2022 Community Report

Onward Upstream

Navigating Community-Wide Problem-Solving
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Year in Review

In 2022, Step Up to Justice (“SU2J”) elected new leadership and welcomed Lisa Lovallo as our Board President. Lisa, Vice President & Market Leader for Cox Communications Southwest Region, brings a wealth of experience and a passion for improving access to justice in her new role. Lisa’s election marked an exciting juncture in our organization’s history. With her guidance, we engaged increasingly diverse partners from business, civic philanthropy, and industries outside of the legal community. In partnership with SU2J’s founding board, our new leadership positioned SU2J to preserve our mission while expanding our capacity to address the ever-growing need for civil legal services to assist low-income individuals and families in Pima County.

SU2J also paused to celebrate the organization’s sixth year of operation. This celebration also included an internal challenge to continue to innovate. We asked: “How can Step Up to Justice advance civil justice for low-income families in Pima County?” Although SU2J’s work will always include free civil legal assistance delivered by volunteer attorneys, SU2J recognized that emergency legal services alone will never fully close the justice gap. Instead, and in addition, our community needs reliable and trustworthy upstream outreach and education to help prospective clients avoid future legal disputes and to reduce the number civil legal emergencies in our community.

To meet this objective, SU2J expanded three of our legal education projects: eviction prevention, mobile-home ownership, and consumer issues. Each resource was designed to target the common pitfalls that threaten low-income households, with the ultimate goal of preventing legal emergencies and the emotional trauma and economic hardship that so often accompany them.

SU2J is a small organization, but we accomplished important work in 2022. Together with our community partners, volunteers, and donors, SU2J continued to grow the breadth and depth of our work. Thank you for your ongoing support of SU2J’s mission. With your help we have increased access to civil legal justice in our community. We move forward with a renewed passion for justice and a commitment to lifting our neighbors out of poverty.

In Service,

Michele Mirto  
Executive Director/Attorney at Law  

Melissa Spiller-Shiner  
Associate Director/Attorney at Law
Upstream Education

In an effort to inform, intervene and prevent future legal disputes, Step Up to Justice is investing significant resources in the development of upstream community education projects. The curriculum is available both online and in live workshop settings, in English and Spanish. The online materials were established for ease of access and convenience. The live workshops take place in conjunction with many of Step Up to Justice’s 26 community partners and allow volunteer attorneys to go into the community and meet clients where they live and work.

Programs

**MAPP**
Step Up to Justice’s Mobile Home Owner Asset and Property Protection (MAPP) Project, was initially funded with the support of the American Bar Endowment. The presentation explains mobile home owners’ legal rights and responsibilities when they own their mobile home, but rent the land beneath the home. The intent of the project is to help mobile home owners avoid disputes with their landlords and preserve their primary asset.

**BEACON**
Step Up to Justice’s Bankruptcy Education and Consumer Outreach Network (BEACON) Project launched with support from the American College of Bankruptcy Foundation. The goal of the project is to reach low-income residents before they have a legal emergency and provide them with information about their rights and responsibilities as consumers/debtors. Armed with this preventative education, consumers will be able to make informed decisions and avoid legal disputes.

**RENT**
At inception, Step Up to Justice’s Renter Education For Neighborhoods & Tenants (RENT) Project, was funded with support from the Agnese Nelms Haury Foundation. The project and curriculum were originally created in partnership with the University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law and its Innovation 4 Justice Project. The presentation and materials explain tenants’ legal rights and responsibilities under the Arizona Residential Landlord & Tenant Act. The intent of the project is to help tenants avoid disputes with their landlords, prevent eviction, and preserve housing stability.

*Additional support for RENT comes from Chicanos Por La Causa and the H.S. Lopez Family Foundation.*
Meghan McNamara Miller, Tretschok, McNamara, Miller & Feldman, P.C.

Meghan McNamara Miller has been a volunteer lawyer with SU2J since we opened our doors in 2017. Meghan assists SU2J with our Federal Court Clinic where she helps clients with Social Security Disability matters. She also accepts cases for direct representation.

In 2022, Meghan met a client at the clinic and agreed to represent him. For two years, the Social Security Administration had alleged that the client received an overpayment from the government of more than $32,000. In addition to demanding repayment, the Social Security Administration sought to terminate the client’s future benefits. Meghan appealed the case and received a fully favorable decision from the Administrative Law Judge, who found that the client did not have to repay the $32,000 and is still eligible for Social Security Benefits.

Meghan shared the following: “I entered the legal profession to be able to help people. I went to law school because I was able to see that my father, who is a lawyer, was able to give a voice to people who otherwise wouldn’t have one. And that’s what motivates me in my practice. Giving back is so important to me. It feeds my soul. And it is intensely rewarding to be able to help people who have no means to hire an attorney and who are facing really challenging, really stressful issues in their lives.”
In 2022, Step Up to Justice grew our partnership with the University of Arizona, engaging student interns and volunteers from the School of Government and Public Policy, the Legal Paraprofessional Program and law students from the University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law. Through their work with Step Up to Justice, students developed client interview skills and helped grow the organization's capacity.

Professor Lett says, “Volunteering enables people to re-engage in the Tucson community and see their work have a positive impact.” She shared that she also sees the difference in her students “who can put their classroom skills to use and learn how to love the law.”

### Staff, Fellows and Interns

- **Kayla Armantrout**
  *Family Law Fellow*
- **Ashley Bremner**
  *Administrative Assistant / Intake Specialist*
- **Guadalupe Durazo**
  *Administrative Assistant*
- **Grace Harrington**
  *Intern*
- **Briana Hoyos**
  *Program Coordinator*
- **Michele Mirto**
  *Executive Director*
- **Meena Ravishankar**
  *Intern*
- **Amanda Rutherford**
  *Director of Outreach*
- **Myrna Seiter**
  *HOME Fellow*
- **Melissa Spiller-Shiner**
  *Associate Director*
Board of Directors

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*Tucson Electric Power*

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*Hollingsworth Kelly*

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*Liberty, Audette & Manzi, P.C., Retired*

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*Pima County Superior Court, Retired*

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Debra S. Salaiz  
*Raytheon Technologies*

Denice R. Shepherd, Board Treasurer  
*Law Office of Denice R. Shepherd, P.C.*

SU2J STAFF

L-R (back row) Grace Harrington, Briana Hoyos, Meena Ravishankar, Michele Miro

L-R (front row) Ashely Bremner, Melissa Spiller-Shiner, Guadalupe Durazo, Amanda Rutherford, Myrna Seiter

Not pictured – Kayla Armantrout
2022 By the Numbers

$1,500,000 in Free Civil Legal Services
Provided to the Community

244 Volunteer Attorneys

Our cost per case is 72% less than the average cost per case for traditional legal aid

Increased clients’ collective assets by $2,324,738, increased their collective incomes by $372,636 per year, and decreased their debt by $864,064

Annual Budget

Funding Sources

22% Events
49% Foundations/Grants Court Contracts
29% Private Donations

In Thousands

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
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<td></td>
<td>$229,480</td>
<td>$245,333</td>
<td>$330,000</td>
<td>$394,500</td>
<td>$430,000</td>
<td>$512,000</td>
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645 Volunteer attorney-led legal clinics

Volunteered 4,506 hours to assist our low-income neighbors

SU2J impacted the lives of more than 1,000 children

Expanded the reach of 3 Upstream Community Education Projects

Volunteer attorneys helped 1,502 low-income clients with their civil legal needs

7 Full Time Staff + 2 Part Time Employees

Our Clients

14% Over 65

27% Victims of Domestic Violence

64% Women

Our Services

31% Housing

34% Family

Minor Guardianship 2%

Social Security 1%

Other 8%

Consumer/Debt Collection, BK 7%

Employment Unemployment 9%

Wills/Probate End of Life Planning 8%
Special thanks to all who make Step Up to Justice Possible

Volunteer Attorneys

Peter Akmajian
Ronald Allen
Monali Amin
Lauren Audette
Don Awerkamp
Peter Axelrod
William Bacon
Robert Barrasso
Thomas Bayham
Brooke Bedrick
Laura Belleau
Elisabeth Benavidez
Jodi Bernstein
Christie Blair
Ivelisse Bonilla
Paul Bowron
Patrick Broom
Caleb Brown
Jane Burch
Randi Burnett
Brendan Burns
J. Patrick Butler
Christopher Caine
James Carlson
George Carroll
Anna Ceder
Rob Charles
Joseph Chimienti
Kristy Clairmont
Melvin Cohen
Thom Cope
Jody Corrales
Steven Cox
Sarah Crotty
David Curi
Frederic Dardis
Joubert Davenport
Lynne Davies
David Diamond
Suzanne Diaz
Peter Economidis
Robert Erbe
Blair Feldman
Robert Fleming
Erin Fox
Roger Frazier
James Frisch

Shannon Giles
Leoni Gray
Kristin Green
Nathan Hannah
Andrew Heideman
Joy Herr-Cardillo
Megan Hill
Nicci Hinderaker
Barney Holtzman
Todd Jackson
Jane Jacobs
Robert Johnstone
Leonard Karp
Karolyn Keller
Michael Kelly
Arianne Kerr
Colleen Kinerk
Gary Kraft
George Krauja
Amy Krauss
Robert Kuhn
Marley Lamb
Jane Larrabee
Suzette Leonardo
Zelma Letarte
Sylvia Lett
Lisa Schriner Lewis
Pamela Liberty
Sabrina Lochner
Brian Longenbaugh
Jennifer Manzi
Amy Farrell Matheson
Patrick Mause
Michael McGrath
Lisa McNorton
Meghan McNamara Miller
Audrey Miller
Angela Moore
Annalisa Moore Masunas
Kay Nelson
Thomas Niemeir
Kasey Nye
Karen Nygaard
Luis Ochoa
Eric Ollason
Nathan Parkey
Adam Pelz
Frederick Petersen
Riisa Petersen Mandel
Terri Pones
William Poorten
Mark Ralles
John Richardson
Leighton Rockafellow
Jean Roof
Nathan Rothschild
Dan Rylander
Shannelle Schmitz
Kristin Schriner
Denice Shepherd
Lisa Siegel
Sally Simpson
Keith Singer
Marissa Sites
Jeffrey Sklar
Benjamin Smith
Spencer Smith
Lisa Anne Smith
Zachary Spanier
Sesally Stamps
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J. Gannon Strader
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Law Office of Denice R Shepherd
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Law Office of Robert F Fee
Liberty, Audette & Manzi, PC
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Maizlish Family Philanthropy of the Bank of America Charitable Gift Fund
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Willman Law Firm
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Arizona Superior Court in Pima County
City of Tucson, Arizona
Pima County, Arizona
United States District Court-District of Arizona
“There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they’re falling in.”

— Desmond Tutu