



2016 ANNUAL REPORT



Equal justice starts here.

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS



For the past 50 years, LAF has provided free, high quality, civil legal services to the most vulnerable people living in Cook County. By resolving critical legal problems that trap people in poverty, LAF has helped hundreds of thousands of individuals get their lives back on track.

Legal aid is one of the most effective tools to make lasting change and bring families out of poverty. LAF helps families stay in their homes and avoid homelessness; enables victims of abuse and trafficking begin new, safe lives; ensures veterans receive all the benefits to which they are entitled, and children receive the special education services they deserve; protects seniors victimized by consumer scams and employees victimized by wage theft and employment abuses. Because of LAF, every year thousands of people obtain justice and begin the move out of poverty.

LAF relies on private donations to fulfil its mission. With government funding for civil legal services on the chopping block, individual and corporate contributions like yours are more important than ever. With your ongoing and increased financial support, LAF will remain the source of the best legal help money can't buy.



ABOUT LAF

LAF staff through the
ages, including cheering
the Cubs on to their
first World Series victory
in LAF's lifetime!



"Our aim is not only to relieve the symptoms of poverty, but to cure it and, above all, to prevent it."

Those were the words of President Lyndon B. Johnson 50 years ago in a speech that kicked off the War on Poverty, which in turn gave birth to the federal Office of Economic Opportunity, and to legal aid lawyers who built the LAF many rely on today. We have weathered many changes – including names and locations, funding feasts and famines, and we were proud to celebrate LAF's 50th Anniversary in 2016.

In 1966, the Office of Economic Opportunity awarded two grants to two Chicago legal aid organizations which later became the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago, now known simply as LAF. In 1974, finding that "a need to provide equal access to the system of justice in our nation for individuals who seek redress of grievances," Congress established the Legal Services Corporation and transferred the OEO's legal services programs to LSC. The Legal Services Corporation remains LAF's partner to this day.

LAF was originally organized with a downtown office in the Loop, which housed its administrative staff and specialty law projects, and neighborhood storefronts where attorneys served clients with diverse legal needs. By 2011, many of those offices had merged or closed. LAF decided to consolidate all of its offices into one central location in the Chicago Loop, where clients can still reach us relatively easily. LAF reorganized its staff into Practice Groups, focusing on Housing, Consumer, Children and Families, Public Benefits, and Immigrants and Workers' Rights issues.

The last half century has seen LAF grow and change in many ways, but the core of our work, providing high quality civil legal services for low-income and vulnerable people, and lifting them out of poverty, has remained the same. You – the legal community, foundations, and generous individual supporters – ensure that LAF has been around so long, and you lay the foundation for our next 50 years!

LAF's 50 YEAR HISTORY

In 2016, LAF made equal justice a reality for 30,000 people across Cook County.

LAF
clients
are:



85%
racial
minorities



62%
women



31%
disabled



14%
seniors



7%
veterans



100%
living in
poverty

In 2016, LAF's services had a
financial impact of
\$27,540,459

for our clients, in
increased assets,
increased income,
and decreased debts.

LAF BY THE NUMBERS



LAF saved homes for 1,406 people

in 2016, through


preserving housing subsidies,
preventing unfair foreclosure,
and stopping illegal evictions.

More than 75% of those homes have **female heads of household**.

Because of LAF's intervention
682 people are safer,
and are

free of physical and financial abuse,
in safe housing and safe schools,
have good senior care,
and more.

51% of them were **children,**
and **45%** were **people with disabilities.**



1,760 families gained
access to healthcare or other health improvements,
including **food stamps, medicare, medicaid, protection**
from abusers, or admission to a **long-term care facility.**

I must admit I loved our year-long 50th Anniversary celebration. It was wonderful reconnecting with former staff, board members, volunteers, and clients. Hearing how LAF impacted their lives inspired all of us. As I write this today, government funding for legal aid is under attack. But I am confident that 50 years from now, LAF will be celebrating its 100th Anniversary – because the need for legal aid never abates, and civic-minded people in Chicago and suburban Cook County care too much about the vitality of our neighborhoods to ignore that need. In good times, poor people may do a little better, but in hard times they do a lot worse. Whenever LAF can keep a family housed, or stop an abuser from terrorizing his wife and his children, or get medical care for an elderly diabetic who's never seen a doctor except in an emergency room – we make a real difference. And, while doing it, we make sure that justice for all is not just a slogan but a basic value.

Diana C. White
LAF Executive Director



NAME:
HEIDI, WITH
PATRICK AND
ATHENA

**CAME TO
LAF:**
PREGNANT
WITH THE
BABY AND

FLEEING HER ABUSIVE HUSBAND

Now: PROTECTED, IN A SAFE
HOME, WITH FOOD STAMPS AND
HEALTH INSURANCE FOR THE KIDS

NAME:
LARRY
**CAME TO
LAF:**

BEING SUED
FOR NOT
PAYING
INSURANCE
ON A CAR

HE HADN'T OWNED FOR MORE THAN
TWO YEARS



Now: PROTECTED FROM
UNFAIR COLLECTIONS

UPDATES AND FACES OF LAF



NAME:
MICKEY

**CAME TO
LAF:**
FIGHTING
CANCER
WITHOUT A
POWER OF
ATTORNEY

Now: HAS DOCUMENTS DECLARING HIS
INTENTIONS FOR HIS HEALTHCARE, AND
IS IN REMISSION

NAME:
ELSIE

**CAME TO
LAF:**
FIRED AFTER
“STEALING”
THREE TEA
BAGS FROM
HER OFFICE’S
CABINET OF SUPPLIES



Now: SETTLED FOR MORE THAN
\$5,000, AND IN A NEW JOB

When you read the stories in this Annual Report, I think you’ll see how important and life-changing LAF’s work can be. LAF’s staff is remarkable. They work tirelessly on behalf of their clients but they can’t do it without your support. It takes money to make equal justice a reality for families living in poverty. Your ongoing support is our life blood.

When you read this Report and see what your contributions have helped us achieve, I hope you will be as proud as we are. In these difficult times, when federal funding for the poor is being threatened, we need you more than ever.

Thank you.

Maja C. Eaton and Richard J. Klawiter
Co-Chairs, LAF Governing Board of Directors

Vanessa had applied for a subsidized apartment through the Chicago Housing Authority, and was waiting to hear back – a wait that sometimes lasts for years. Finally, she got a letter from Hilliard Homes – a mixed-income development in the South Loop – stating that there was a two-bedroom unit available. This would be perfect for her family, as she was pregnant with her second child and would benefit from being near to resources like schools, stores, and businesses, as well as her work. At her open house appointment, Vanessa explained that she worked as a housekeeper, but was currently on short-term medical leave because of complications associated with her pregnancy. Hilliard took this information and denied Vanessa's apartment application, on the grounds that she did not meet CHA's requirements that residents be employed.

That's when Vanessa came to LAF. Housing Attorney Jackie Koriath took her case, and pushed CHA to schedule a hearing before Vanessa's baby was due. CHA was dragging its feet, and Jackie was afraid that Vanessa would lose her chance at this apartment. With time running out, Jackie threatened Hilliard Homes with a federal lawsuit, accusing them of discrimination and calling them out for violating the Fair Housing Act and the Illinois Human Rights Act, among others.

Before the lawsuit was even filed, Vanessa got a call from Hilliard Homes, offering her the apartment they had wrongfully denied, and welcoming her to her new home. Today, she lives there with her two children, and they are all doing well.

“The last thing that Vanessa needed during her high-risk pregnancy was a CHA mistake. I'm happy that LAF was able to resolve this issue before her baby was born, giving her comfort and stability during a challenging time.”

- Jackie Koriath

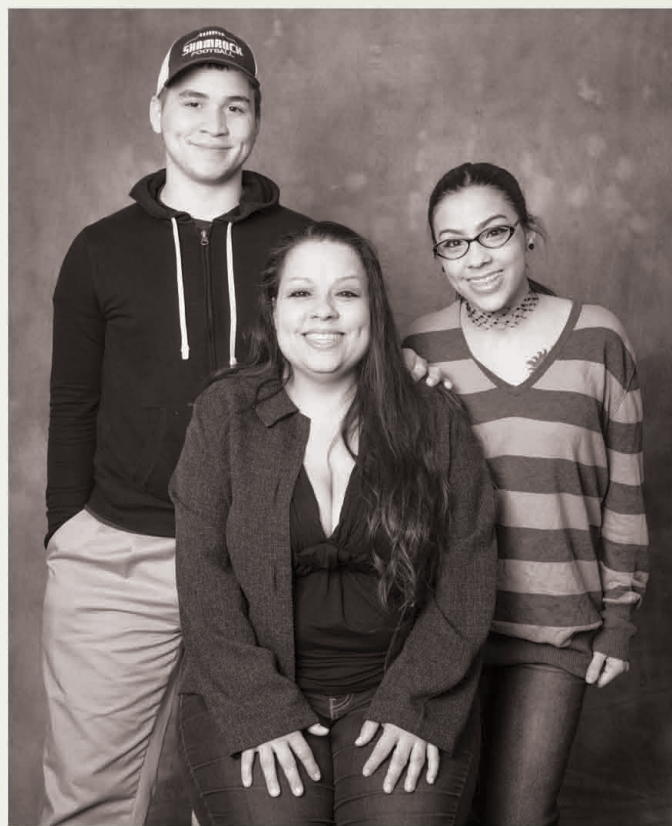


MEET VANESSA: A LAF STORY

Christina first came to LAF in 2007. Her husband was physically abusive towards her. He slapped her, hit her, blackened her eye, and fractured her arm – even in front of the children, – creating fear and sleepless nights for the whole family. LAF attorney Kate Shank described Christina’s abuser as “the very caricature of a bad guy.”

Over more than a decade, Kate repeatedly represented Christina to extend her Order of Protection and to obtain a divorce from her husband. In the divorce judgment, Christina received sole custody of her children, child support, freedom from marital debts, a share of her husband’s retirement accounts, and an order denying her husband visitation. The Order of Protection and divorce judgment also gave Christina something intangible and invaluable – the confidence to know she and her children could live their lives in peace. In 2014, Christina’s ex-husband agreed to a permanent restraining order which prevents him from initiating any contact with the children until they are 23 years old, and forbids him from ever having contact with Christina.

Today, Christina and her children are excelling. Janicee, 20, has graduated from high school and is taking classes at a city college. Junior is 18, and just received a full-ride scholarship to college for the fall. Christina works full-time and is happy and healthy.



Junior, Janicee, and Christina

“Even with child support that was unreliable at best, Christina has always managed to maintain steady employment, keep stable housing for the kids, keep them academically achieving, and stay strong for them. Christina and her children are a remarkable family and I am grateful to know them.”

- Kate Shank



Amy and Richard

**“RICHARD’S
PERSEVERANCE AND
HUMOR IN THE FACE
OF A 5-YEAR SOCIAL
SECURITY BATTLE
AND MEDICAL
CHALLENGES HAS
BEEN INSPIRING. I
AM BETTER FOR
KNOWING HIM.”
- AMY MARINACCI**

Richard was in his mid-thirties, working as an engineer, and earning a six-figure salary when friends reported his behavior became explosive and aggressive. Then Richard withdrew from all social contact. After about 5 years of near-total social isolation, when his sister finally got him into medical treatment, doctors discovered a tumor the size of an orange on his brain. By this time, he had spent all his savings and was living without electricity in his condo that was in foreclosure.

Even after the tumor was removed, Richard continued to be disabled by debilitating headaches and has required intensive cognitive therapy. LAF represented Richard at his Social Security Disability Insurance hearing. The Social Security Administration agreed he was disabled, but only starting from when the tumor was discovered, because he had no documentation of the tumor before that date. Social Security ignored the letter from Richard's neurologist stating that his reported behavioral changes years ago were consistent with the size, location, and type of tumor, and testimony from his friends and family, who described the changes they observed several years before doctors discovered the tumor. LAF attorneys Katie Shelton and Amy Marinacci appealed until a federal judge ordered Social Security to reconsider when Richard's disability began, noting that “even Athena had a gestation period before springing fully grown and armored from Zeus's head.”

Finally, years after the tumor was removed, SSA agreed that the tumor had been impacting Richard's life long before it was discovered. Because of LAF's advocacy, Richard received substantial back benefits and ongoing monthly income, so he can finally concentrate on his recovery without worrying about how to make ends meet.

MEET RICHARD: A LAF STORY



“THE RESOURCES, EFFORT, AND SUPPORT LAF PUT INTO ROBERTA’S CASE REMINDED ME OF HOW COMMITTED WE ARE TO DEFENDING OUR IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES WHO SEEK A BETTER LIFE FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR CHILDREN.”

- NUBIA WILLMAN

Roberta is an immigrant for whom LAF sought asylum in the United States. Like many immigrants, she left her entire world behind to seek a safer life. Roberta left Guatemala after her husband became abusive; he slapped her, choked her, and threatened her life. She hid her young daughter with her sister’s family, and got a tourist visa to come to the United States. When she landed at the airport, her first call was to LAF.

Attorney Nubia Willman took her case, knowing it wouldn’t be a sure victory. Asylum cases are difficult proceedings. She would have to prove not only that Roberta was a victim of domestic violence, but also that sending her back to Guatemala would result in her death because the government was unwilling and unable to protect her. Nubia also knew that asylum cases often take years – years Roberta did not have on her tourist visa – and that immigration deportation proceedings could begin at any point during her asylum application process.

Three years later, an interview was finally granted. Roberta and Nubia, along with Mary Ellen Diaz, who faithfully translated Roberta’s story, met with an asylum officer. Roberta told her story in detail, and answered the officer’s questions. This August, her asylum application was approved. But Roberta’s story doesn’t end there. Her daughter, still in Guatemala, developed brain cancer, and has few treatment opportunities outside of the U.S. Now that Roberta has asylee status, she will be able to petition for her daughter to enter the U.S. and obtain the care she needs.

MEET ROBERTA: A LAF STORY

20 years ago, Brianna's next door neighbor was struggling with drug addiction, had 14 children, and could not manage any more. When she fell pregnant again, Brianna agreed to take the baby and raise him as her own. The baby, Paul, didn't know his siblings and believed Brianna to be his mother, because she was the only mother he knew. Three years later, when the biological mother disappeared, DCFS removed her 14 children and mistakenly thought Paul was missing. Brianna read about it in the paper, so she contacted the authorities to let them know that she was caring for him and that he was happy and safe with her. DCFS used this information to remove Paul from Brianna's care because she had no legal relationship to him. LAF and Jennifer Payne went to court with Brianna to try to convince the judge to return Paul to her care.

At a hearing in juvenile court, the judge told Brianna, "You've got to convince me that if I return this child to your care, I'm never going to read about him in the paper. I need to know that I'm doing the right thing. So tell me why I should return this child to you." The whole courtroom turned to look at Brianna, who said, "Because I am his mother. When he cries at night he's crying for me. He calls my name. And he's in so much pain without me, and I'm in so much pain without him."

There was not a dry eye in the courtroom. The judge declared, immediately, "You're the mom."

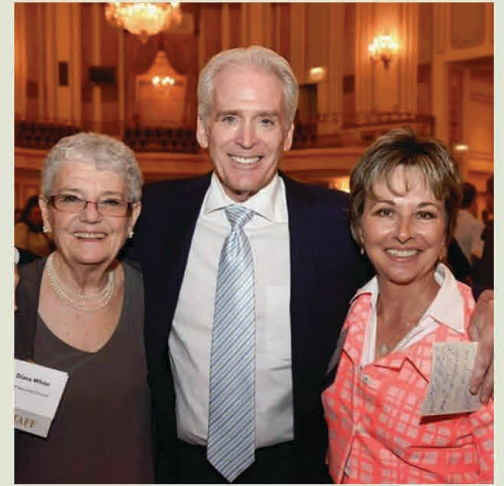


**"LIKE BRIANNA,
SOMETIMES OUR
CLIENTS ARE THEIR
OWN BEST
ADVOCATES."
- JENNIFER PAYNE**

A 50TH ANNIVERSARY STORY



LAF had a big year in 2016! Miriam Hallbauer and Tim Huizenga (*top left*) won a case in front of the Illinois Supreme Court for a client's unemployment benefits. LAF and Sidley Austin attorneys (*left*) received the Seventh Circuit Bar Association Pro Bono and Public Service Award for Outstanding Work in the District Courts of Illinois for their work for residents of Cabrini-Green. LAF celebrated its 50th Anniversary with a birthday cake at the *Justice is Served* gala (*bottom left*). José Alonso was recognized by the Peace and Education Coalition (*top right*) and also received the Jerold S. Solovy Equal Justice Award. Diana celebrated with Board members Philip H. Corboy, Jr. and Maja Eaton (*right*) at the 50th Anniversary Luncheon. And LAF won a major victory over the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland when the Cubs beat the Indians in the World Series, and we got pierogis for it (*bottom right*).



2016 EVENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

LAF STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

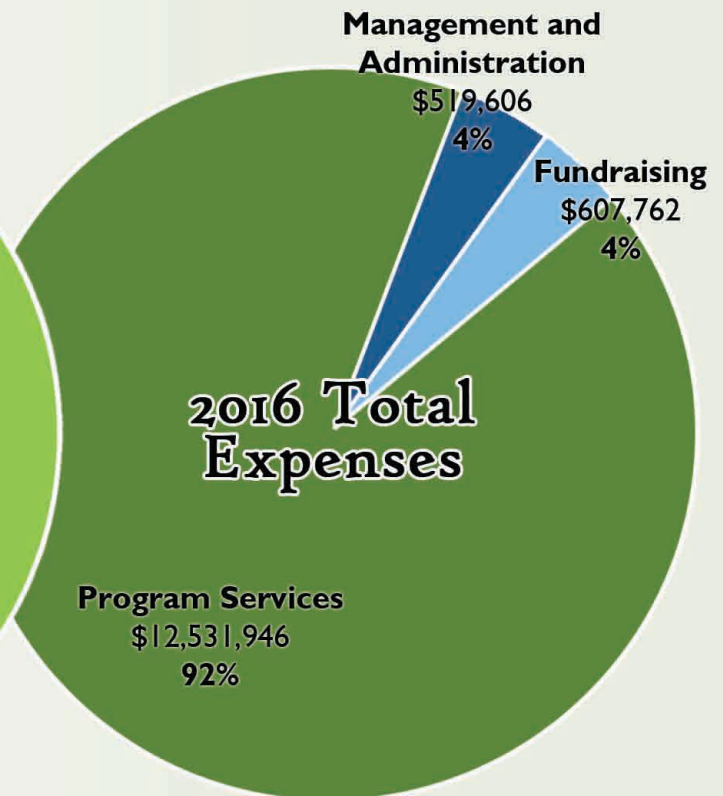
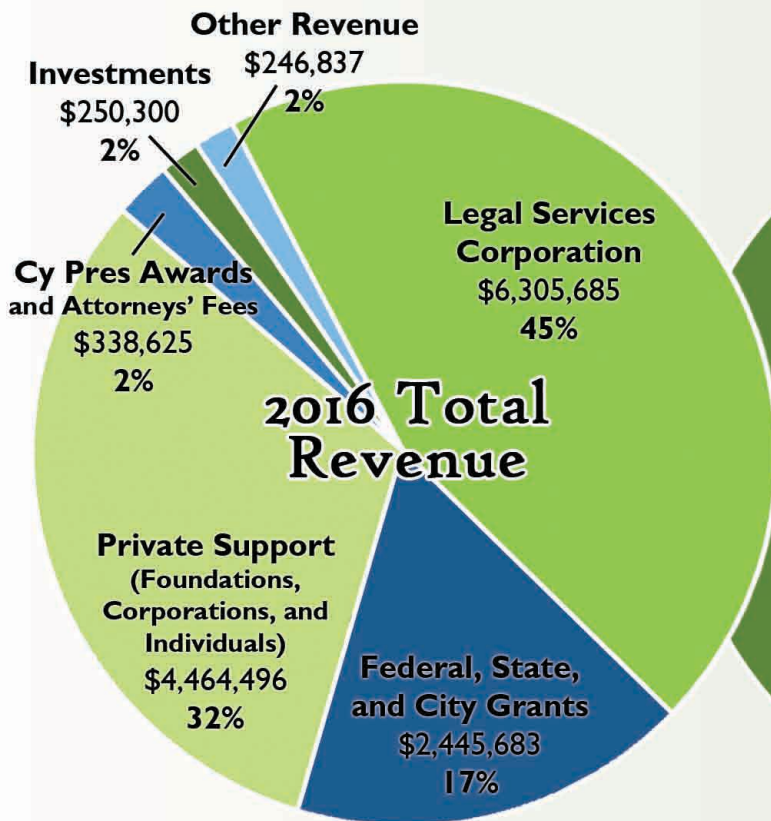
Year Ended December 31, 2016

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
REVENUE				
Grants and Contracts - LSC	\$ -	\$ 6,305,685	\$ -	\$ 6,305,685
Grants and Contracts - Other Government Foundations, United Way, and others	2,245,683	-	-	2,445,683
Contributions	991,221	1,772,547	-	2,763,768
Special Events	872,298	498	-	872,796
Cy Pres Awards	827,632	-	-	827,632
Attorneys' Fees	29,212	-	-	29,212
Interest and dividend income	-	309,413	-	309,413
Realized and unrealized gain on investments	90,083	4,559	-	94,642
Miscellaneous	155,658	-	-	155,658
Services, in-kind	135,247	17,348	-	152,595
Net Assets released from restrictions:	94,242	-	-	94,242
Satisfaction of program restrictions	8,485,293	(8,485,293)	-	-
Total Revenue	14,126,569	(75,243)	-	14,051,326
EXPENSES				
Program Services	12,531,946	-	-	12,531,946
General and administration	519,606	-	-	519,606
Fundraising	607,762	-	-	607,762
Total Expenses	13,659,314	-	-	13,659,314
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	467,255	(75,243)	-	392,012
NET ASSETS				
Beginning of Year	3,808,133	1,336,613	100,000	5,244,746
End of Year	\$ 4,275,388	\$ 1,261,370	\$ 100,000	\$ 5,636,758

Source: Certified Financial Statements

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2015</u>
Total Assets	\$ 11,231,450	\$ 11,245,881
Total Liabilities	5,594,692	6,001,135
Net Assets		
Unrestricted		
Undesignated	2,200,597	1,864,304
Board-Designated Endowment	2,074,791	1,943,829
Total Unrestricted	4,275,388	3,808,133
Temporarily Restricted	1,261,370	1,336,613
Permanently Restricted	100,000	100,000
Total Net Assets	5,636,758	5,244,746
Total Liabilities and Assets	\$ 11,231,450	\$ 11,245,881

Source: Certified Financial Statements



\$200,000+

Alphawood Foundation
Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois

\$100,000+

BUILD Health
The Chicago Bar Foundation
Equal Justice Works
Illinois Equal Justice Foundation
Kirkland & Ellis LLP Foundation
Sidley Austin LLP
United Way of Metropolitan
Chicago

\$50,000+

DLA Piper LLP (US)
Erie Family Health Center
Robert E. Gallagher Charitable
Trust
Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP
Polk Bros Foundation

\$25,000+

Baker & McKenzie LLP
The Chicago Community Trust
Margaret and Philip H. Corboy,
Jr.
Equal Justice America
Jenner & Block LLP
Mayer Brown, LLP
Public Interest Law Initiative
Charles & M.R. Shapiro
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Winston & Strawn LLP

\$10,000+

AIDS Foundation of Chicago
Tony & Lawrie Dean
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\$5,000+

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**"I've been on the
LAF Board for
almost 20 years, and
I know first-hand
what an outstanding
organization it is. I
also know how
important it is for all
of us who care about
making Chicago a
fairer, more just city
- lawyers and
non-lawyers alike -
to support LAF."**



Philip H. Corboy, Jr.
LAF Board Member
and Justice is Served emcee

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“Sidley has decided to celebrate LAF’s 50th Anniversary and honor the work it does by increasing our annual gift by 50% this year. There is no reason to believe that LAF’s work will be any less necessary in the next 50 years than it has been since 1966. As LAF embarks on its next half century of service – to its clients and to our community – we must lead the way in supporting LAF’s work.”

- Larry Barden,
 Sidley Austin
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Paul & Susan Freehling
 Longtime LAF Donors

“We became LAF
 supporters upon meeting
 our then-neighbors, the
 Roodmans, 40+ years ago.
 Our appreciation of
 LAF's vital services
 increased exponentially
 during Paul's nine years
 as a member of the Board
 of Directors in the 1990s.
 Admiration for Sheldon,
 Diana, and the entire
 LAF staff keeps us
 contributing.”

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 who help make equal
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 more than 30,000
 people living in
 poverty in Cook
 County. However,
 owing to space
 limitations, we are
 unable to print the
 names of donors who
 contributed less than
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LAF

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