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Annual Report

Legal Services of North Florida

2019
MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Choices. We are often defined by the choices we make or do not make. Each day, we face so many choices. Some large, some small. Where to live, what job will we have, who will we marry – if we choose to marry at all, where will we go to school.

These choices seem simple to many of us. Imagine that those choices are limited. Imagine only one choice, and that choice has consequences that could harm you or your family. Imagine having no good choices. Do I feed my family, or pay the utility bill? Do I stay with the person abusing me, or risk living on the streets? Do I stay in my home – damaged from a hurricane and growing mold from a leaking roof; or do I move to a new community without the social supports I have here?

LSNF’s advocates help people sort through these difficult choices every day, deploying legal solutions to improve the choices or reduce the harm caused as a result. A family living in substandard housing can decide whether to stay and fight for improvement or move to a new home, with a member of the LSNF team helping them know if there are other, better choices. With legal information and advice, someone can know the consequences of those choices better. A victim of domestic violence can lay out a safety plan that includes protection for their children and financial stability to prevent continued abuse. A person experiencing homelessness can access social security and other supports previously unavailable to them – giving them choices in housing and even a path to return to work.

Choices in 2019 were no different for those in the Panhandle, especially those still facing decisions around Hurricane Michael recovery, reduced availability of affordable housing, limited access to employment, and heightened stress causing challenges for students, families, and organizations alike. LSNF is honored to be working in the trenches with our neighbors as we turn this critical recovery effort into one of opportunity. Each person we helped – each case we handled – made

the Florida Panhandle a better place for that person and for our communities. As we look to 2020, we do so with a continued goal for our neighbors to find their world filled with better choices to protect themselves and their families economically and in improved health and

Leslie Powell-Boudreaux, Executive Director

Yvonne Whitehead, Board President
The mission of Legal Services of North Florida is to provide an opportunity for justice for eligible residents through representation conducted efficiently and comparable in quality to that of the private bar, and through other forms of legal assistance designed to provide a full range of civil legal services to those in need.
Even a year after Hurricane Michael, LSNF saw many clients facing a myriad of legal challenges – some more extreme than others. For Denise*, living with a disability was difficult, but after the storm it was even harder in her subsidized housing. After being sexually assaulted by a contractor in her apartment complex, she decided she needed to leave, but her landlord wouldn’t let her switch apartments and affordable housing in her area was nearly nonexistent. Denise found LSNF and we were able to ask for accommodations from the public housing offices based on her circumstances. Our attorney was granted an emergency transfer request and even secured a 20% increase for the rent payment.

*Names of clients have been changed
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LSNF was appointed as attorney ad litem for Annie*, a minor in foster care. At the time, Annie was being considered for residential treatment. LSNF worked with Annie to make sure she had representation throughout the dependency case proceedings, which included pre and post termination of parental rights. Our attorneys advocated and negotiated on Annie’s behalf to ensure proper placements based on her needs and to make sure that she had the proper treatment and medications. All of the work LSNF did to help Annie eventually ended with her in the safety of her grandmother’s home, who adopted her.
WHO DO WE SERVE?

Clients are normally limited to an adjusted income of 125% of the federal poverty guidelines, with several of our grant sources having other income guidelines. All cases must be civil in nature and adhere to our priorities.

CLIENTS & SERVICES

1,311 Men
3,942 Women

BENEFITS TO CLIENTS

- $1,682,897 in one-time benefits awarded to clients
- $1,699,620 million in annual benefits for our clients

HELP PROVIDED

- Helped 1,087 families stay in their homes by defending unlawful evictions, negotiating reasonable terms, and providing legal counsel
- Prepared 542 wills and advanced directives

Clients are normally limited to an adjusted income of 125% of the federal poverty guidelines, with several of our grant sources having other income guidelines. All cases must be civil in nature and adhere to our priorities.
TOTAL NUMBER OF CLIENTS SERVED: 6,641

CLIENTS & SERVICES

- Provided specialized service to veterans experiencing homelessness
- Obtained financial relief for residents of public housing
- Resolved tax controversies for low-income taxpayers
- Recovered social security benefits for clients with disabilities
- Represented children in the foster care system
- Helped victims of domestic violence or sexual violence or human trafficking separate from their abusers
- Helped survivors of disaster
Keynote speaker, Tom Julin, Esq. spoke during Law Day Celebration on May 1, 2019. Speaker Tom Julin spoke on the 2019 Law Day theme—Free Speech, Free Press, Free Society—focusing on these cornerstones of representative government. Law Day also recognized the law community’s outstanding contributions made by attorneys of the Second Judicial Circuit, along with partners Legal Aid Foundation of Tallahassee and the Florida State University College of Law. Awards were presented for professional and judicial excellence to the following individuals:

The Joy Aukema Taps Children’s Advocate Award
The Honorable Mark Walker

The Parks and Crump, Thurgood Marshall Judicial Excellence Award
Representative Lorrane Ausley

The Richard W. Ervin Equal Justice Award
The Honorable Stephen Everett

The Blaise N. Gamba Outstanding Pro Bono Award
Laurel Tallent

LSNF works closely with private attorneys throughout our 16-county service area to give legal assistance to low-income and vulnerable individuals. Through the Private Attorney Involvement Program (PAI), this cooperation takes several forms including coordinating volunteer attorney resources of time and/or financial support.
PRO BONO RECOGNITION

PRO BONO RECOGNITION AND AWARDS
The Florida Bar President’s Pro Bono Service Award Recipients are those who have been juried through a rigorous panel process. These members of the law community across the entire state are dedicated servants to the community and provide a great deal of time to helping those who most need support finding justice.

The Florida Bar each year recognizes 21 lawyers for their pro bono services throughout the year. The 2019 Pro Bono Awards ceremony on January 25, 2019 was hosted by the Florida Supreme Court and certificates were presented by Florida Bar President Michael J. Higer. LSNF is honored to have nominated these three deserving recipients:

1st Judicial Circuit
Nancy Lynn Carty Hartjen

2nd Judicial Circuit
Jennifer LaVia

14th Judicial Circuit
Julia K. Maddalena

AWARD WINNERS

PRO BONO WEEK CELEBRATION
LSNF honored Pro Bono Celebration week on October 23, 2019, alongside co-hosts Legal Services of North Florida (LSNF), Okaloosa Bar Association, Walton County Bar Association, Inc. And The Florida Bar Foundation. Each year, Pro Bono Celebration recognizes the outstanding contributions made by attorneys of the First Judicial Circuit and brings together more than 150 attorneys representing top local law firms across the Florida Panhandle. Keynote presenter, The Florida Bar President John Stewart, presented the LSNF challenge coins and service awards to local attorneys.
Planned Giving: Leave a lasting legacy by naming LSNF as a beneficiary in your will.

Endowment Fund: Sustain LSNF’s services well into the future by helping our endowment grow.

Founders of Justice: Pledge or give $5,000 or more to LSNF and you can become a Founder of Justice.

Partners in Service: Members of The Florida Bar can meet their pro bono goal by contributing to LSNF.

Sponsor An Event: Sponsor our fundraising events, like Jazz for Justice or Dancing with the Stars, throughout the year.

Support one of our many in-kind gift giving programs.

Attorneys and judges can consider designating Cy Pres Funds to LSNF.

ROUND UP your purchases to the nearest dollar and donate the extra change to LSNF, every penny matters!
PRO BONO INVESTMENT IN 2018

- Over $50,000 Contributed through Partners in Service
- Nearly 4,277 Hours of Pro Bono Service
- $1,283,085 Worth of Legal Services Donated by Volunteer Attorneys

Cy Pres Fundraising: 2%
Partners in Service: 3.9%
Florida Bar Foundation: 8.8%
State & Local: 2.9%
County: 12.7%
Other Federal: 28.4%
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

PENSACOLA: JAZZ FOR JUSTICE

Jazz for Justice brought hundreds of guests to the Seville Quarter in 2019 for an array of music, food, and entertainment on November 10. Headlining the event, Rebirth Brass Band a Grammy-winning and a true New Orleans original brought all of the true French Quarter vibes to Jazz for Justice. Along with Rebirth, we featured incredible artists like locals Whiskey & Water, The Quashers, Ellen Vinson and Denise D’Angelo, and Big Daddy and Red Hot Java. Funds were raised through sponsorships, VIP ticket sales, and a silent auction that displayed the many incredible businesses and talented local artists in North Florida.

ALL PROCEEDS FROM OUR FUNDRAISING AND AWARENESS EVENTS HELP LSNF PROVIDE LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO RESIDENTS WHO QUALIFY TO RECEIVE THE FREE CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES LSNF PROVIDES THE COMMUNITY.
On December 11, 2019, the 3rd Annual Dancing with the Stars Tallahassee (DWTS) had a record-breaking evening raising funds for LSNF. The sold out, standing room only crowd of 300 community leaders cheered on their favorite celebrity dancers who collectively raised a record of over $113,000 for LSNF. Christian Cutillo won the 2019 People's Choice Award by bringing in over $27,000 in votes/donations! Then with a rousing paso doble, Josie Tamayo glided across the dance floor with incredible grace, sweeping up the crowd and judges in her performance, which led to Josie taking home the Judge's Choice. All of our celebrity dancers including Kristin Dozier, Tom Findley, Mutaqee Akbar, “Rocky” Bevis, Jasmyne Henderson, Mia McKown, Carrie Roan, and Glenda Thornton did an outstanding job with their dance performances and combined to help LSNF reach new heights and exceed our goal of $100,000.
LSNF is grateful for the many local and national governmental entities, agencies and grantors who have embraced our mission of justice by supporting our work. On behalf of all we serve we thank our funding partners.

**PARTNERS**

- AARP Foundation
- Archibald Foundation
- Area Agency on Aging for North Florida
- Bay Area Legal Services
- Bay County Bar Association
- Bay County Commission
- Calhoun County Commission
- Capital City Bank Group
- Center for Disaster Philanthropy
- Chase Bank
- City of Tallahassee
- Escambia County Commission
- Equal Justice Works
- First Presbyterian Church of Quincy
- Florida Office of the Attorney General
- Florida Bar Foundation
- Florida Coastal School of Law
- Florida Council Against Sexual Violence
- Florida Department of Elder Affairs
- Florida Guardian ad Litem
- Franklin County Commission
- Friends of LSC
- Gadsden County Clerk of the Courts
- Gadsden County Commission
- Gulf County Commission
- Holmes County Commission
- Internal Revenue Service
- Jackson County Commission
- Jefferson County Commission
- Justice Administration Commission
- Lakeview Center
- Legal Services Corporation
- Legal Services of Greater Miami
- Leon County Commission
- Liberty County Commission
- National Low-Income Housing Coalition
- Okaloosa County Commission
- Pensacola Foo Foo Festival
- Refuge House
- Regions Bank
- Second Circuit State Attorney
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living
- U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women