



Legal Aid Service of Broward County 2020 Annual Report

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Dear Friends,

What a challenging year! We have survived! Despite difficult economic times, we were able to provide civil legal services that impacted more than 24,000 individuals and families. This was critically important as many were ravaged by Covid-19, loss of employment or reduced wages.

The entire team of 140 employees had to pivot their entire lives to work remotely and continue to serve our constituents and provide a safety net for them. We did this in 2020 despite disruption in the Courts, lack of fundraisers, shelters and offices being closed.

With the assistance of volunteer Pro Bono attorneys in the community, we were also able to serve an additional 2,060 clients in 2020. Our Rainbow Justice project conducted virtual trainings for private attorneys about some of the unique needs of LGBTQ clients.

Our practice areas included working on cases involving evictions, immigration, homelessness, children in foster care, serving our military veterans through MISSION UNITED, and assisting victims of crime among various other needs. We received funding from Broward County to provide legal assistance for people facing eviction. This grant enabled us to hire 3 attorneys to prepare for the impending eviction crisis.

It goes without saying that our own attorneys have set the example for so many of our young lawyers. Our own James Heaton received the incredible honor of being selected to serve as the Vice Chair of the Florida Bar Military & Veterans Affairs Committee, and became president of the Young Lawyers Section of the Broward County Bar Association in June 2021.

We increased outreach on social media to reach not only our constituents but also attorneys, community partners and referral sources who support our services. We collectively published monthly postings promoting virtual events, education, fundraising, and resources for the community at large. During 2020, our Facebook and Instagram accounts reached not only our active followers, but more than 24,000 unique individuals with consistent and valuable information and updates.

Thank you to our staff, board members, pro bono attorneys, sponsors and law firms that have gone above and beyond this year in helping to make justice a reality for the clients of Legal Aid Service of Broward County.

As I transition into retirement, I am confident I am leaving this great institution, a strong and thriving organization, for my successor. The future is bright.

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tony". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Anthony Karrat
Executive Director
Legal Aid Service of Broward County

WHO WE ARE



Legal Aid Service of Broward County (LAS) provides free legal services to low-income and otherwise eligible residents of Broward County. LAS's mission is to provide high quality free civil legal advice, representation, and education to the most disadvantaged of Broward County so as to improve lifestyle and living conditions and encourage self-sufficiency. We protect and defend the legal rights of families, children, veterans, and underserved populations .

WHY IT MATTERS



1,748

Children benefitted from our children's advocacy programs during 2020



20,000+

Low-income clients have received Pro Bono legal assistance since the inception of Broward Lawyers Care in 1983



977

Veterans and their families received legal assistance in 2020



9,719

Underserved individuals and families in Broward received legal assistance in 2020



1,496

Legal Aid attorneys served 1,496 clients seeking housing and consumer assistance in 2020



24,722+

Individuals impacted by Legal Aid services during 2020



2.5 Million

Total dollar value of benefits secured for clients in 2020

OUR FUNDERS



WHY IT MATTERS

Story of Justice: Olivia, A Transgender Navy Veteran, Successfully Appeals A VA Claim



Olivia*, a transgender Navy Veteran, was having a hard time coping with trauma and injuries that she suffered while in the military. The Veteran served six years in the United States Navy as a queer male and during this time was regularly harassed and physically assaulted. The harassment included serious threats to be thrown overboard if she ever came out.

Suffering from extreme depression and nightmares, Olivia was diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder. At that time, she applied for compensable benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Due to a lack of records and treatment during her time in service, the claim was denied.

After a few years, of dealing with her trauma with little to no support. Olivia came to Legal Aid Service of Broward County looking for legal assistance with her appeal. Olivia was directed to Legal Aid's Mission United Veterans Pro Bono Project, which provides free legal services to eligible veterans, active-duty service members, and their families in Broward County. The staff attorney at the Veterans Pro Bono Project was able to obtain and review all of the Veterans military service records and discovered a pattern of behavior change and disciplinary action that coincided with her reported incidences of abuse. The attorney presented this evidence at a hearing before the Board of Veterans Appeals. After reviewing the evidence, the Board agreed that Olivia's PTSD was related to her military service and granted benefits retroactive to her initial application.

Story of Justice: A Family Broken by Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse gets a Second Chance



This is the story of the Ortiz* family. A father and three children at first broken by domestic violence and substance abuse, but then put back together. John*, the father, was not stable as he had a severe substance abuse issue and an ongoing co-dependent relationship with the mother. The mother, dealing with her own issues, could not provide a safe environment for the children. Needless to say, the three children led troubled lives and were in desperate need of help. Unfortunately, one of the siblings was on the autism spectrum, while the youngest one was born testing positive for heroin and morphine. In January of 2020, the three children were court-ordered a Legal Aid Service of Broward County Attorney from the Child Advocacy Program.

Initially, the three children were separated and bounced around between placements until eventually they were placed back together in foster care. It was clear through communication with the children that they missed John, however, visits with their father were limited partly due to COVID-19. Faced with this unfortunate situation, John had been proactively looking to improve himself. After some time and effort, John was clean and sober and participating in counseling. He was also engaged with the proper services to help him better parent his children, especially his son with Autism.

Given the notable improvement in John, by October a hearing was held to begin a transition to reunification. While the other parties proposed a separate transition for each child, the Legal Aid Attorney and Legal Specialist objected passionately. This was not what the children wanted – they wanted to stay together as a sibling group. Legal Aid took testimony by the children's therapist as to the emotional cost another separation would cause the children who had already been through so much. After carefully studying the situation, the court agreed and ultimately all the children were reunified together with their father in time for the Thanksgiving Holiday.

*Names and images have been changed to protect the privacy of our clients

LAS' Community Economic Development Unit is Making Dreams A Reality For Small-Business Owners



Under the Florida Community Development Legal Project (FCDL), Legal Aid Service of Broward County's (LASBC) Community Economic Development Unit has had the opportunity to help build stronger communities by providing free and low-cost legal services to eligible nonprofit corporations and small businesses serving low-to-moderate-income (LMI) areas in the county. Through this initiative, supported by the Jerry Taylor and Nancy Bryant Fund of the Community Foundation of Broward, participating Florida legal aid organizations, The Florida Bar Foundation, and other generous donors, Legal Aid has opened case files for 30 small businesses and 19 nonprofits in Broward County, to date.

Thanks to our longstanding relationships with organizations such as the Urban League of Broward County and the Central County Community Development Corporation, which operates several small business education and mentoring programs, Legal Aid is connected with numerous minority and women-owned businesses in need of counsel. Many of these entrepreneurs are leading ambitious business undertakings, and as part of our mission we're dedicated to helping them overcome challenges and achieve their goals.

In the first four months of 2021, we represented dozens of organizations and businesses - from education and tutoring centers, medical services practices, and insurance brokerages, to nail salons, spas, and business marketing consultants. Two of our most impactful stories involve a local restaurant and a salon.

We are proud of being able to assist a minority and woman-owned restaurant and urban garden bringing healthy eating to the food desert located in the historic Black neighborhood of Sistrunk Boulevard in central Fort Lauderdale, one of the poorest census tract neighborhoods in the city. The founder is bringing her passion in holistic health, nutrition and organic gardening to create an outside-the-box concept in the now burgeoning neighborhood, with the mission of offering wholesome fare, and educational components to teach community members how to grow fresh produce and cook nutritiously. We were able to help jumpstart her dream by assisting with lease negotiations with a rigid real estate developer, while providing counsel on best practices for navigating complicated landlord-tenant contracts. On the construction front, we advised the client on expediting the submission of blueprints and permits, and began the bid process for the general contractor and subcontractors to ensure she signed an agreement to fairly protect her interests and not just those of the construction professionals. We're also currently drafting an operations agreement delineating company management and assisting with succession planning necessary to protect the business in unforeseen circumstances.

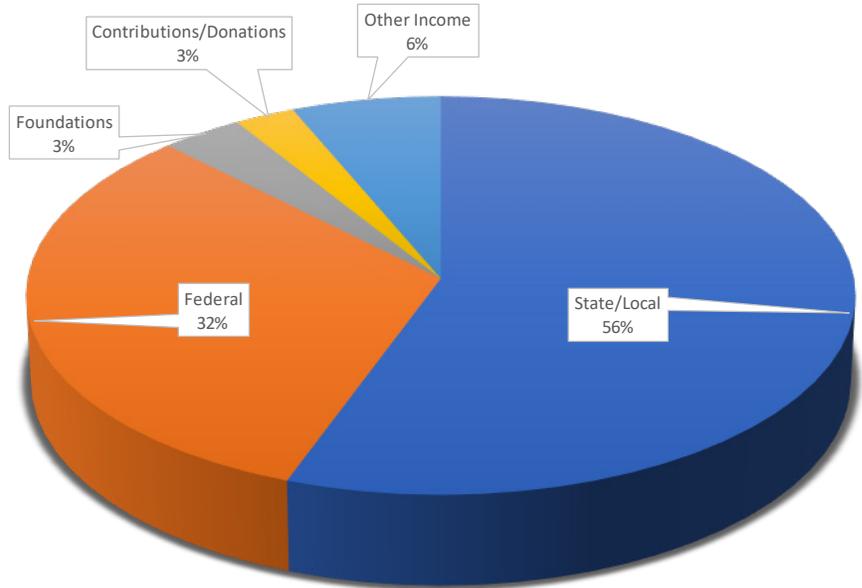
We also are proud of helping to save a hair salon that had been operating for ten years in the very same location. The minority and woman-owned salon was forced to close its doors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With a significant loss of revenue, the salon was unable to pay rent and fell behind on several months. Faced with an eviction notice for non-payment, the salon reached out to Legal Aid with hopes of saving their business from a permanent closure. Our legal team stepped in and was able to negotiate for the salon to remain in the unit while awaiting an answer from the Small Business Administration about an EIDL loan and from Broward County about a CARES Act grant. Despite the excruciatingly slow process of obtaining grants, Legal Aid attorneys were able to keep the business operating in the premises as it continued to recover. As the process continues we're confident the salon will receive the requested loan, allowing our attorneys to renegotiate the owed lease balance so the business can resume normal payment terms and continue to operate a successful salon for years to come.

We're incredibly grateful for the generous contribution of our local community partners and organizations that keep our program afloat and with resources to serve individuals in our city that are most in need. Through this program, and with the continued support of donors, Legal Aid Services of Broward County aspires to continue on its mission of helping entrepreneurs create wealth, social stability, and economic opportunity in low-income minority neighborhoods in Broward County.

BY THE NUMBERS: 2020

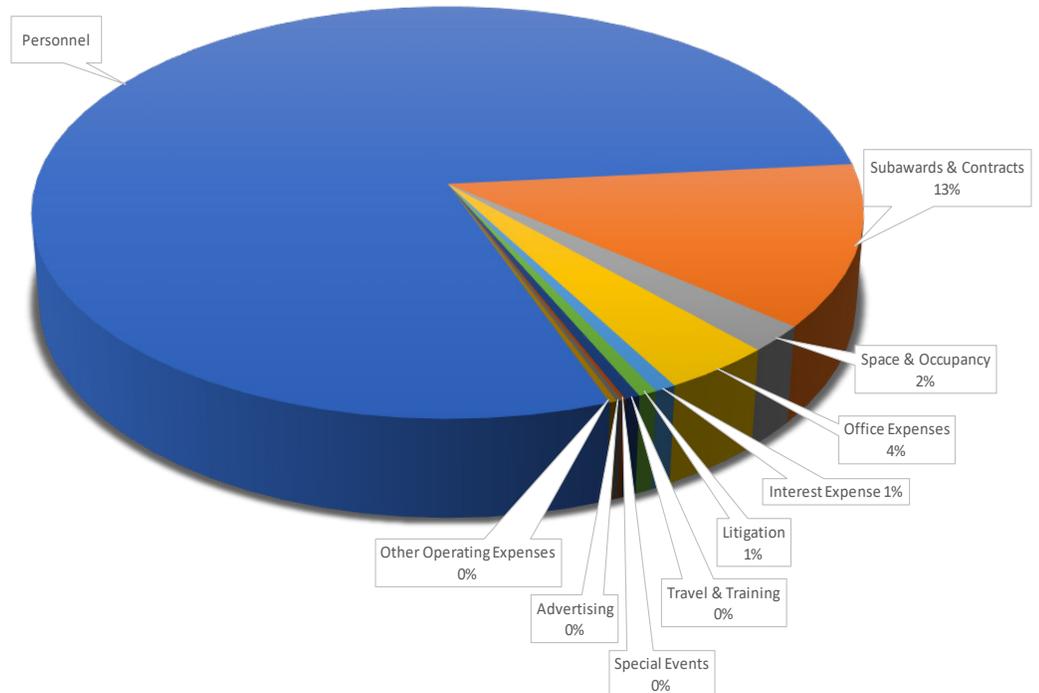
Revenue

Source	Revenue
State/Local	\$5,614,365
Federal	\$3,242,822
Foundations	\$350,365
Contributions/Donations	\$259,143
Other Income	\$638,403
TOTAL	\$10,105,098



Expense

Source	Expense
Personnel	\$7,639,241
Subawards & Contracts	\$1,229,146
Space & Occupancy	\$200,959
Office Expenses	\$365,615
Interest Expense	\$70,677
Litigation	\$61,956
Travel & Training	\$51,088
Special Events	\$13,451
Advertising	\$18,118
Other Operating Expenses	\$23,625
TOTAL	\$9,673,876



OUR SPONSORS



\$10,000+



\$5,000 - \$9,999



\$4,999 and Under



Jacquelyn and Bruce Rogow, both former Legal Aid Lawyers, are seeking to encourage others to champion pro bono legal services in our community. In that spirit, they have made a \$50,000 commitment to Legal Aid Service of Broward County. Jacquelyn was an attorney with Legal Aid Service of Broward County in 1978-80, and Bruce, a civil rights lawyer in Mississippi in the 1960s, was Assistant Director of the Miami Legal Services Program and Chairman of the Broward Legal Aid Board in 1983. They are longtime supporters of legal aid programs and organizations. Their gift of \$50,000 over five years hopes to inspire members of the community to make five-year commitments (from \$1,000 to \$10,000 or more) to provide continuing support for programs essential to equal justice for all.

★ **THANK YOU LEAGUE OF JUSTICE DONORS FOR YOUR SUSTAINED ANNUAL COMMITMENT**
ENSURING ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST

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