Taking Cases
Changing Lives

Volunteer Lawyers for Justice
Annual Report 2017-2018
In 2017 and 2018, VLJ impacted 8,200 people through the following programs:

**AIDING WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND FAMILIES**
- Children’s Representation Program
- Divorce Program
- New Jersey Human Trafficking Victims Legal Assistance Program
- South Ward Promise Neighborhood
- Tenancy Program

**RESPONDING TO DISASTER**
- Disaster Legal Response Program

**ADVOCATING FOR VETERANS**
- PSEG Veterans Legal Clinic
- Veterans Legal Wellness Clinic

**WORKING THROUGH FINANCIAL CRISIS**
- Bankruptcy Program
- Consumer Law Program
- Reentry Legal Services (ReLeSe)

$4,866,760 in free legal services were donated by VLJ volunteer attorneys in 2017 and 2018

3,140 legal cases were handled by VLJ in 2017 and 2018

50% VLJ increased the percentage of clients placed with pro bono attorneys by 50% over 4 years
Dear friends,

We are so honored to work with VLJ’s amazingly talented board, staff, volunteers, donors, and community partners. The collective impact of our work fighting for justice for vulnerable client populations across our state is apparent not only in the legal victories of our clients, but also in the ripples that our sometimes seemingly “small” actions make upon our community. 2017 and 2018 were years of considerable expansion and achievement for VLJ.

The impact of the work performed by the volunteers from Prudential Financial, Inc. and Lowenstein Sandler LLP was felt well beyond the doors of VLJ’s Tenancy Program. Legal teams assisted low-income tenants facing imminent eviction in Essex County by reviewing complaints, determining affirmative defenses, and negotiating with landlords. The attorneys achieved favorable outcomes for 85% of the tenants helped, keeping families in their homes and providing greater stability for our community.

Visionary leaders at BASF Corporation and Panasonic Corporation of North America partnered with VLJ to create the Veterans Legal Wellness Clinic, the first legal clinic at the East Orange VA Hospital. Attorneys conduct extensive interviews and provide legal advice to veterans at this clinic. As “Alan’s” story displays on page 5, seemingly limited legal assistance can have far-reaching reverberations.

In 2018, VLJ began a five-year partnership with South Ward Promise Neighborhood. In this innovative program, VLJ is the legal services provider collaborating with 20+ community partners, to provide wrap-around support to families in Newark’s South Ward, so children in that community can successfully transition through school to college to career—leaving a long-lasting imprint.

Donations can also cause upsurges. At the outset, small individual donations were combined with a modest grant to fund VLJ’s New Jersey Trafficking Victims Legal Assistance Program. Because of that initial funding, VLJ was able to apply for and received a two-year government grant that began in 2018, dramatically increasing the legal services available to human trafficking victims across New Jersey.

VLJ’s founders knew that the legal needs of New Jersey’s most vulnerable residents could not be met by legal services attorneys alone; partnering with private law firms, corporations, law schools, foundations, and individual donors offers a greater opportunity to give marginalized people a voice in the legal system. We are proud to report that VLJ’s 15 staff members worked with more than 500 volunteer attorneys in both 2017 and 2018; those attorneys educated 1,200 people at legal seminars, worked on 3,140 legal matters and helped 8,200 of our most vulnerable neighbors. Eighteen years after VLJ was founded, the ripples of our collective work have become waves enabling us to take cases and change the lives of the people we serve. Thank you for your support!

Cathy Keenan
Executive Director

Susan McGahan
Chair, Board of Trustees
In June, VLJ received the 2018 Jefferson Award Medallion in the Volunteer Group category for outstanding work benefiting the community.

Established in 1972, the Jefferson Awards are the official recognition program of the United States Senate and are considered America’s highest honor for public service and volunteerism. In New Jersey, the awards are the official recognition program of the Governor’s Advisory Council on Volunteerism.

VLJ was recognized for our commitment to coordinating free legal services throughout the state and for partnering with more than 1,500 attorneys and paralegals who help those in need. From helping veterans resolve civil legal barriers preventing successful return to civilian life, to defending low-income tenants against eviction, to assisting victims of human trafficking vacate their criminal records, VLJ’s work impacts over 3,600 people every year.

We are so honored to be recognized and grateful for everyone who helps us carry out our motto: “Taking Cases. Changing Lives.”
Advocating for Veterans

“Alan” served honorably in the U.S. Army for 16 years. After returning to civilian life, he faced several legal challenges and he reached out to VLJ for help. Alan attended the PSEG Veterans Legal Clinic to get help restoring his driver’s license, which was suspended due to unpaid parking tickets in several towns.

In New Jersey, unpaid parking tickets can lead to additional surcharges, fines, and even license suspension. For people with limited incomes, those surcharges become insurmountable and regaining a driver’s license seems out of reach; Alan’s surcharges amounted to more than $3,500. Without a driver’s license, Alan’s work commute took six hours each day by public transportation, and he wasn’t able to see his three daughters during his allotted parenting time.

The volunteer lawyers at the PSEG Clinic worked with Alan to draft letter motions to the municipal courts to dismiss the tickets and surcharges. Three of the courts dismissed the tickets and surcharges outright and two courts reduced the surcharges significantly so that Alan was able to pay them off. Now that Alan has his license again, his commute has been cut by more than three hours a day! Today, not only is Alan expanding his job skills by taking resume-building workshops, but he is also able to spend time with his daughters – all because VLJ volunteers helped him restore his driver’s license.

“I am very thankful I was at the right place at the right time to find VLJ and their lawyers. My life has improved immensely because of them.”

- “Alan,” PSEG Veterans Legal Clinic
Fighting for Safe and Stable Housing

A life-long resident of Newark, “Sabine” had lived in her apartment for 10 years. After years of neglect by the landlord, Sabine’s apartment fell into disrepair; her unit had extensive water damage, broken fixtures in the bathroom, dysfunctional smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, exposed electrical outlets, and broken doors. After contacting Newark code enforcement to have the building inspected, Sabine was told to withhold her rent and notify her landlord. Sabine then became one of the 40,000 tenants in Essex County who have an eviction complaint filed against them each year.

Newark has long suffered with deplorable rental conditions at the hands of irresponsible landlords. Mayor Ras Baraka sued landlords on behalf of the City of Newark in July 2017, stating, “For far too long, these horribly managed buildings have been a breeding ground for disease, crime, blight, and suffering in Newark.”

Sabine attended VLJ’s Tenancy Clinic, where volunteer attorneys from Prudential Financial and Lowenstein Sandler provide legal aid to tenants facing imminent eviction. After the clinic, Meg Slachetka and Frank Catalina from Lowenstein Sandler accepted Sabine’s case for full representation. After months of litigation by the Lowenstein Sandler team, Sabine was victorious; the judge returned $7,000 of rent to her and gave Sabine four additional months in the apartment. Luckily, Sabine was in the 1% of tenants who obtain legal representation in housing court in New Jersey and her rights were enforced. Sabine used the money awarded to her to move to a new, safe home.
Rebuilding the Lives of Human Trafficking Survivors

“Maria” came to the United States from Ecuador on a tourist visa in 1995. When she struggled to make ends meet, her landlord lured her into one of the most notorious trafficking rings in the country. The ring controlled Maria’s life for 16 years; she was moved throughout the U.S. and was subjected to horrific abuse, harassment, and sex against her will. In 2011, the FBI raided the ring. Maria cooperated with law enforcement and her testimony helped lead to the arrest, conviction and sentencing of the traffickers to 51 months in prison.

Despite her heroic efforts, Maria was still struggling six years later when she was referred to VLJ’s New Jersey Trafficking Victims Legal Assistance Program. A 47-year-old mother of three, Maria was living in Chicago with her severely disabled young son and was unemployed, largely due to the criminal record she had from her years as a human trafficking victim.

Maria needed to clear her record and move on from the years of abuse. Nora Wolf, an associate with Gibbons PC, co-counseled Maria’s case with VLJ. Nora worked tirelessly to clear Maria’s NJ record. With the drastic expansion of VLJ’s Trafficking Program in 2018, VLJ helped 62 victims of human trafficking, most of whom, just like Maria, needed help with clearing their criminal records. Vacating a criminal record can transform a trafficking victim’s life, opening doors that had previously been closed. Now, with her NJ arrest history wiped from her record, Maria is on the road to a brighter tomorrow with her children.

Human trafficking is the 3rd largest criminal activity in the world, behind illegal arms & drug sales

NJ’s call volume to the National Human Trafficking Hotline is the 9th highest of all states
Taking Cases and...

VLJ is able to help so many clients each year because of the tireless efforts of our volunteer attorneys, paralegals, law students, and other volunteers. These individuals donated close to 14,000 hours of service in 2017 and 2018. We are grateful to all of our volunteers, but would like to provide special recognition to the lawyers who reported 25+ hours of service in 2017 and 2018. Attorneys who volunteered 25+ hours in both 2017 and 2018 are indicated with an *.

On behalf of the clients we serve, thank you!

AJ Agnew
Adam Arnold
Sylvia Ayler
Peter Balsamo
Roy Basile
Nicole Beeler
Marninah Beitel
David Berney
Laury Betha
Richard Billups
Christopher Birkheimer
Joseph Blaney
Lenore Boyarin
Robert Brauer
Baerbel Brown
William Brown
Victoria Calle
Thomas Cannon
Kenneth Cerullo

Eric Chafetz
Marjorie Chertok
Patricia Clark
Debra Clifford*
Anna Cocuzzo
Anne Collart
Dana Cordes
Mariann Crincoli
Daniel D’Alessandro
Thomas DeCataldo
Kathleen DeCelie*
Jennifer Delgado
Sam Della Fera*
Sneha Desai*
Karen Edler
Janet Fair*
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Jack Feinstein
Wendy Feldman

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Alysa Finnegan
Catherine Fitch
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Laura Ginkel
Staci Greenwald*
Matthew Heimann
George Holland*
Lauren James-Weir
Wojciech Jung
Margaret Jurow
James Kellar
Nick Keller
Laura Kelly
Su Kim
June Kim
Natalie Kraner*
Kelly Lloyd Lankford
Larry Lesnik
Debra Levin
Bruce Levitt
Alexandra Litvin
Pantea Maddux
Michael Malia
Beth Manes
Mary McElroy
Susan McGahan*
Molly Mcgee
Daniel McGrady
Maryann McGrath*

VLJ trained 577 volunteers at 20 training events in 2017 and 2018
9,13742 hours of legal services were donated by VLJ volunteer attorneys in 2017 and 2018

...Changing Lives

Andrew Meltzer*
Howard Menaker*
David Miller
Leda Moloff
Sarah Monaghan
Amanda Munsie
Chioma Nelson
Mark Norgaard
Robert Nussbaum
Sheri Ostrowitz
Mary Frances Palisano
Denise Panzer
Tierney Peprah
Stephanie Pisko
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Cassandra Porter
Helen Quan
Lisa Quartarolo
William Ranieri
Denise Rekem*
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Ashley Richardson*
Maritza Rodriguez

Risa Rohrberger
Christopher Rojao
Geoffrey Rosamond*
Sondra Rosen
Rebecca Rosenfeld
Jennifer Sang
Amy Schwind
Melissa Scott
Steven Serna
Patricia Shatynski
Aliza Sherman
Jackie Shulman
Meg Slachetka
Shelley Slafkes
Kevin Small
Bryan Small
Paula Stefanou
Kaitlyn Stone
Linda Sweet Marks
Penelope Taylor
J. Eric Thies
Ashley Vallillo
Meredith Walsh*

Julie Warshaw
Guido Weber
Judith Weinstock
Catherine Weiss*
Danielle Weslock
Nora Wolf*
Amy Woltman
Loretta Yin
Raynard Yuro
Joseph Zakhary
Yong Zhao

“There are so many people out there who also aren’t being heard and VLJ lawyers can give them a voice, like mine gave me.”

-“Margaret,” Children’s Representation Program
Most attorneys view retirement as an opportunity to slow down. But for VLJ trustee and volunteer attorney Howard Menaker, retirement provides more time for pro bono work.

Howard spent his career focused on tax and real estate matters, but as a pro bono attorney he has broadened his legal knowledge and experience. Howard volunteered in VLJ’s office for two years, conducting client interviews and assessing cases for merit.

In recent years, Howard volunteers his time through VLJ’s Newark-based legal clinics, including the Consumer Law Clinic, the Divorce Clinic, and ReLeSe. Howard is so skilled with assisting low-income debtors that he manages the Consumer Law Clinic when VLJ’s staff attorneys are unavailable. In the past four years, Howard has volunteered at 200 clinics and donated more than 600 hours of his time!

Some of the most meaningful cases he has handled involve clients who were hospitalized and could not afford the significant medical bills that were not covered by their insurance and young clients with debt from a for-profit college that recently shut down. These clients were especially vulnerable, in dire need of legal assistance, and Howard valued the opportunity to help. Howard is a shining example of how VLJ lawyers are “Taking Cases and Changing Lives.”

“It’s always gratifying to be able to assist those in the community who truly need help. Pro bono work is a great opportunity to use your legal knowledge to lend a hand to others.”

– Howard Menaker, VLJ Trustee and Volunteer
Supporting Justice in New Jersey

Through the vision and generosity of our donors, VLJ provides much-needed legal help to New Jersey residents who otherwise would not have a voice in the legal system. Your donations help to ensure that access is for all, and not just the wealthiest members of our community. Thank you to all of our donors for your support of VLJ’s mission!

2017 DONORS

$100,000+
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Merck & Company, Inc.
PSEG Foundation
Prudential Financial, Inc.

$50,000-$99,999
David Bershad & Mindy Cohen
Legal Services Foundation of Essex County

$25,000-$49,999
AT&T
Lowenstein Sandler LLP
Panasonic Corporation of North America

$10,000-$24,999
BASF Corporation
Bressler, Amery & Ross, PC
Jewish Women’s Foundation of New Jersey
Kirkland & Ellis LLP
Littleton Park Joyce Ughetta & Kelly LLP
Montclair Fund for Women
Ocean County Long Term Recovery Group
Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP
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The Turrell Fund
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Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP

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Aristea Capital LLC

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Mark & Yvonne Daniel
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King & Spalding LLP
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New Jersey State Bar Foundation
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Lisa Scottoline
Thompson Hine
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Atlantic Federal Credit Union
Bederson LLP
Randi & Marc Berson and Kerri & Jared Levine
Lori Outzs Borgen
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Chicago Title/Fidelity National Title Group
Leon & Toby Cooperman
Hon. Patricia Costello (Ret.)
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Cullen and Dykman LLP
Gemma Giantomasi Diaco
$100,000+
McCarter & English, LLP
Merck & Company, Inc.
Prudential Financial, Inc.
PSEG Foundation
VOCA Grant Program

$50,000-$99,999
David Bershad & Mindy Cohen
Legal Services Foundation of Essex County
Panasonic Corporation of North America
South Ward Promise Neighborhood

$25,000-$49,999
BASF Corporation
Lowenstein Sandler LLP
Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP

$10,000-$24,999
American College of Bankruptcy
AT&T
Bressler, Amery & Ross, PC
Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP
Gibbons PC
Hogan Lovells US, LLP
Kirkland & Ellis LLP
The IOLTA Fund of the Bar of New Jersey
Littleton Park Joyce Ughetta & Kelly LLP
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The Turrell Fund
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Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP
Winston & Strawn LLP

$5,000-$9,999
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April Pish
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RBC Wealth Management
Reed Smith LLP
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Wilentz, Goldman & Spitzer

$2,500-$4,999
American Bar Association
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$1,000-$2,499
Alston & Bird, LLP
Atlantic Federal Credit Union
Andrew & Froma Benerofe

1/4 of New Jersey residents live below 200% of the federal poverty level, $47,688/yr for a family of four
With a yearly average of $2.4 million in donated services, donors get a 3-1 return on their investment at VLJ.
“Pro bono work with VLJ offers an exciting opportunity to use my legal expertise. Sometimes the issues that require so little effort from us result in an enormous benefit to the clients we serve. Seeing the relief on the faces of clients as they leave a legal clinic is remarkable—and the way I feel is pretty amazing, too!”

-Tracy Forsyth, Divorce Program volunteer

VLJ’s 2017 Financial Statement

INCOME

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EXPENSES

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<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
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Please check VLJ’s website in the coming months for the finalized 2018 financial records.
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Director of Administration and Community Engagement

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Staff Attorney

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Partner, Lowenstein Sandler LLP
Volunteer Lawyers for Justice (VLJ) seeks to improve the lives of economically disadvantaged adults, children, and families in New Jersey by empowering them with tools, advice and pro bono representation with the goal of securing fair and equal treatment within the legal system.

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