MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

PIVOT. VIRTUAL. ZOOM. REMOTE. All words that defined the work environment for Legal Services of North Florida in 2020. For the low-income and vulnerable who we serve, words like ACCESS, INTERNET, UNEMPLOYMENT, EVICTION, HUNGER defined their surroundings. We spoke to more victims of domestic violence who saw no safe way to leave their abuser; more families with children trying to make the ends to an ever-shortening string meet, with constant threats of eviction or foreclosure hanging over their shoulders. The COVID-19 pandemic has shone an even-brighter light on the disparities between those with financial stability, those on the cusp of poverty, and those in poverty or facing unsafe situations.

The Legal Services of North Florida team responded with agility and persistence. Within one week, our team moved to remote work, while maintaining limited staff in the office to meet with those who came, often facing emergencies, to our offices.

We developed enhanced tools to communicate with existing clients and to educate those in the community about their rights as tenants, homeowners, employees, students, taxpayers, and many others. We coordinated responses with the Courts, the local voluntary bar associations, the Florida Bar committees, our human services partners, and our medical providers. The cracks that our most vulnerable neighbors could fall through grew in size in 2020.

LSNF built new bridges and safety nets to help those with increased needs in these trying times.

As we close out 2020, we look back on the structures we built and know that many will need to continue – both because they remain necessary and because they help us to better serve all of those in need.

For LSNF, the words that define 2020 will be TEAMWORK, INNOVATION, DETERMINATION, SERVICE, and – as always – HOPE. JUSTICE.FOR ALL.

YVONNE WHITEHEAD
LSNF BOARD PRESIDENT

LESLIE POWELL-BOUDREAUX
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OUR MISSION

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.”
LSNF BOARD & STAFF

LSNF is guided by a 21-member Board of Directors, Seven of whom represent low-income client groups or are low-income clients. The remaining members include an accountant and volunteer attorneys appointed by local voluntary bar associations and the Florida State University College of Law.

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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.

RAY lost his job early on during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of lost wages, he got behind in his rent, even though he had never had an issue with rent before. Ray even had a verbal lease agreement going back a decade with his landlord. After applying to the local rental assistance program, Ray let his landlord know he submitted an application, but he was still met with a notice to vacate. Ray found LSNF with days left to respond. LSNF moved quickly and advocated successfully to keep Ray in his home, keeping him from becoming homeless.
Readers appreciate accurate information

Cases Handled in 2020

1867
Cases Handled Related to COVID-19

6763
Cases Handled in 2020
HELP PROVIDED

LSNF serves thousands of people each year across 16 counties. Each of our 5 offices manages hundreds of cases at a time, ensuring eligible clients receive professional and adequate legal assistance.

OF LSNF’S CLIENTS

- 75% were women

$1,682,897 in one-time benefits awarded to clients

$1,699,620 in annual benefits for our clients

1087 families stay in their homes by defending unlawful evictions, negotiating reasonable terms, and providing legal counsel.

542 wills & advanced directives were prepared for clients.

19%

28%

38%

CLIENTS

Had eviction cases

Had cases related to COVID-19

Had family law cases

ADDITIONAL LEGAL SOLUTIONS PROVIDED

- Provided specialized service to veterans experiencing homelessness.
- Obtained financial assistance 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 find safety away from their abusers.
The Florida Bar President’s Pro Bono Service Award Recipients represent members of the legal community across the entire state that are dedicated to their local communities and give their time to helping bridge the gap to justice by providing access to the courts through their pro bono work. Each year, the Florida Bar recognizes 21 lawyers for their pro bono services throughout the year. After a rigorous panel process, these attorneys are chosen. LSNF proudly nominates attorneys in our service area. The following deserving recipients received a Pro Bono Service Award in 2020:

- Shelley Guy Reynolds, 1st Judicial Circuit
- Robert G. Churchill, Jr., 2nd Judicial Circuit
- Ladray Brandan Gilbert, 14th Judicial Circuit
- Nicholas Joseph Youtz, 14th Judicial Circuit
PRO BONO RECOGNITION

Law Day Celebration

Mitigating COVID-19 meant changing how people joined events during 2020 and LSNF was excited to find a way to still bring Law Day Celebration 2020 to the Second Judicial Circuit. Awards were presented for professional and judicial excellence to the following individuals:

The Richard W. Ervin Equal Justice Award Winner
The Honorable Justice Major B. Harding

The Parks & Crump, Thurgood Marshall Award for Judicial Excellence Winner
The Honorable Judge Francis J. Allman

Recognition of the 2020 Florida Bar President’s Pro Bono Service Award for the 2nd Judicial Circuit
Robert G. Churchill, Jr.

FSU College of Law Blaise N. Gamba Outstanding Pro Bono Service, Law Student Award Winner
Kathryn Mesa

Keynote speaker Martha Barnett, retired partner at Holland & Knight LLC and former President of the American Bar Association, spoke on the Law Day 2020 theme “100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment”. This event was viewed by thousands, across multiple platforms online. The event provided recognition, custom videos, and heartfelt gratitude throughout.

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 ENGAGEMENT

Over 100 pro bono attorneys helped LSNF serve clients in need across the Florida Panhandle. Their service provided incredible resources for low income and vulnerable populations that otherwise would not have had access to our courts.

1,529
Attorneys gave over 1,500 hours of service to low income individuals across North Florida.

824
PAI attorneys served 824 clients with a total of 1,937 household members in 2020.

$391,700
LSNF Pro Bono attorneys gave the equivalent of $391,700 worth of legal services through their time.
LSNF continued to recognize pro bono attorneys during Pro Bono Celebration through a virtual event that featured The Florida Bar President, Dori Foster-Morales, Esq. as the 2020 keynote speaker. This event aired on October 20 and brought in attendees from across the First and Fourteenth Judicial Circuits, recognizing over 100 volunteers who have served LSNF. These volunteers were mailed a challenge coin in recognition for their service and encouraged to share, with LSNF and their broader community, why they support pro bono and volunteer service.
Jazz for Justice 2020 was no stranger to the challenges COVID-19 presented to all in-person events. Thankfully, with the incredible support and partnership of WUWF in Pensacola, LSNF’s annual Jazz for Justice continued on with a virtual showcase of local and regional talent on November 14, 2020.

Headlining the event was national recording artist Flow Tribe, along with Al Martin & Michael J. McCartan, Big Daddy & Red Hot Java, David Paul Zimmer, Dirty Foot String Band, Ellen Vinson & Bobby van Deusen, Kathy Lyon, The Ladies Of (feat. James Hall), and Whiskey & Water.

Continuing this tradition was important and in doing so, Jazz for Justice reached not only listeners at WUWF and online across multiple platforms, but also Cox Channel 4 ECTV Channel 1004, Spectrum Channel 98, Mediacom Channel 98, ATT&T U-Verse Channel 99 and WUWF digital platforms.
Dancing with the Stars

While Dancing with the Stars has traditionally been in December, LSNF pushed this event back 2 months in an effort to ensure safety and proper planning through the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2020’s DWTS wasn’t in 2020 but wasn’t quite 2021, we decided to name this hybrid event Dancing with the Stars 2020-ish!

This event will land on February 25, 2021 and look a little different than previous years with attendees socially distanced in person, as well as online viewers! Each celebrity dancer has signed on to support LSNF, excited to bring some of the fervor of DWTS to a virtual and in-person crowd.

Dancing with the Stars 2020-ish Dancers

Akin Akinyemi

Kimmy Hogan

Rick Minor

Heather Telfer

Suzanne Van Wyk
INVESTING IN LSNF

Leave a lasting legacy by naming LSNF as a beneficiary in your will.

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

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

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

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

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

Become a sustaining donor through LSNF’s monthly giving opportunities.

$133,281
Raised during the Partners in Service Campaign
LSNF is grateful to work alongside so many local, state and national governmental entities, along with agencies across the Florida Panhandle who have embraced our mission of justice by supporting our work. On behalf of all those we serve we, LSNF would like to thank our funding partners.

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Advantage Aging Solutions
Bay County Commission
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Florida Office of the Attorney General
Florida Bar Foundation
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Florida Department of Elder Affairs
Foo Foo Festival
Franklin County Commission
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Gadsden County Commission
Gulf County Commission
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Holmes County Commission
Internal Revenue Service
Jackson County Commission
Jefferson County Commission
Justice Administration Commission
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Legal Services Corporation
Legal Aid Foundation of Tallahassee
Legal Services of Greater Miami
Leon County Commission
Liberty County Commission
National Low-Income Housing Coalition
Okaloosa County Commission
Pensacola State College
Refuge House
Santa Rosa County Commission
Second Circuit State Attorney
Tallahassee-Leon County Office of Economic Vitality
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living
U. S. Department of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women
United Way of West Florida
United Way of Northwest Florida
United Way of the Big Bend
Wakulla County Commission
Walton County Commission
Washington County Commission
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There is no higher calling for members of the Bar than to serve those who fall in the justice gap in our community and the state as a whole.

Suzanne Van Wyk
Administrative Law Judge

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