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Greetings friends and supporters,

We had a banner year at Legal Aid of Arkansas in 2021. Our staff closed a record 7,290 cases for clients, helping 18,507 people, including 8,510 children. We assisted over 1,000 clients impacted by or in recovery for Opioid Use/Substance Use disorder. We helped 2,081 survivors of domestic violence feel safe and supported while becoming self-sufficient. Our aid resulted in clients recovering or avoiding over $4.5 million, money they were able to use to better care for their families and assure a brighter future.

All of this during the uncertainty of a worldwide pandemic. Our staff met and exceeded every expectation and overcame every challenge. When the public health conditions indicated we should work remotely, we worked remotely. When circumstances required us to be fully engaged in court or other public forums, we were there. Through it all, we never missed a beat. Our clients were often heroic in pursuing their legal remedies, putting themselves on the line with the knowledge that their efforts would help other similarly situated individuals in the community.

The importance of access to civil legal services is magnified during times of uncertainty. Our ability to help stabilize families and communities by working holistically with other providers from the non-profit and government world, gives individuals and communities hope and a path forward.

This annual report provides a small snapshot of what we did, work that would not have been possible without the generosity of more than two dozen funders providing more than $4 million support for our efforts. From the Legal Services Corporation grant of almost $2 million to the $10 donations received on Giving Tuesday, we were good stewards of every penny. In addition to monetary support, 163 attorneys volunteered time to provide pro bono services valued at over $480,000.

This marks my 31st year at Legal Aid, and I continue to be amazed by the dedication and sacrifice of our staff, the generosity of those who provide us financial and volunteer support, and the resilience of our clients. Together, we make equal access to justice a reality.

Lee Richardson,
Executive Director
At the state level, the Arkansas Supreme Court is currently deciding a case led by five Legal Aid clients that will determine whether nearly 70,000 Arkansans receive federal pandemic unemployment benefits that the state prematurely terminated. And, we are leading the charge on a Freedom of Information Act case to ensure that the state can’t use a black-box algorithm hidden from the public to mete out unemployment benefits.

We’ve also had at least six cases decided or pending before the Court of Appeals involving the denial of unemployment benefits to workers affected by the pandemic and denial of orders of protections to survivors of abuse. Just last week, the Court of Appeals ruled that an abuser was in contempt of court when he came to the survivor’s home and caused over $10,000 of damage. Although orders of protection don’t guarantee safety for victims, rulings like this show that the justice system must be more active in deterring violence.

Of course, casework and lawsuits are only part of the picture. We’ve broken ground by being the first legal aid provider in the country to partner with federal healthcare authorities to fight the systemic barriers and stigma of substance use disorder for affected clients and families. We’ve held countless presentations to ensure clients know the latest about federal tax credits, disaster relief, rental assistance, and pandemic support programs. And, we’ve started monthly Spanish-language social media presentations to make sure this vital information reaches our Latinx client communities.

While we take pride in these accomplishments, we know there is so much more to do. Life before the pandemic was hard enough for our client communities. It is even harder now. We remain devoted to the cause and invite you to join our clients and our advocates to bring forth a more just world. Indeed, we can’t do it without you.
Annie B. Smith, University of Arkansas School of Law
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Bill Waddell, Arkansas Bar Association
Daniel Brightwell, Independence County Bar Association
Demetre Walker, Arkansas Support Network
Donna Price, Van Buren County Bar Association
Garry Ward, Diva & Dude
Helen Jenkins, Healing in the Hood
Kevin Watts, Cross County Bar Association
Kyle Stoner, Phillips County Bar Association
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Matt Cook, Breaking Bonds Ministries
Mihailo Albertson, NADC
Neal Burns, Greene County Bar Association
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Pamela Haun, Craighead County Bar Association
Rene Ward, East Arkansas Area Agency on Aging
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Tim Watson, Jr, Jackson County Bar Association
Val P. Price, Craighead County Bar Association

*current board as of December, 2021
THANK YOU DONORS!

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Annual Report - List of Donors
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Rose Law Firm
Tyson Foods

Defenders for Equal Justice

Arkansas Access to Justice Foundation

Thank you to all the shoppers who used our link on Amazon Smile, Kroger Reward Card donors, and the generous donors at the Fayetteville Farmers Market!
71% of low-income households experienced at least 1 civil legal problem. [Access to Justice, 2019]

There is one legal aid attorney for every 10,253 eligible Arkansans.

Arkansas' poverty rates rank 5th highest in the nation. [America's Health Rankings, 2021]

Arkansas has the fewest attorneys per capita in the country with one attorney per every 426 Arkansas residents. [American Bar Association, 2020]
ABOUT US

OUR MISSION
The **mission** of Legal Aid of Arkansas is to champion equal justice for low-income individuals and communities and to remedy the conditions that burden and marginalize them.

WHO WE ARE
Arkansas started its first legal services program in 1965 - after multiple mergers, **Legal Aid of Arkansas** was created in 2002.

Legal Aid of Arkansas is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization that provides **free legal services** to low-income individuals residing in the state of Arkansas in civil (non-criminal) cases. Legal Aid has offices in **9** locations, serving **31 of the 75** counties in Northern and Eastern Arkansas.

Legal Aid works together with The Center for Arkansas Legal Services and the Arkansas Access to Justice Commission to provide civil legal aid to all Arkansans.

Fighting Poverty, Maintaining Dignity, Assuring Justice

- www.arlegalaid.org
- @arlegalaid
- Helpline: 1-800-952-9243
- Office: 1-870-972-9224
Office Locations:
AR Children’s Hospital MLP  Rogers
Harrison  Springdale
Helena - West Helena  West Memphis
Jonesboro
Little Rock
Little Rock - Fair Housing Office
Newport

Office Locations:
El Dorado
Fort Smith
Hot Springs
Little Rock
Pine Bluff
Rogers
Russellville
In 2021, we provided civil legal services to 7,290 people, impacting 18,507 household members and 8,510 children.

We recovered $4,520,409 in economic benefits for low-income Arkansas families.

We helped 2,081 domestic violence survivors.

We empowered 1,007 families impacted by Opioid Use or Substance Use disorder.

We represented 1,657 individuals in court or administrative hearings.

“I would like to thank Legal Aid for helping me and my family now that I am able to support and provide for my family.”

--Resmond Pankae

In addition to three dozen Legal Aid staff members, 190 private attorney volunteers assisted by closing cases we referred to them.
Our Domestic Justice group assisted 1,113 clients seeking an Order of Protection. The Domestic Justice workgroup helps with obtaining and enforcing orders of protection and a variety of family law issues, including divorces and child custody cases, where there is an immediate or ongoing risk of harm to the child.

Our Economic Justice group assisted 136 clients with unemployment compensation cases. The Economic Justice workgroup protects rights related to public benefit programs (Medicaid, SNAP, Unemployment Insurance, Social Security), special education services, and employment, including the enforcement of laws outlawing discrimination and wage theft.

Our Housing group helped 828 clients with private Landlord/Tenant issues. The Housing workgroup fights housing discrimination under a variety of federal, state, and local laws. It defends tenants facing civil eviction suits and homeowners facing foreclosure suits.

Our Consumer group assisted 371 clients with criminal record sealing cases. The Consumer Protection workgroup focuses on asset, income, and resource protection. It protects consumers from unfair trade and debt collection practices. It files petitions to seal criminal records to remove barriers to employment and housing.
"Life can change in just a heartbeat. In my case it really did.

I suffered a series of heart attacks over a three year period that decimated my ability to work and whipped out what I thought was a secure financial future in just a matter of years.

My situation, because of all the medical expenses, spiraled out of control, so I was forced to make some very difficult decisions about where the limited resources that I had could be spent..." - Jon, Client

"LEGAL AID JUST CAME ALONG AND PUT THEIR ARMS AROUND ME AND SAID, WE CAN TAKE CARE OF THIS FOR YOU, AND THEY DID."
Congratulations to Neyra Galvez for receiving the Lynda Ware award!

Neyra Galvez is our Intake Specialist and Spanish Interpreter.

She joined Legal Aid in 2016.

Congratulations to Jason Auer for receiving the Versalee Wyatt award!

Jason Auer is the Housing Workgroup Leader and Director of Fair Housing Projects.

He joined Legal Aid in 2011.
Tyson Foods' Law Department has supported the work of Legal Aid of Arkansas for a number of years, providing financial assistance to support various programs. In 2021, this support was taken to a new level by Tyson’s Pro Bono Committee, who pledged to provide four legal clinics over a twelve-month period, in partnership with Legal Aid of Arkansas.

The first clinic, a virtual criminal record sealing clinic, proceeded in late 2021. The legal services for the clinic were provided by attorneys from Tyson's legal team, assisted by volunteer students from the University of Arkansas School of Law. The Tyson attorneys met via Zoom with clients from the Washington County Salvation Army, as well as clients from Legal Aid’s service area who contacted our helpline or were referred from other sources. Ninety legal documents were prepared for the clients served in this clinic.

Criminal record sealing improves the lives of Arkansans with criminal histories in many ways. It increases the chances of finding safe housing, as background checks are standard procedure for many landlords. Criminal records also negatively impact job seekers in their efforts to secure employment, as well as advance in jobs once employment is obtained, since even employers may be unwilling to promote, or even hire, individuals with any criminal background.

The legal services provided by Tyson attorneys during this clinic benefitted deserving Arkansans, and the continued clinic partnership between Tyson and Legal Aid of Arkansas will provide greater benefits in the coming year.
BEYOND OPIOIDS

Beyond Opioids provides free civil legal services to eligible clients impacted by the opioid crisis and other substance use disorders in Arkansas.

Beyond Opioids is a consortium of prevention, treatment, and recovery service providers led by the two legal aid programs in Arkansas: Center for Arkansas Legal Services (CALS) and Legal Aid of Arkansas (Legal Aid).

In 2021,
- 1,114 individuals impacted by substance use disorder were provided services.
- 69% were domestic justice cases.
  - Divorce (34%), Custody (22%), Guardianship (13%)
- Majority of cases came from Washington, Benton, and Craighead county.

For more information, visit: www.beyondopioids.org
The Low Income Taxpayer Clinic ensures the fairness and integrity of the tax system for taxpayers who are low income or speak English as a second language. They provide representation, resources and education on rights, and they actively advocate and identify issues that may be unjustly facing low-income Arkansans within the IRS tax system.

Taxpayers overwhelmingly came to the LITC in 2021 because they had not received their income tax refunds and could not resolve the issue with the IRS. For example, a single custodial father's 2019 income tax return was delayed in processing because his W-2s did not arrive at the IRS to match with the income he indicated on his return. We worked with the client to secure the proper letter from one of his employers to verify his refund and submitted it to the IRS. He promptly received his refund of $5,917.

In another case, a young, struggling, low-income family went to a paid preparer where the preparer e-filed client's 2019 return. The refund was delayed because the IRS examined the return. To the client's surprise there was an unknown dependent listed on the return. We assisted client in amending the 2019 return, then assembled extensive documentation to show that the 2 children, including a newborn, lived with the client. We established that client was entitled to EITC and CTC, and he received his refund of $8,377.

The pandemic brought unprecedented numbers of taxpayer to our clinic for help. The LITC represented 286 tax clients in 2021, after representing 291 tax clients in 2020. We set a record for advice and consultation cases, with 500 this year. We represented 13 taxpayers in US Tax Court, recovering thousands of dollars for low-income petitioners.

In 2021, 53% of our tax clients were Marshallese, which was the highest level ever for us at the tax clinic.
The Fair Housing Project of Legal Aid of Arkansas works to eliminate housing discrimination and to ensure equal housing opportunity for all people through education, outreach, public policy initiatives, advocacy, and enforcement.

In 2021, Fair Housing staff conducted 110 fair housing tests, a 50% increase from the previous year!

Provided representation in state or federal courts on 13 cases

To help eliminate housing discrimination in Arkansas, sign up to be a Fair Housing Project Tester here: https://arlegalaid.org/housingtester/apply.html

If you believe you have been discriminated against, please call the fair housing helpline at 1-870-338-9834.
MEDICAL LEGAL PARTNERSHIPS

Legal Aid of Arkansas is engaged in Medical-Legal Partnerships (MLP) throughout Arkansas with a variety of health care providers. MLP’s team lawyers and paralegals with health care teams in medical settings to **detect, address and prevent health-harming social conditions for people and communities.** The goal is for attorneys and medical staff to work together to achieve lasting positive health outcomes for low-income patients and clients.

- Mid-Delta Health Systems and Friday, Eldridge & Clark
- Arkansas Children’s Hospital
- Mid-South Health Systems

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Legal Aid of Arkansas works to mitigate Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) by **prioritizing cases where households have children under 5 years old.**

Legal Aid of Arkansas can help **prevent stress** in a child’s life from causing serious physical, mental and emotional issues by helping with **Domestic Violence, Guardianship/Custody, Housing, Education, and Benefits cases.**
Legal Aid of Arkansas receives funds from the Legal Services Corporation (LSC). Legal Aid complies with the LSC Act, 42 USC §§ 2996 et seq., regulations, 45 CFR Part 1600, et seq., appropriations riders and all other applicable law. See, Pub. L. 104-134 (1996).
Volunteer with us!

Providing pro bono services to people of limited means can mean the difference between justice for some and justice for all. **Pro bono service is one of the most rewarding experiences in an attorney's career.**

You can register to become a pro-bono volunteer here: [https://arlegalaid.org/how-to-help/volunteer.html](https://arlegalaid.org/how-to-help/volunteer.html)

Join our mission!

A lack of resources is the number one reason Arkansans get turned away at Legal Aid of Arkansas. **Through your donations, you can cover what it costs for legal aid to represent a domestic violence victim, a family struggling to pay their bills, or a child in need of a stable home.**

You can make your one-time or monthly gift online today at: [https://arlegalaid.org/donation-landing-page/donate-landing.html](https://arlegalaid.org/donation-landing-page/donate-landing.html)

Join the Legal Aid Loop!

Our **monthly newsletter** shares our current events and news.

Sign up here: [https://arlegalaid.org/news-events/sign-up-for-our-newsletter.html](https://arlegalaid.org/news-events/sign-up-for-our-newsletter.html)