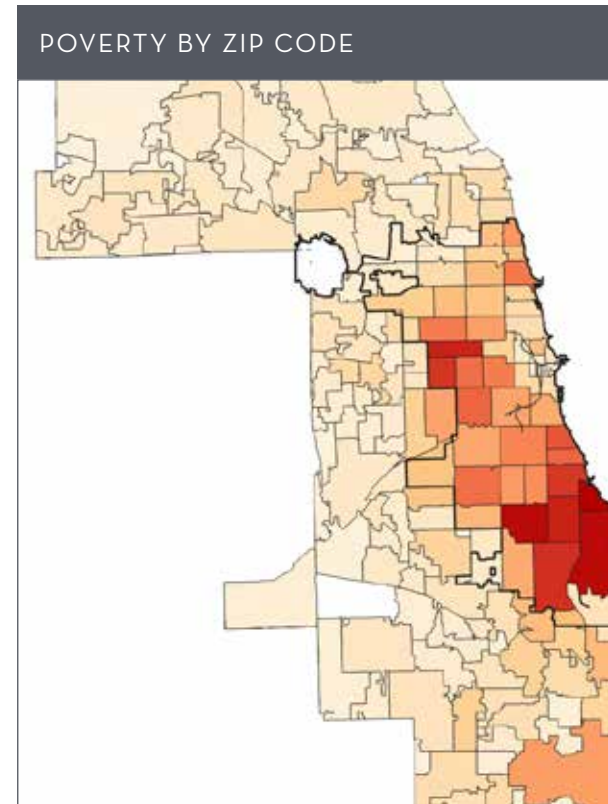
### CASES OPENED EACH YEAR



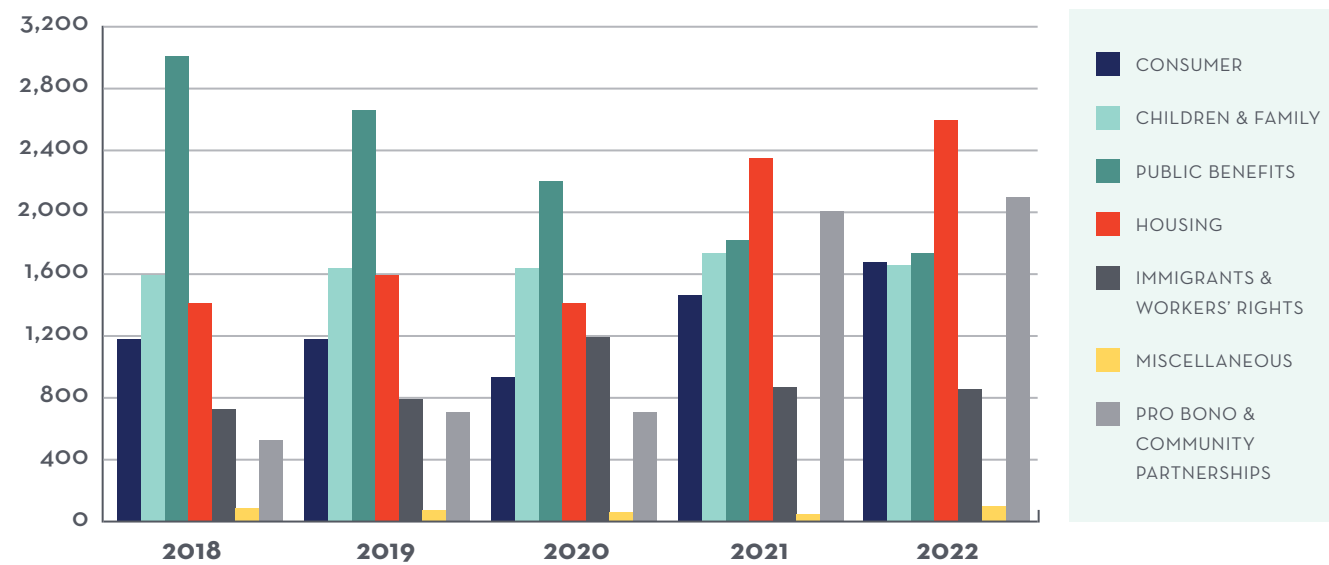
Legal Aid Chicago opened more cases in 2022 than in any of the past five years.

### OUR GEOGRAPHIC IMPACT

Legal Aid Chicago's commitment is clear: we provide life-altering legal assistance to our most vulnerable neighbors, and we never charge for our services. As the maps presented here illustrate, our impact is concentrated in the communities that experience the greatest need. **ZIP codes in red represent the highest concentrations of case activity and poverty, respectively, in Cook County.**



### CASES OPENED BY PRACTICE AREAS EACH YEAR

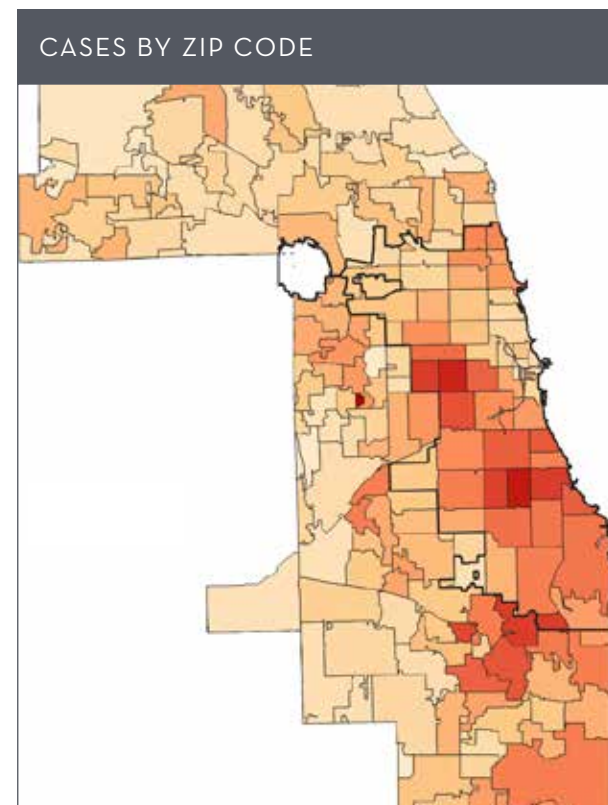


Case types also shifted in 2022 to reflect our clients' changing legal needs. In particular, housing issues increased dramatically. Our Pro Bono & Community Partnerships group also expanded its work, taking on hundreds of cases related to criminal records expungement/sealing.

### CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2022, Legal Aid Chicago made equal justice a reality for tens of thousands of people across Cook County, with a particular focus on underserved populations. The following demographics represent clients whose cases were closed in 2022:

- 100%** In poverty or otherwise at-risk
- 64%** Women
- 33%** People living with a disability
- 15%** Seniors
- 6%** Veterans





## HOUSING

At Legal Aid Chicago, we believe everyone deserves access to a safe and affordable home, free from discrimination. Our Housing Practice Group (HPG) is dedicated to housing advocacy, protecting housing rights, and preserving stability of residents across Cook County. HPG staff provide legal assistance in cases that jeopardize the security of homes. We also defend the rights of tenants by preventing wrongful evictions and avert terminations of subsidized housing. In addition, we challenge housing discrimination and provide support to vulnerable clients, including survivors of gender-based violence and sexual harassment.



### CLIENT STORY



Many landlords impose blanket policies barring all individuals with criminal records. However, these policies have a disparate impact on Black and Hispanic individuals and therefore violate the Fair Housing Act (FHA).

In one recent case, we represented a tenant who was denied housing due to a single misdemeanor record. We assisted this tenant in negotiating a settlement, and in the end, she was awarded \$15,000 in settlement funds.

In another case, our team helped a tenant named Gabriella, whose daughter suffered severe asthma attacks. These attacks were exacerbated by the mold Gabriella discovered in her new apartment shortly after moving in. Our staff met with Gabriella and drafted a reasonable accommodation letter, requesting a transfer to a different (mold-free) apartment. **As a result, Gabriella and her family successfully relocated to a new unit, and her daughter's health has greatly improved.**



## LONG-TERM CARE

The Long-Term Care Practice Group at Legal Aid Chicago supports residents of long-term care facilities, including seniors and individuals with disabilities. Our staff advocates for residents facing various challenges, such as quality of care issues, involuntary discharge, financial abuse, and Medicaid concerns. Additionally, we conduct educational efforts to raise awareness about residents' rights.



Our Long-Term Care staff.

### CLIENT STORY



Janine hoped that her mother Sharon would receive the best medical attention possible as she approached the end of her life in hospice care. Imagine Janine's shock when the nursing home expressed plans to move her mother to a less-favorable area of the facility with fewer staff members. Distraught, Janine called Legal Aid Chicago's Long-Term Care Practice Group.

She did not want much; she simply wanted her mother to stay in her current room, where she could transition in peace. It was the only

room she had occupied, and she was familiar with many of the staff on the floor. The day before the change took place, Volunteer Ombudsman Donna Fox began to advocate for both Janine and Sharon.

According to Janine, Donna "swooped in to save the day like a bulldog with angel wings." **As a result, Sharon was allowed to remain in her room, and Janine took comfort knowing that her mother would have a peaceful and dignified place to live during her final days.**

### CLIENT STORY



In 2017, forty-seven underpaid and overworked factory employees in Illinois petitioned the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) for an election, seeking representation to redress their unlawful mistreatment. Before the election could occur, however, the factory owners required all workers to verify their work authorization at City Hall. Many employees, afraid of the threat posed by immigration enforcement, never appeared and were fired in the following days.

Thankfully, ARISE, a Chicago-based workers' advocacy center, flagged this case to Legal Aid Chicago's Immigrant and Worker's Rights Practice Group. Our team argued on the workers'

behalf, successfully persuading the NLRB that the employer had committed obstruction of justice and witness tampering, crimes that can qualify a non-citizen for a U visa.

Filing a visa can take a tremendous amount of time. Fortunately, our team received assistance from 35 hard-working pro-bono attorneys from across Chicago, who partnered with Legal Aid Chicago in helping these clients. **As of today, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has finally approved the majority of the applications.** Upon hearing about his visa, one client said, "Yes! This is the best news I've ever had!"

## IMMIGRANTS AND WORKERS' RIGHTS

The Immigrants and Workers' Rights Practice Group (IWR) is committed to supporting vulnerable workers and communities, providing a range of legal services in the areas of employment, immigration, human trafficking, and the protection of migrant farmworkers. This includes challenging discrimination and retaliation, seeking redress for wage theft, and other worker protections. Our immigration and human trafficking work focuses on victim advocacy and assisting immigrant crime survivors, asylum seekers, and survivors of labor and sex trafficking. We also provide services to migrant, seasonal, and foreign visa workers through statewide outreach and claims addressing housing, employment, human trafficking, and health and safety laws.



## CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Legal Aid Chicago’s Children and Families Practice Group (CFPG) is dedicated to safeguarding the well-being and stability of families in the Chicagoland area. For example, the CFPG team helps victims of domestic abuse or sexual violence obtain protective orders and assists clients in divorce and custody matters, ensuring fair distribution of marital assets and advocating for custody arrangements that prioritize the child’s best interests. The group also advocates for students’ rights to fair and inclusive education and works to protect families from unwarranted actions by the Department of Children and Family Services.



### CLIENT STORY



Every day, Legal Aid Chicago fights to preserve families and keep children safe in the care of their loved ones. Last year, for example, a 4-year-old boy was taken from the custody of his mother, Shania, when she was briefly hospitalized due to depression. Shania was discharged after only two days with a positive prognosis and a hopeful outlook. Nevertheless, a judge took protective custody of her son and forced him into the foster care system. Shania and her son were incredibly close, and the separation was

devastating for them both. Desperate to regain custody, Shania connected with several private attorneys who were eager to help but lacked the knowledge needed to navigate a complex child protection case. Supervisory Attorney Melissa Staas happily agreed to extend her expertise as co-counsel. In less than 2 months, the judge returned the child to the care of his mother. **Shania and her son can now begin the process of healing and rebuilding their lives together.**

### CLIENT STORY



In 2021, Christopher suffered a stroke and was paralyzed on his right side, losing his independence. He could no longer work and lived in a second-floor apartment with no elevator, surviving on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and the goodwill of friends. Unsure about his future, Christopher contacted Legal Aid Chicago. Fortunately, he was eligible for Aid to the Aged, Blind, and Disabled (AABD) cash assistance. Christopher’s attorney helped him apply, but he was

initially denied because he owned life insurance. Fortunately, his lawyer knew that his policy was exempt and filed an appeal with proof of this exception. Under normal circumstances, AABD cash is less than \$100 a month. However, because Christopher used a wheelchair, the benefit was multiplied to over \$600, covering all his rent, and he was given months of back pay totaling over \$3,000. **Thanks to his attorney, Christopher can now search for a first-floor apartment and feel safe and secure in his home.**

## PUBLIC BENEFITS

The Public Benefits Practice Group (PBPG) is dedicated to protecting access to essential benefits and ensuring that each individual and family in Cook County has enough to meet their basic human needs. Through holistic legal advocacy, they assist clients in obtaining a range of benefits, including SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), Medical Assistance (Medicaid, Medicare), SSI (Supplemental Security Income), Social Security, Veterans Benefits, AABD Cash (Aid for the Aged, Blind, Disabled), TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), and Crime Victims Compensation from the State of Illinois.





## CONSUMER

The Consumer Practice Group (CPG) is dedicated to helping clients navigate the complexities of financial security, protect their assets from collection, and take control of their financial futures. Our CPG attorneys provide assistance in various areas, including bankruptcy, foreclosure, predatory lending, home repair, vehicle repossession, student loans, and debt collection.

We prioritize homeownership preservation, fighting unfair debt collection and consumer fraud, and protecting older adults from exploitation. Additionally, CPG houses our Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic.

### CLIENT STORY

→ An unlucky mishap can sometimes turn a happy occasion into a legal nightmare, as Naomi experienced when she bought a car. She had purchased insurance, but when she got into an accident and totaled her new vehicle, the insurer refused to cover the loss, claiming that Naomi had failed to inform them of her teenage daughter's learner's permit.

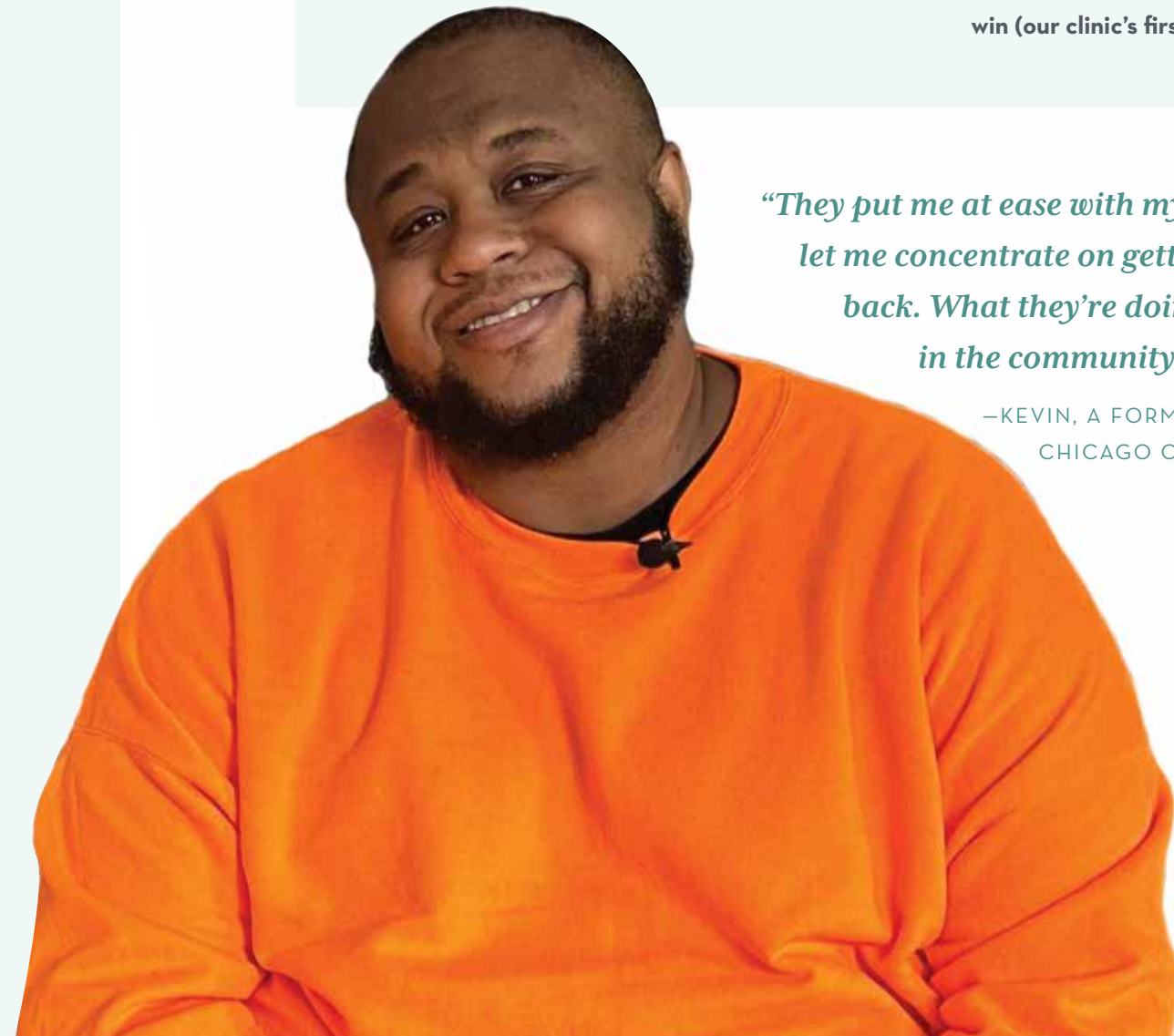
However, the insurance agency had never asked about Naomi's family during the application process, and her daughter had never even driven the vehicle. We immediately drafted a complaint against both the insurance

company and the body shop where the damaged car sat, racking up \$12,000 in storage fees. Our staff then represented Naomi in a formal hearing, putting forward a compelling argument. The arbitrator ultimately concluded that the insurance company violated its contract, as well as the Illinois Insurance Code and the Illinois Consumer Fraud Act. As a result, Naomi was awarded \$10,000 from the insurance company and the body shop's fees were canceled. **Naomi was thrilled with this outcome and looks forward to purchasing another vehicle with the proceeds.**

### CLIENT STORY, LOW-INCOME TAXPAYER CLINIC

→ Legal Aid Chicago's Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic helps individuals settle tax disputes, solve cases of identity theft, and more. Last year, Francisco contacted the Clinic after the IRS alleged that he owed over \$12,000 in unpaid taxes. As a rideshare driver, Francisco knew that driving expenses qualified as eligible deductions. However, when Francisco filed his taxes, the IRS disallowed his deductions and applied an additional 20% penalty for the alleged errors.

Francisco sought help from the Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic. Francisco's lawyer used records from the rideshare companies to demonstrate that most of the IRS denials were incorrect. After filing a petition in U.S. Tax Court, Francisco's attorney worked with the IRS Office of Appeals, hoping to resolve the case before it was heard. He successfully argued that the deductions were accurate and persuaded the Appeals Office to waive the penalty, **reducing Francisco's tax burden by nearly 90% and securing a win (our clinic's first!) in Tax Court.**



*“They put me at ease with my legal issues and let me concentrate on getting my health back. What they’re doing for the people in the community is amazing!”*

—KEVIN, A FORMER LEGAL AID CHICAGO CONSUMER CLIENT

## PRO-BONO & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Legal Aid Chicago's Pro Bono and Community Partnerships Practice Group (PCG) collaborates with dedicated volunteers and pro bono attorneys. We leverage connections with local partners (both individual and institutional) to provide expert services across a wide range of legal issues. In particular, PCG handles all of our criminal records expungement cases, facilitates legal help desks, organizes community engagement and outreach, and hosts virtual and in-person legal clinics across Cook County.



## IT IS EASY TO “REMEMBER” LEGAL AID CHICAGO IN YOUR ESTATE PLANS!

*There are many ways to include Legal Aid Chicago in your estate plan, like designating us:*

- ✓ a specific dollar amount named in your will,
- ✓ a percentage of your estate described in your trust,
- ✓ as a beneficiary of your retirement account, a donor advised fund, and/or a life insurance policy.

If you would like any more information about doing so, OR have already remembered us in your estate plan, please contact:

Jen Miller, Chief External Relations Officer  
jemiller@legalaidchicago.org  
(312) 347-8381

**Our staff, our clients, and their families cannot thank you enough for remembering us!**



### CLIENT STORY



Each year, hundreds of clients meet with Legal Aid Chicago attorneys and pro-bono volunteers to receive free legal advice at one of our walk-in community clinics. In late 2019, one of these clients, Emmanuel, attended our Jose de Diego clinic in Humboldt Park, seeking assistance in obtaining a new birth certificate from Puerto Rico. His original document, he explained, contained an error, misspelling the name he had gone by for over 60 years.

We first worked to change Emmanuel's name in Illinois and then contacted a Puerto Rican law firm that helped navigate legal intricacies unique to the territory. At this point, COVID-19 hit the world, and

Puerto Rico was devastated by multiple, historic hurricanes.

Nevertheless, we continued to partner with the firm in Puerto Rico to advance Emmanuel's case. After three years, our team finally succeeded in securing Emmanuel's new Certificado de Nacimiento (Birth Certificate).

In an email to our partners in Puerto Rico, one of our volunteer attorneys wrote: "My thanks go to you and to our partners at Legal Aid Chicago for introducing me to Emmanuel, and for giving me the opportunity to serve this most deserving client. He could not possibly be more pleased or more grateful for this wonderful outcome."



## Changing the Lives OF SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE'S LIVES WITH A CRITICAL PARTNERSHIP



Ben Weinberg, Pro Bono Partner at Dentons US LLP, is no stranger to Legal Aid Chicago's work and how it can dramatically alter the lives of its clients. In fact, Ben started his legal career working in Legal Aid Chicago's Englewood office, where he handled many domestic violence

(DV) cases. These cases and potential legal ramifications stayed with him long after he left to clerk for Seventh Circuit Court Judge Bauer, and later at Jenner and Block, where he was a partner in commercial litigation.

In 2008, Ben became Pro Bono Partner at Dentons. Here, he saw an opportunity to make a real difference by encouraging pro bono participation not only in his own firm but also by working with community not-for-profits.

One of the first pro bono projects that Ben developed was with Legal Aid Chicago. As a result of the mortgage foreclosure crisis, Legal Aid Chicago lawyers were concerned about the tax consequences for clients whose mortgages were forgiven or written down. Ben organized a system whereby Dentons' tax lawyers would advise Legal Aid Chicago lawyers on the relevant tax implications for their clients.

This project lasted long enough for the Legal Aid Chicago lawyers to develop their own tax expertise sufficient to represent clients without pro bono assistance.

In addition, from his past experiences, Ben had observed that the Illinois Domestic Violence Act was being misapplied in DV trial courts. As a result, DV clients would often have Orders of Protections (OP) denied under the Illinois Domestic Violence Act, when according to the correct interpretation of the law, relevant facts of the case, and/or prior case law, the OP should have been granted. To help correct this, in 2013, Ben helped create the Order of Protection Appeals Project by partnering with Legal Aid Chicago and Ascend Justice, a local DV rights not-for-profit that helps provide client referrals.

With this Project, Dentons attorneys and staff partner with Legal Aid Chicago by appealing OPs that have been wrongly denied by the trial court. First, Legal Aid Chicago's Children and Families Services Practice Group (CFPG) identifies through a referral process clients whose OPs have been incorrectly denied, and then sends a memo to Ben, identifying the issues at the lower case level. Among other invaluable things, Dentons generously supplies the financial resources (including ordering transcripts from the lower court's proceedings, which can cost thousands of dollars alone). Dentons and Legal Aid Chicago CFPG attorneys then handle the appeals and the next steps together.

**"The work is being done by incredible Dentons and Legal Aid Chicago lawyers and staff working alongside each other. As this project has unfolded, we have seen how to best leverage our skills and resources to achieve maximum results for our clients,"** Ben says with pride.

This fantastic partnership clearly shows in the results. Since the beginning of the project ten years ago, Dentons and Legal Aid Chicago have handled approximately two appeals a year and have a 90% success rate of OPs being successfully granted at the appeals level. The Project has led to three published opinions that have substantially improved access to justice in DV courtrooms. Most recently, a pro bono team from Dentons along with Legal

Aid Chicago represented a DV survivor who was wrongfully denied a Plenary Order of Protection, despite clear evidence that she had been abused. In August 2022, the First District Appellate Court reversed the trial court's denial, resulting in a victory for survivors across the state. *Richardson v. Booker*, 2022 IL App (1st) 211055.

"This is one of the most effective pro bono projects I have ever seen," Ben says. "Our appellate work regularly results in published cases that are some of the leading cases interpreting the Illinois Domestic Violence Act, not to mention the DV survivors whose lives we are changing. This Project truly captures what pro bono should be, and together, we magnify the impact of legal aid."

*"We cannot emphasize enough the importance of the Richardson case's outcome. We are now seeing Illinois trial court judges citing this case regularly in these types of DV cases. This incredible end result would not have been possible without our fantastic Dentons partnership!"*

Teresa Sullivan, General Counsel & Benna Crawford,  
Director - Children and Families Practice Group.



## MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIPS ARE *flourishing* AT LEGAL AID CHICAGO!

Legal Aid Chicago is pioneering a unique model of service, known as **Medical Legal Partnerships**, to address the intersecting challenges clients face with a more holistic and compassionate approach. For instance, a patient with a disability may be recovering at a participating medical facility while fighting against employment and housing discrimination, as well as denial of social security benefits. Connecting this client to the appropriate legal resources can make the difference between survival and further decline into poverty.

In 2022, we partnered with the University of Chicago Medicine Trauma Center to launch our newest MLP: *Recovery Legal Care*. This MLP offers a broad range of public benefits assistance to patients who are admitted for violent injuries. **It also represents the first MLP in the country to focus on gun violence, based on research indicating that people receiving public benefits are less likely to become victims or perpetrators of gun violence.**

“MLPs are a delivery mechanism for stabilizing resources, such as public benefits, and a way to spread knowledge of our complex legal systems,” said Equal Justice Works Fellow, Attorney Carly Loughran, who spearheaded this partnership. MLPs integrate the unique expertise of lawyers and legal advocates into healthcare systems, helping clinicians and violence recovery specialists address structural problems that affect entire communities.

The other two Legal Aid MLPs are the Health Justice Project, in partnership with Erie Family Health Center; and the Health Law Clinic at Loyola University and Health Forward/Salud Adelante, in partnership with Cook County Health. These two MLPs serve a broader population of patients

needing general medical care, whereas the Recovery Legal Care MLP focuses on victims of gunshot wounds.

*Recovery Legal Care* is composed of three attorneys and one paralegal, working in tandem with trauma surgeons and social workers from UChicago to provide resources and assist victims of gun violence in obtaining public benefits. Such timely assistance helps patients maintain their homes and employment while recovering from traumatic injuries. As the team grows, they hope to provide additional services related to expungement, education, and domestic violence, which has a disproportionate impact on low-income communities in Chicago’s South Side. This program is set to run for five years, serving an estimated 150 patients within the first year and building a model for other trauma centers across the country.

In the words of Mona Elgindy, Supervisory Attorney in the Public Benefits Practice Group: “We have the best of both worlds with these partnerships. Doctors, lawyers, clinicians, and other staff are working together in a multi-disciplinary environment that puts our clients and their needs at the core. We have the capacity to truly transform lives here.”



Equal Justice Works Fellow, Attorney Carly Loughran, with UChicago Medicine Violence Recovery Specialist, Christine Goggins.



## OUR 2022 *donors*

We regret we cannot list every donor, but we extend our sincere thanks to each and every one! (This list reflects cumulative gifts of \$1,000 and more received between January 1, 2022 and December 30, 2022.)

### \$100,000+

AgeOptions  
Alphawood Foundation  
The Chicago Bar Foundation  
Kirkland & Ellis LLP  
Sidley Austin LLP

### \$50,000+

Baker McKenzie  
DLA Piper LLP  
Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP  
Polk Bros. Foundation

### \$25,000+

Nader and Sarah Boulos  
Robert E. Gallagher Charitable Trust  
Greenberg Traurig LLP  
Jenner & Block LLP  
Latham & Watkins LLP  
Mayer Brown LLP  
McDermott Will & Emery LLP  
PharmaCann Inc.  
Burt and Sheli Rosenberg  
Salvi, Schostok & Pritchard P.C.  
Charles & M.R. Shapiro  
Foundation, Inc.  
Winston & Strawn LLP

### \$15,000+

Bobbi and James Anderson  
Carlene M. Blumenthal Estate  
Chapman and Cutler LLP  
Theodore T. Chung  
Dentons US LLP  
Discover Financial Services  
Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP  
Virxhini Gjonzeneli  
Jaime L.M. Jones

Robert J. Kriss  
Catherine M. Masters  
Northern Trust Co.  
Paul Hastings LLP  
Megan B. Poetzel  
Polsinelli  
Reed Smith LLP  
Riley Safer Holmes & Cancila LLP  
Patrick A. Salvi II  
The Virginia Lee Shirley  
Private Foundation  
Holly Snow and Christopher Allen  
Annie S. Terry  
White & Case LLP

### \$10,000+

ArentFox Schiff  
Jon and Susan Ballis  
Bartlit Beck LLP  
Daniel Campbell  
Katherine Jahnke Dale  
J. Gregory Deis  
Eimer Stahl LLP  
Pat and Jenni Fitzgerald  
Brian Haussmann  
Ted and Dawn Helwig  
Carolyn B. Hilliker  
Jones Day  
Kenneth P. & Susan Kahn Morrison  
Timothy D. Kincaid  
King & Spalding  
Richard F. Klawiter  
Marmon Holdings, Inc.  
Thomas and Kymberly Marrinson  
Anne Mitchell  
Ontra  
Pritzker Traubert Foundation  
Ben and Nancy Randall

Ropes & Gray LLP  
Thiry-O'Leary Foundation  
The Trustmark Foundation

### \$5,000+

Accenture  
Akerman LLP  
AlixPartners  
Anonymous  
Augeo Affinity Marketing  
Barack Ferrazzano Kirschbaum &  
Nagelberg LLP  
Baxter Healthcare Corporation  
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Jackson Lewis  
Johnson Farms

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Jean and Peter Lawrence  
Local South Foundation  
Loeb & Loeb LLP  
David and Rachel Lurie  
Barbara W. Mayers  
Daniel and Jen McElroy  
McGuireWoods LLP  
McMaster-Carr Supply Company  
Neal Gerber & Eisenberg LLP  
Novack and Macey LLP  
Eileen Pembroke  
Perkins Coie LLP  
Related Midwest  
Douglas B. Sanders  
Saul Ewing  
Alan Schriesheim  
Seyfarth Shaw LLP  
Siemens  
Skadden Arps Slate  
Meagher & Flom LLP  
Smith, Gambrell & Russell, LLP  
Sterling Bay Companies LLC  
Taft Law  
Nancy A. Temple  
Kristine Trustey  
Tully & Associates Ltd.  
United Airlines  
Vedder Price P.C.  
Diana and Peter White  
Helen E. Witt  
Ami N. Wynne  
Sheldon T. Zenner & Ellen J. Morgan  
Zurich North America

### \$2,500+

Donald Allen  
Uma Amuluru

Robert and Carrie Andalman  
Anonymous  
Blank Rome LLP  
Mark C. Brown  
CLAYCO  
John and Maria Crawford Scott  
Carrie Dolan  
Francis Beidler Foundation  
FTI Consulting  
Ben Ganellen  
Thomas Geraghty  
Maximilian Gibbons and  
Andria Cantu  
William J. Gibbons  
Illinois Trial Lawyers Association  
Susan K. Laing  
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## DONORS SPOTLIGHT

# Heather Ross and Nora Zuckermann

Legal Aid Chicago is proud to recognize Heather Ross and Nora Zuckermann, two former Legal Aid Chicago employees who have continued to support our mission as donors while pursuing pioneering careers in a unique area of the law.



**LEFT TO RIGHT:** Heather Ross and Nora Zuckerman, founders of Ross & Zuckerman LLP.

Nora and Heather, founders of Ross & Zuckerman LLP, began working at Legal Aid Chicago in the late 1990s, when our name was Legal Assistance Foundation (LAF). At that time, before the development of practice groups, LAF attorneys served as generalists, assisting clients across a range of legal issues. Nora and Heather took on cases involving divorce, foreclosure, unemployment, eviction, special education, and much more, thus exemplifying the passion and expertise that drive our mission today.

The connections we build at Legal Aid Chicago often last a lifetime. In Heather and Nora's case, working at LAF led to a partnership that would change the course of their lives. While working at LAF, both Nora and Heather navigated reproductive challenges in their path to become

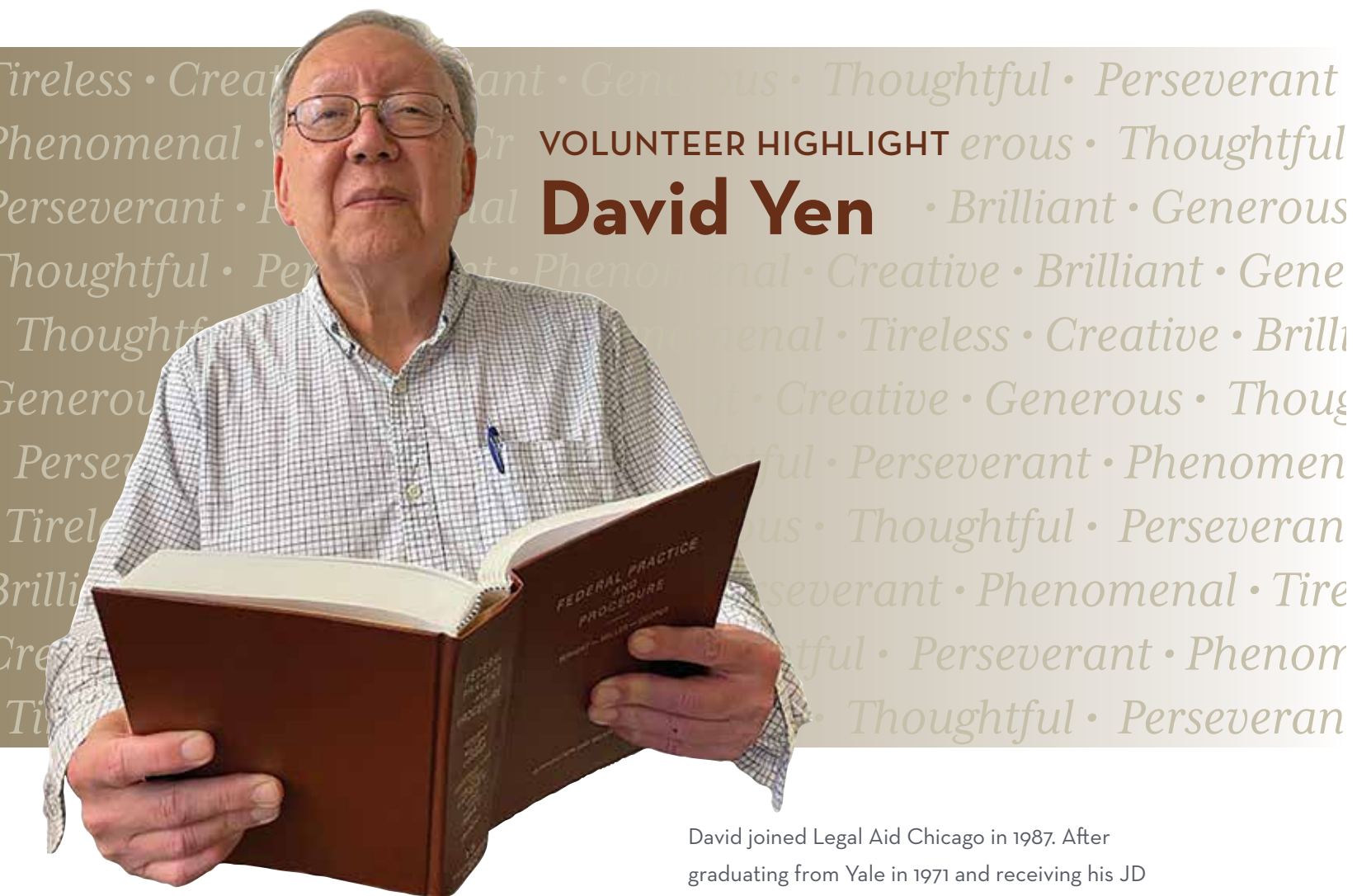
parents. After having children, they decided to unite their experiences to support other prospective parents and growing families. Together, they founded Ross & Zuckerman LLP, a private law firm specializing in reproductive law and alternative family building.

At the time, reproductive technologies and alternative family-building strategies, like surrogacy and in-vitro fertilization, were growing in popularity. However, laws and legal services related to these practices struggled to keep pace. Early on, Nora and Heather relied on the skills they learned at LAF to develop their practice. Today, they are well-known in their field, representing a range of clients including intended parents, egg donors, sperm donors, embryo donors, and surrogates.

Despite their busy lives and successful careers, Nora and Heather still find time to give back, as both donors and volunteers. In their words:

*"We understand the crucial impact Legal Aid Chicago has for some of the most vulnerable individuals and families in the Chicagoland area. Legal Aid Chicago provides advocacy with dignity and compassion and clients receive the highest quality legal representation. For all of these reasons and more, Ross & Zuckerman LLP is incredibly proud to support Legal Aid Chicago."*

*Thank you to Heather and Nora for your outstanding advocacy and for your ongoing support of Legal Aid Chicago's mission, both personally and professionally!*



## VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

## David Yen

These are just a few words that describe David Yen and what he means to Legal Aid Chicago and our clients. For the last 40 years, David has **tirelessly** worked to ensure that those in need have a shoulder to lean on and an experienced voice to guide them through some of the most stressful times of their lives.

David joined Legal Aid Chicago in 1987. After graduating from Yale in 1971 and receiving his JD from the University of Pennsylvania, David built an impressive record of dedication and expertise at legal assistance organizations in Alabama and upstate New York. From his first day on staff with us, David's brilliance was immediately on display. At the time, our consumer law practice did not represent individuals in bankruptcy court, but David recognized the enormous impact such services could have on the lives of our clients. David knew that "for those who will benefit from filing, it is an extremely powerful tool." It took several years for Legal Aid Chicago to fully adopt these services as a priority, but David's experience and determination eventually led us to develop a highly respected legal aid bankruptcy practice.

According to Tim Huffman, former longtime Legal Aid Chicago attorney, "David's depth of knowledge

in so many areas of law is amazing. He is an authority in bankruptcy, consumer, and social security law. In the years that I worked with David as co-supervisor at the Englewood neighborhood office, I repeatedly relied upon his depth of knowledge in litigating cases that required a creative use of the law. His willingness to share his innovative thinking repeatedly made me look good to the rest of the world."

**Perseverance** in the face of adversity is another of David's strengths. In the late 1990s, David and other Legal Aid Chicago attorneys wanted to use bankruptcy to prevent evictions of tenants from subsidized housing. At the time, however, the law on the intersection of bankruptcy and eviction was unclear. The success of these efforts varied depending on which judge was assigned the case. In two such cases, David and fellow Legal Aid Chicago attorney Larry Wood obtained favorable rulings from the U.S. District Court on behalf of subsidized housing residents who were facing eviction. Although the landlords eventually won those cases on appeal in the Seventh Circuit, the opinion was helpful because it clarified when in the eviction process a tenant can still file bankruptcy and save their tenancy. This clarification has helped tenants' rights advocates throughout Illinois understand how to use the Bankruptcy Code to preserve numerous low-income tenancies.

In the years since, this hard-won clarity has helped countless clients successfully leverage bankruptcy as a defense against eviction, especially in public housing cases. "Working with David was one of the most instructive and rewarding experiences I've had in my career," recalls Larry Wood, now a Supervising Attorney at Legal Action Chicago. "David's arguments were **thoughtful** and **creative**. He taught me a tremendous amount about housing law, the Bankruptcy Code, and federal practice that

I used during the next 25 plus years of my career."

Many Legal Aid clients, who become homeowners, find themselves in danger of losing their homes because of the convoluted system for collecting property taxes. In 2014, after two prior appeals settled before David could get a ruling, David helped Legal Aid Chicago, on behalf of a third homeowner, bring another case before the Seventh Circuit. Here, the third time was the charm: the Seventh Circuit issued a ruling that established homeowners' rights to use Chapter 13 bankruptcy to save their homes.

Another of David's lasting legacies is the role he played in developing our Bankruptcy Help Desk. Fifteen years ago, after Legal Aid received generous support from the Chicago Bar Foundation and the Bankruptcy Court, David helped launch the Help Desk in order to provide pro se debtors with expert bankruptcy advice and brief services. In his honor, the Help Desk gives an annual award, named after David, to the Desk's most dedicated volunteer.

Since retiring from Legal Aid Chicago in 2016, David has **generously** volunteered his time to our Consumer Practice Group and the Bankruptcy Help Desk. David is always willing to go the extra distance to help support both clients and staff. According to our Chief Litigation Officer (and former Consumer Practice Group Director) Dan Lindsey, "David serves as the agency's Bankruptcy Guru Emeritus. He doesn't just advise, he also contributes to our work on bankruptcy appeals and in amicus briefs filed in the district court, the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, and the United States Supreme Court. In a word, David's long-term impact on our client community has been **phenomenal**."

*Thank you, David, for everything that you have done for us over the decades! Clearly, you have made a lasting impact on our clients' and our staffs' lives.*



# FINANCIALS

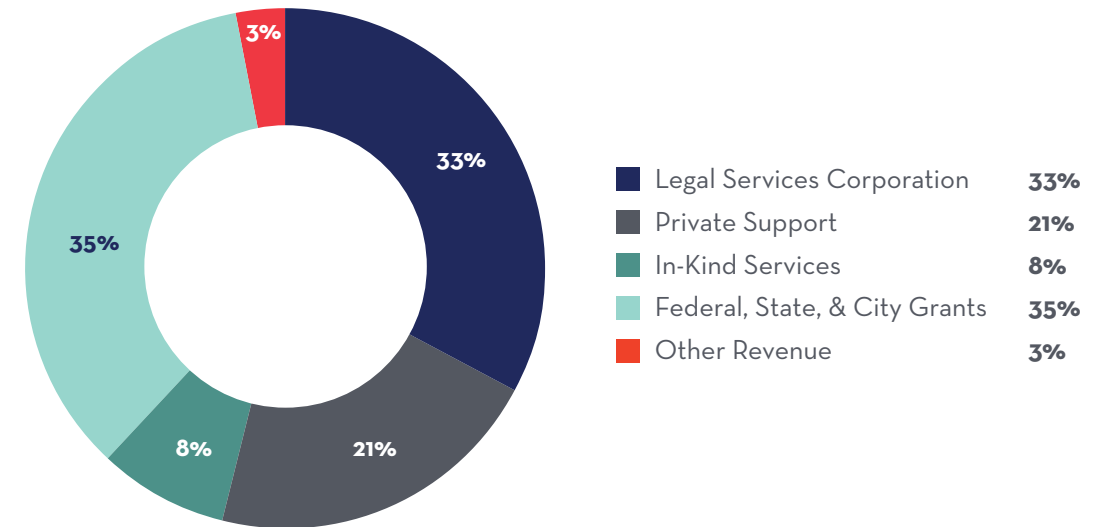
## Statement of Activities for the Year Ended December 31, 2022

REVENUE		
Grants and Contributions - LSC	\$	7,681,727
Grants and Contributions - Other Government		8,059,643
Foundations, Fellowships, and Other Private Awards		2,297,415
Contributions		2,509,512
Special Events		121,384
Less cost of direct benefit to donors		(115,619)
Cy Pres Awards		144,614
Attorney's Fees		205,253
Investment Return (Loss), Net		(753,938)
Miscellaneous		192,973
Services, In-Kind		1,944,983
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>22,287,947</b>

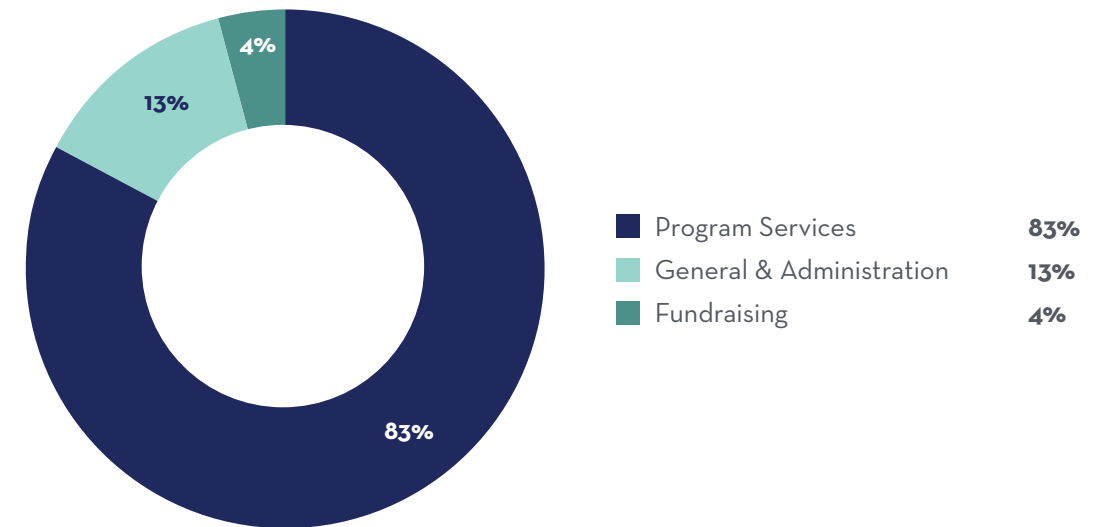
EXPENSES		
Program Services	\$	20,046,271
General and Administration		3,154,135
Fundraising		967,536
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>24,167,942</b>

CHANGE IN NET ASSETS		
Net Assets - Beginning of Year		11,149,398
Net Assets - End of Year		9,269,403

### 2022 TOTAL REVENUE



### 2022 TOTAL EXPENSES



# FINANCIALS

## Statement of Financial Position

as of December 31, 2021 and December 31, 2022

ASSETS	2022	2021
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 2,319,781	\$ 3,881,117
Restricted Cash - Client Deposits	397,866	456,544
Restricted Cash - Letter of Credit Deposit	500,000	500,000
Grants and Contributions Receivable	3,058,021	2,347,085
Miscellaneous Receivable	231,230	476,957
Due from Affiliate	—	5,044
Prepaid Expenses	553,656	560,260
Investments	2,605,107	2,903,254
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$ 9,665,661</b>	<b>\$ 11,130,261</b>
<b>NONCURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Investments	2,701,464	3,258,891
Property and Equipment:		
Computer Equipment and Software	285,709	287,954
Furniture and Equipment	790,157	1,024,329
Leasehold Improvements	3,269,328	3,269,328
Total	4,345,194	4,581,611
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	(3,408,214)	(3,413,182)
Property and Equipment, Net	936,980	1,168,429
Total Noncurrent Assets	3,638,444	4,427,320
Operating Right-of-Use Asset	4,747,266	—
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ 18,051,371</b>	<b>\$ 15,557,581</b>

## Statement of Financial Position

as of December 31, 2021 and December 31, 2022

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	2022	2021
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Fringe Benefits and Payroll Withholdings	104,492	63,151
Accounts Payable	153,497	124,833
Grants Payable	174,216	159,219
Deferred Revenue	178,180	142,625
Deferred Rent	—	487,726
Current Lease Liability - Operating	1,661,155	—
Accrued Vacation Expense	732,828	694,271
Due to Affiliate	13,807	—
Client Deposits	397,866	456,544
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>3,416,041</b>	<b>2,128,369</b>
<b>NONCURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Long-Term Lease Liability - Operating	5,365,926	—
Deferred Rent	—	2,279,814
Total Noncurrent Liabilities	5,365,926	2,279,814
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>8,781,967</b>	<b>4,408,183</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
Without Donor Restrictions:		
Undesignated	6,150,712	7,133,495
Board-Designated Endowment	2,601,464	3,158,891
Total Without Donor Restrictions	8,752,176	10,292,386
With Donor Restrictions	517,228	857,012
Total Net Assets	9,269,404	11,149,398
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>18,051,371</b>	<b>15,557,581</b>



## AMBASSADORS HIGHLIGHT **Lee Muench**



Members join the Ambassadors Board (AB) with a spirit of justice and a desire to make the legal system work for everyone. Below we highlight an AB member whose work has been particularly impactful.

**Lee Muench** is a Partner in the Chicago office of Benesch, Friedlander, Coplan & Aronoff LLP. He focuses on complex commercial litigation and internal investigations. He also serves as the Recruitment Committee Co-Chair on the AB Executive Committee.

“Before I joined the AB, I provided pro bono services for various organizations,” Lee says. “But I felt like I was bouncing around, and, over time, forgetting what I learned from each engagement. I wanted to concentrate my time and make steadier contributions to one organization. The pro bono counsel at my firm recommended that I join the AB. I gave it a shot and have made Legal Aid Chicago my go-to ever since.”

Since joining the AB in 2020, during the COVID-19 global pandemic, Lee has always viewed challenges as opportunities. He wanted to help rebuild the AB as workers returned to offices. From 2020-

2022, Lee and his Co-Chair Ben Haskin built the Recruitment Committee from the ground up, welcoming new members who wanted to reengage with the legal aid community while rejoining civic life.

Lee loves sharing information about Legal Aid Chicago’s impact. “The legal aid leadership and staff are so dedicated, talented, and enthusiastic.” Lee says, “Their positive energy is contagious. When you get to know them and learn about the clients that they support, you cannot help but want to contribute.”

Entering his third year on the Board and as a Recruitment Chair, Lee aspires to develop new relationships for recruitment and build on current recruitment infrastructure. “The AB has grown so much already through teamwork. We’re going to maintain this momentum and continue growing,” Lee proudly states.

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### ***Interested in joining the Ambassadors Board?***

*“Do it! There’s only an upside. Sign up for a project and give your best effort. Join the AB and attend an event. These experiences will open doors. You will meet good, like-minded people; gain skills that you appreciate later; and learn about new service opportunities that will enrich your life.”*

<https://legalaidchicago.org/get-involved/join-ambassadors-board/>

## LEGAL AID CHICAGO LEADERSHIP TEAM\*

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Mark Kennedy	Chief Financial Officer
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Jennifer E. Miller	Chief External Relations Officer
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Teresa Sullivan	General Counsel

*“When I volunteered at Legal Aid Chicago prior to law school, I learned how lawyers could use the power of law to obtain justice for people who are often shut out of the systems that are meant to protect them. This experience ignited my commitment to equal justice that I’ve had the privilege of fulfilling along with amazing colleagues over the span of 30+ years.”* –CYNTHIA SADKIN



Chief Strategy Officer, Cynthia Sadkin, with Intake Specialist, Amanda Palacios.

## LEGAL AID CHICAGO STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

The following staff represent long-standing members of our community who recently celebrated anniversaries with us.

### 30+ Years

Cynthia Sadkin  
Denise Davis  
Lisa Palumbo

### 20+ Years

Ana Franco  
Erica Adams  
Colleen Connolly  
Jessica Kalmewicki

### 15+ Years

Dennericka Brooks

### 10+ Years

Ainat Margalit  
Benna Crawford  
Desiree Mathews-Plonowski  
Shirley Wilkins  
Talissa Guerrero

### 5+ Years

John Gallo  
Trey Daly  
Marisol Guadarrama  
Regina Rizzo  
Jenelle Pedroza  
Teresa Sullivan  
Regina Hernandez  
Steve Phillips  
Aziza Khatoun  
Eva Torres  
Anna Reynoso  
Naeem Nulwala  
Anna Maitland  
Lauren Dana





## IN OUR OWN *words*

*This year, we are pleased to debut a new feature. We asked a cross-section of our incredible staff why they work at Legal Aid Chicago and what makes them feel like they are making a difference. Here are some of their responses.*



### BARBARA BERTINI

Associate Director of Community Partnerships, Pro Bono and Community Partnerships Practice Group

Barbara focuses on creating new community partnerships and expanding existing ones.

*"I love being in the community, answering questions and clarifying issues and concerns. The civil legal system is so complicated, and I have the incredible opportunity to help people navigate it and share the numerous ways Legal Aid Chicago can offer support."*



### JOEY CARRILLO

Equal Justice Works Fellow, Children and Families Practice Group

Formerly a volunteer, intern, and now an EJW Fellow,

Joey Carrillo leads Legal Aid Chicago's effort to ensure LGBTQ+ clients have access to legal services. Through Legal Aid Chicago's LGBTQ+ Task Force, Joey connects with LGBTQ+

organizations across the city and implements organization-wide training to support clients. Joey hopes this work will help make the legal system more accessible to LGBTQ+ clients across Chicago.

*"Moving forward, I am looking to utilize Legal Aid Chicago's LGBTQ+ Task Force to systematize training, ensuring all Legal Aid Chicago staff have consistent guidance for interacting with the LGBTQ+ communities. Since this is such an incredibly vulnerable population, putting these types of trainings in place will help us better serve the LGBTQ+ community with not only their legal issues but with advocacy and increased awareness."*



### SARAH FERGUSON

Paralegal, Public Benefits Practice Group

The Public Benefits Outreach and Enrollment (PBOE) program informs

different communities about Legal Aid Chicago's services. One PBOE paralegal is assigned to each of the six Department of Family Support Services Community Service Centers across Chicago. Sarah is primarily at the Garfield Community Service Center site, where she encourages members of the community to access available public benefits, sometimes by partnering with other organizations.

*"One client I met was very skeptical. However, after we continued to show up every week, he eventually reached out for assistance. We helped him obtain*

*a housing voucher from one of our partners, among other services. This client would not have trusted us with referring him to a community partner if we hadn't built that confidence first. I love how we help people together!"*



### JOSEPH GARCIA

EJW Fellowship Attorney, Immigrant and Workers' Rights (IWR) Practice Group

Joseph, an Equal Justice Works Fellow, provides

domestic workers legal representation that combats wage theft, harassment, and discrimination. Thanks to the new Illinois Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights, Joseph's work is more impactful than ever.

*"Ultimately, I would like to provide as many resources as possible to domestic workers in Illinois. Domestic workers have been excluded for far too long from protection, and it's time we include them in the conversation. I am so glad I have the opportunity to do so working with my Employment team (part of IWR) at Legal Aid Chicago."*



## IN OUR OWN *words*



### MONA GREEN

Senior Intake Specialist, Client Screening Unit

For over twenty years, Mona Green has spoken to and carefully listened to

potential clients who seek to use our services.

*"Many people we interview are faced with some of the greatest challenges of their lifetime. Clients benefit from supportive listening, which is a big part of making a difference. I enjoy helping our clients and am proud to be a part of Legal Aid Chicago!"*



### VALARIE OWINO

Staff Attorney, Pro Bono and Community Partnerships Practice Group

The expungement team in Legal Aid Chicago's Pro

Bono & Community Partnerships Practice Group helps clear people's criminal records, working to remove barriers so people can rent an apartment or obtain a job.

Valarie Owino, staff attorney on the team, files clients' required paperwork and attends court hearings. She is a client's primary advocate and works to get them the best outcome possible: a judge granting the client's petition to expunge their record.

*"I know my job is meaningful, because my clients are so thankful that someone is finally listening and giving them a chance. I also love when we succeed in getting our clients' record expunged, which is over 98% of the time!"*



## Remembering RICH COZZOLA

*In April, 2022, Legal Aid Chicago lost a beloved colleague, Rich Cozzola. In honor of his many years of service and friendship, our staff share their memories of Rich's kindness, commitment, and incalculable impact:*

I was with one of the judges in the Child Protection Division when I learned of Rich's passing. He knew Rich and said he remembered thinking the first time Rich appeared in his courtroom, "If I had five lawyers like him in my courtroom, we would be set."

—ANONYMOUS

Rich was everything a legal aid lawyer should be: passionate, empathic, a zealous advocate, and committed to social justice for all, with an exceptional commitment to children and families.

—LISA PALUMBO, DIRECTOR OF IMMIGRANTS AND WORKER'S RIGHTS PRACTICE GROUP

To Rich, everyone was worth the investment to start a friendship and build a community. He cared about the future of Legal Aid Chicago and was so proud of the work every single person does here.

—EMMA MCMULLEN, STAFF ATTORNEY

Once, it came out in a conversation with him that I missed easy access to good bagels like they have in New York. He told me about his favorite Chicago bagel shops. Later, he asked when I'd be in the office next, and when I came in, he had a bag of bagels for me (and a StreetWise magazine).

—JUSTIN BRYANT, FORMER EXTERNAL RELATIONS COORDINATOR

Rich gave support staff respect and showed his appreciation for the work we do here. He always found the right words to say to make you feel better.

—IRMA AMARO, OFFICE ASSISTANT

One quality I admired in Rich is how much he admired his colleagues. He taught me to take pride in the work everyone in this organization does and be interested in who they are outside of work.

—BEN BENNETT, STAFF ATTORNEY

When Chicago Public Schools was attempting to close NTA Elementary, the parents and students protested, chanting in unison. Rich loved watching these young people and their parents stand their ground. Rich was a revolutionary in his heart and his work.

—ASHLEY FRETTHOLD, SUPERVISORY ATTORNEY

Rich was instrumental in founding the Juvenile Expungement Help Desk (JEHD). This initiative is a monument to his work in the youth system—easily tens of thousands of juvenile cases have been expunged since the Help Desk opened. The impact of our presence in the Juvenile Center is tremendous, and JEHD is Rich's legacy.

—NATANYA POPE, STAFF ATTORNEY

Rich was a gifted guitarist and songwriter. He continued to maintain the friendships and the folk band he started in high school throughout his life. I played with that band and his long-time friends. Rich's songwriting reflected his deep love for Americana music and his many diverse interests, many of which intersected with Legal Aid Chicago.

—HUGH F. "TREY" DALY III, PUBLIC BENEFITS PRACTICE GROUP DIRECTOR





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## OUR MISSION

At Legal Aid Chicago, we work together to provide high quality civil legal aid to people living in poverty and other vulnerable groups. Through advocacy, education, collaboration, and litigation we empower individuals, protect fundamental rights, strengthen communities, create opportunities, and achieve justice. In carrying out our mission, we treat everyone with compassion and respect.

## OUR VISION

It is our vision that poverty will not be an impediment to justice in Cook County. Legal barriers that perpetuate poverty and inequality will be dismantled. Laws and legal systems will be open and equally effective for all who need their protection, especially those who experience unfair and disproportionately unjust treatment due to personal or community characteristics.

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