

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

this is what
equal justice
looks like



A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Neva-Marie Polley Scott



As we look forward to the 100th anniversary of Legal Aid Society (December 15, 2021), I sit and reflect on the work of the past while also taking a moment to envision what the next 100 years might hold. Over the last century, Legal Aid Society has evolved from a small collective of volunteer organizers and service providers to a mid-size law firm with more than 50 employees.

In the last ten decades, we have seen major changes in the law, in our society, and in the movement toward justice in a very unjust world. Our clients have always been disproportionately impacted by crises. At these moments in time, Legal Aid Society strives to be a place where they can turn for an advocate, a champion, and a compassionate ear.

We, like many non-profits in our community, continue to work to unravel historic disenfranchisement, red-lining, and other discriminatory practices impacting members of our client community. As the pandemic raged in 2020 and continues well into 2021, we have watched the devastating impact the crisis has had on our clients and their families.

Yet, at the same time, we saw you – our staff, our supporters, our friends – come out in record numbers. You donated your talent, time, and treasure. You picked up the mantel of justice for all, without hesitation, and remained true and steady in the face of adversity.

Since the start of the pandemic, and as the racial justice movement shines more light on systemic issues, we have seen record giving to Legal Aid, record volunteer initiatives, and record services to clients. As you will see throughout this report, your Legal Aid Society has been working hard, fighting for justice, and carrying on the 100-year-old tradition of legal service to our community.

As I step back from the position of Executive Director later this year, I reflect on what it has meant to be part of Legal Aid Society's legacy. It has been an honor to steward our mission and an even deeper honor to have walked alongside our clients and worked alongside such a dedicated team of advocates, donors, and friends.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Neva Scott". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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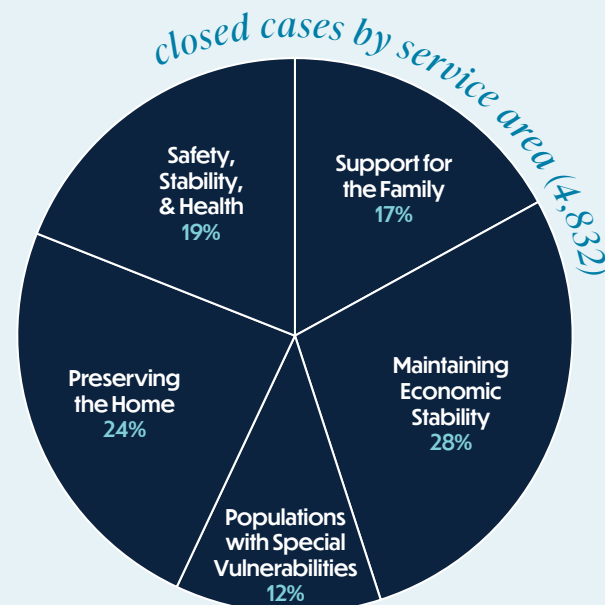
two thousand twenty BY THE NUMBERS

7,117
HOUSEHOLDS
SERVED IN 2020

6,973 CHILDREN **1,080** SENIORS **379** VETERANS

606 CLIENTS LIVING WITH A DISABILITY **673** CLIENTS HELPED BY VOLUNTEERS

1,803
SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE OR SEXUAL ASSAULT



LEGAL AID SOCIETY PARTNERS WITH NEW YORK FIRM, SIMPSON THACHER, TO EXPAND EXPUNGEMENT SERVICES

"It's not every day that you get a call from a prestigious international law firm," said Tracey Taylor, Managing Attorney of Volunteer Services and Community Engagement. "In the middle of the pandemic, as COVID-19 cases were rising, and thousands of Kentuckians were thrown into economic crisis, Simpson Thacher's call was more than welcome, it was exciting."

In early June 2020, Louisville native and Simpson Thacher attorney Brandon Kenney called our offices to propose an idea that would go on to impact hundreds of Kentuckians. Simpson Thacher's attorneys in the New York office would provide pro bono assistance in the preparation of expungement applications. The pandemic closed courts and slowed processes, creating a waiting list of several hundred individuals in need of expungement of records. The list kept growing as Legal Aid was unable to conduct our regular in-person expungement clinics.

While Simpson Thatcher has a longstanding commitment to public service, in 2020 the firm made it a priority to expand its work on pro bono projects that directly combat institutional and systemic racism. Bill Dougherty, Simpson Thacher's Chairman, invited all attorneys at the firm to propose ideas for new initiatives and emphasized "the importance of considering projects in different locations, and the need to partner with organizations who had been in the fight for a long time."

Mr. Kenney championed his home state and by October 2020, more than 30 Simpson Thacher attorneys (including Bill Dougherty) had been trained by Legal Aid and were ready to start serving clients. "As a Louisville native, I'm thrilled that we at Simpson Thacher have had the opportunity to partner with Legal Aid to make a positive impact on the lives of Kentuckians," said Mr. Kenney. "Over the last year, we've completed hundreds of expungement applications for those who have paid their debt to society and demonstrated exemplary conduct in the many years since they completed their sentences. Working closely with the Legal Aid team, we've helped these Kentuckians get closer to obtaining the clean record necessary to access employment, housing, and educational opportunities that will give them a meaningful chance at a better life. We look forward to continuing this important project and partnership."

The work is not done yet. Together, Legal Aid Society and Simpson Thacher are expanding our partnership to include referrals from the Louisville Urban League and Goodwill Industries of Kentucky.

**Simpson
Thacher**

SADIQA REYNOLDS RECEIVES THE 2020 BROWN-FORMAN SPIRIT OF JUSTICE AWARD

On October 28th, Legal Aid Society honored Sadiqa Reynolds, President and CEO of Louisville Urban League and longtime advocate for equal justice, with the sixth annual Brown-Forman Spirit of Justice Award on WAVE 3's WAVE Country.

The Brown-Forman Spirit of Justice Award is given annually to a member of the community who demonstrates deep dedication to upholding the principles of equal justice. Past recipients include Edward S. and Cornelia Bonnie, R. James Straus, the Honorable Boyce F. Martin III, Stephen Reily, and Martha Hasselbacher.

Though the award ceremony traditionally takes place at Legal Aid Society's annual Brush Bottle & Barrel of the Bluegrass fundraiser, this year's event was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, the Legal Aid Society partnered with WAVE 3's WAVE Country with Dawne Gee to present the award.

"If you have built your life work around giving voice to the last, the least, and the lost, there is no greater honor than recognition from an organization that pursues justice for those who have run out of options and sometimes even hope," said Reynolds. "The goal is not to continue preventing those who need us from falling through the cracks, but instead, to close the cracks. If we lived in a just world, we would need no Legal Aid Society to serve the poor, and we would certainly need no Urban League, but until then, we will continue to partner in the fight for equal access and equal justice for all. We honor each other not because it is required but to remind ourselves that we are not now, nor have we ever been, in this alone. I am humbled by the recognition and even more inspired to fight. I hope that you are, too!"

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2020 PRO BONO AWARD RECIPIENTS

Each October, the Legal Aid Society celebrates Pro Bono Celebration Week, presenting awards to select volunteers who have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to pro bono service. The 2020 award recipients are:

- **Karen Faulkner** – Karen Faulkner Law, 2020 Outstanding Volunteer Award
- **Julianna Madaki** – Law Practice Group PLLC, 2020 Outstanding Volunteer Award
- **T. Morgan Ward** – Stites & Harbison, 2020 Outstanding Volunteer Award
- **Robyn Rochelle Smith** – 2020 Kentucky Pro Bono Champion



BROWN-FORMAN

2020 JUSTICE FOR ALL CAMPAIGN RAISES A RECORD \$500,000!

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and with more Kentuckians in need of civil legal aid, our community heard the call and raised over \$500,000 to support Legal Aid Society's life-transforming (and sometimes life-saving) work. With the exceptional and creative leadership of Bart Greenwald and the entire Justice for All Campaign Committee, over 600 donors, law firms, corporations, and foundations contributed to 2020's historic campaign.

In the end, success for Legal Aid is not measured by the money we raise, but by the people we will help with that money. As H. E. Luccock once said, "No one can whistle a symphony. It takes a whole orchestra to play it." Equal justice does not happen without a community of donors, volunteers, and justice fighters all playing their part. Thank you for playing your part!

DOUBLE DOWN FOR JUSTICE

As part of the 2020 Justice for All Campaign, we asked our donors to "Double Down for Justice" by making a gift to the 2020 campaign and pledging support for the 2021 campaign. The donors below contributed over \$60,000 in gifts and pledges to 2021 Justice for All Campaign, providing greater stability for Legal Aid at this unpredictable time.

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Please contact Julia Leist (jleist@laslou.org) for any listing corrections or omissions.

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“In a year with so much uncertainty, it is a statement to the character of our legal community and its leaders to see this generosity. This outpouring of support from firms, corporations, foundations, and individuals is a testament to the value of Legal Aid Society in our community. Legal Aid Society puts equal justice into action, and our community stands with this mission.”

THIS IS WHAT EQUAL JUSTICE LOOKS LIKE.

Baby Charlotte was diagnosed at birth with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA), a progressive genetic disorder that degrades motor neurons. If untreated, Charlotte would lose her ability to sit, stand, walk, and even breathe. Until four years ago, there had been no available treatment for SMA. Today, there is a cutting-edge treatment. While it will not replace the lost neurons, this treatment will slow and even stop the loss of motor function. For patients with the most severe forms of SMA, it has greatly reduced their risk of becoming ventilator-dependent and dying before age 2. This treatment has only been FDA-approved for approximately a year, is only available for children under 2, and costs \$2.1 million for the drug alone.

Charlotte's neurologist submitted her case for Medicaid prior authorization when she was 5 months old and already showing some symptoms, but she was repeatedly denied. Charlotte's Medicaid provider asserted (incorrectly) that the treatment is experimental for patients like Charlotte and that alternative, less expensive treatments were available.

Charlotte's neurologist told the family she was close to giving up the pursuit for approval before taking the case to her superiors. The UofL Chair of Pediatrics tried to get approval through back channels before ultimately bringing the case to Doctors & Lawyers for Kids.

Doctors & Lawyers for Kids took on the case in March of 2020 to pursue an administrative appeal. Over the course of the four months it took to request and schedule a hearing, Charlotte continued to show functional loss including a need for overnight oxygen support and issues swallowing. Her Doctors & Lawyers for Kids attorney continued preparation for the hearing, even looping in a national non-profit, NHELP for Medicaid technical assistance. According to NHELP, no baby with Charlotte's unique factors had been approved for Medicaid coverage of this treatment, so they were particularly interested in the outcome of our hearing. Two days before the hearing, the case was settled and the treatment was approved for Charlotte.

Baby Charlotte received her infusion in July and is doing well. Her mother sent a video in August that showed Charlotte (11 months) walking!

Doctors & Lawyers for Kids is generously supported by Norton Healthcare, Norton Children's Hospital Foundation, the Gheens Foundation, the Louisville Bar Foundation, the Kentucky Bar Foundation, and the Family Health Centers.



DOCTORS & LAWYERS FOR KIDS NOW A PROGRAM OF LEGAL AID SOCIETY

In the Fall of 2020, Doctors & Lawyers for Kids, founded in 2011 as non-profit medical-legal partnership, dissolved as an independent 501(c)3 organization and became an official program of Legal Aid Society.

As a program of Legal Aid Society, Doctors & Lawyers for Kids will benefit from the existing infrastructure of a nearly 100-year-old organization, building program capacity by utilizing Legal Aid's professional fundraising staff, financial management, advocacy support, and volunteer recruitment.

Doctors & Lawyers for Kids is a medical-legal partnership integrating legal care into medical care to empower families, promote resiliency, and eliminate social needs that contribute to poor health in our children. Legal Aid Society and Doctors & Lawyers for Kids partner with area medical clinics, including Norton Healthcare (Norton Medical Association Broadway and Norton Children's Hospital), UofL Pediatrics (Novak Center for Children's Health, Stonestreet, and Eastern Parkway), Family Health Centers (Portland, Iroquois, and East Broadway), and the Smoketown Family Wellness Center.

"I am delighted that Doctors & Lawyers for Kids has found a new permanent home at Legal Aid Society. Over the last 12 years, we have developed the program as a small independent nonprofit, dedicated to eliminating the legal obstacles to a child's health and well-being. I hope that as part of the larger organization, one that shares the same objectives and values; Doctors & Lawyers for Kids will continue to grow. Together with Legal Aid, we can achieve the goal of reaching every child in our community because every child deserves the right to be healthy."

MARTHA HASSELBACHER,
CO-FOUNDER OF DOCTORS & LAWYERS FOR KIDS



THANK YOU TO OUR EDWARD S. BONNIE ENDOWMENT FUND DONORS!

EDWARD S. BONNIE ENDOWMENT FUND

The Edward S. Bonnie Endowment Fund was established in 2011 by Edward S. (Ned) and Cornelia (Nina) Bonnie as a resource for annual unrestricted funding to ensure our neighbors living in poverty always have access to civil legal aid. In 2018, Mr. Bonnie passed away at age 88. His legacy to Legal Aid Society lives on through his wife, Cornelia, and through the Edward S. Bonnie Endowment Fund.

The fund is held at the Community Foundation of Louisville and is currently valued at over \$950,000. In 2021/2022, Legal Aid Society's Centennial Anniversary, our goal is to raise additional funds to increase the endowment to \$1 million. To make a contribution to the fund, mail gifts to the Community Foundation of Louisville, 325 W. Main Street, Suite 1110, Louisville, KY 40202.

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LEGAL AID SOCIETY LAUNCHES ELDER JUSTICE PROGRAM

Our Elder Justice Program is generously supported by Equal Justice Works and Atria Senior Living.



In June 2020, Legal Aid Society received a grant from Equal Justice Works to provide civil legal aid to elder victims of crime. Legal Aid Society is one of twenty legal aid organizations across the country to participate in the Elder Justice Project.

The grant has allowed Legal Aid Society to hire an Elder Justice Fellow for two years. While the pandemic complicated the launch of the program and derailed in-person outreach to a community particularly vulnerable to the virus, the Equal Justice Fellow has built strong relationships with senior service providers, prosecutors, and clients.

The program provides legal service in the following areas:

- Eviction from public or subsidized housing due to self-neglect or presence of others in violation of the elder's lease;
- Recovery of money or property due to financial exploitation from a family member, friend, or corporation;
- Revoking Powers of Attorney to prevent further abuse and create new life planning documents to protect victims in the future;
- Restoration of Public Benefits;
- Intimate partner violence or nursing home abuse.

THIS IS WHAT EQUAL JUSTICE LOOKS LIKE.

"Sharon" carried a lot on her shoulders. A senior herself, she is the caregiver to her 90-year-old father. Sharon had experienced physical and emotional abuse by her husband for years, but things began to escalate over the last year. Her husband began making threats that he would kill Sharon. In fear for her life (and her father's life), she hid her husband's guns. When Sharon's husband couldn't find them, he beat her and strangled her until she lost consciousness.

The police arrested Sharon's husband but he reached a plea agreement in his criminal case and was released from jail just eight days after his arrest, with orders to stay away from the house. Sharon knew that her husband would return if he was released and she begged the prosecutor for time to move out, but it was too late. Sharon's husband was released that night and took a taxi straight from the jail to her house, where he was immediately arrested again. Luckily, he was not able to harm Sharon or her father before the police arrived.

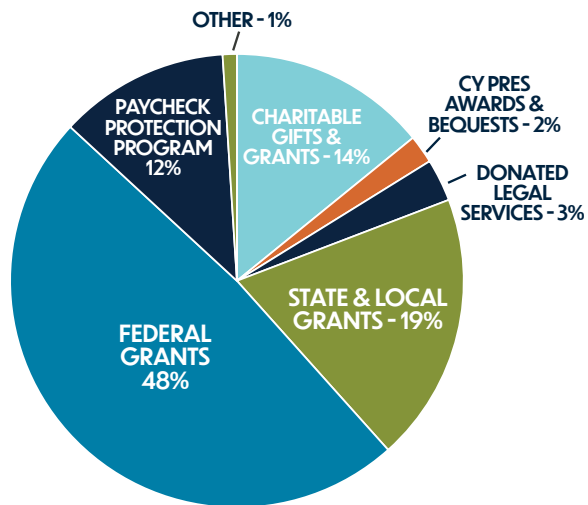
Scared for her future safety, Sharon called Legal Aid. She was connected to our Elder Justice attorney, who began to represent her in a civil protective order case. Sharon was able to obtain a two-year Domestic Violence Protective Order. Additionally, her attorney connected with the prosecutor's office to express Sharon's concerns with how her husband's case had been handled and to ensure that her wishes as a victim were given due consideration in the future.



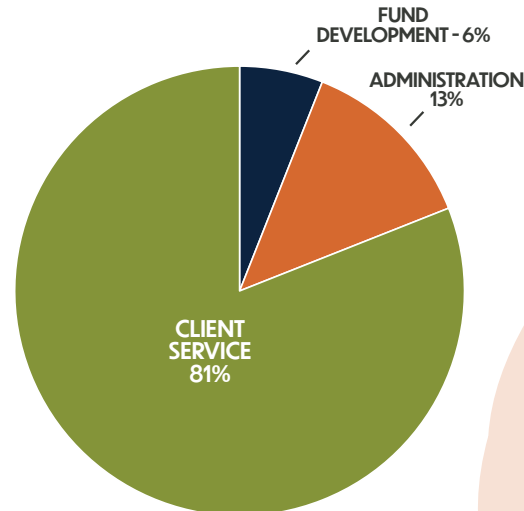
2020 IN REVIEW

TOTAL REVENUE - \$4,653,515 TOTAL EXPENSES - \$4,722,830
 TOTAL NET ASSETS - \$3,414,822

REVENUE



EXPENSES



once a legal aider, always a legal aider

JOIN THE LEGAL AID ALUMNI SOCIETY!

On December 15, 2021, Legal Aid Society will launch a year of celebration in honor of our 100th Anniversary. As part of the celebration, we are creating an Alumni Society. Since 1921, our work has been made possible by countless volunteers, staff, and students. If you've been a Legal Aider, we want to hear from you! Email jleist@laslou.org and let us know that you want to join the Legal Aid Alumni Society.



Dedicated Legal Aid Society attorney, Gwendolyn Horton

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