

LEGAL AID *of* ARKANSAS

Fighting Poverty
Maintaining Dignity
Assuring Justice

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

www.arlegalaid.org

1-800-9 LAW AID



IN THIS REPORT

- 01 Executive Message**
- 02 About Us**
- 03 Our Impact**
- 04 Our Programs**
- 08 Our Projects**
- 13 Client Story**
- 15 Pro Bono Impact**
- 17 Community Engagement**
- 18 Staff Recognition**
- 19 Financial Summary**
- 20 Board Members**
- 21 Pro Bono Volunteers**
- 23 Our Donors**
- 25 A Year in Review**

EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

Dear friends and supporters,

It was a very good year at Legal Aid of Arkansas. We helped a record number of Arkansans, closing an all-time high number of cases. We settled a lawsuit with the Department of Human Services that resulted in a significant financial recovery for our clients and our largest attorney fee award to date to compensate us for the diversion of resources to protect the rights of those we serve. Most importantly, the settlement resulted in a lasting change to a system that impacts over 11,000 of our most vulnerable residents, including a seat at the table to monitor that change. You can read more about the impact of our work later in this report.

The year was one of amazing stability. Our attorney turnover rate was 6%, compared to a national rate of over 26%. After years of striving to make salaries and benefits comparable to or better than those in the private and public sectors, we have succeeded. We are the eighth-largest law firm in Arkansas and the most coveted place to spend a meaningful career.

Access to justice is a fundamental right that should be available to all. That is the foundation of what we believe. Marginalized people face monumental barriers to accessing the legal system. Those include the hopelessness of poverty, barriers created by language differences, and entrenched stigma and discrimination.

We continue to focus on four key substantive areas of service, access to safe and affordable housing, safety from domestic violence, protection of consumer rights, and economic justice. With this consistent undertone, we are always trying new approaches to help the most vulnerable among us, never allowing orthodoxy

to rule the day. We leverage our unique perspective in the client community to bring impact litigation and advocacy to dismantle oppressive systems and to help build new systems to uplift the humblest among us to the level of the most affluent.

We live within our means. Our funding per potential eligible client is at the bottom nationally. In some states, legal aid receives eight times more funding per client-eligible individual than we do. With this seeming disadvantage, our case closures per 10,000 eligible clients are near the top nationally, and our impact has been second to none. We find our inspiration from the clients we serve, the true heroes in this work.

After more than three decades at Legal Aid, time is getting short for me, but the future is bright for the organization. We have an emerging generation of smart and dedicated attorneys and staff who have committed their lives to helping the most vulnerable among us and our board development and leadership are amazing. As we look ahead, we see new emerging challenges that we are eager to meet head-on. We are up to the challenge as we continue to fight poverty, maintain dignity, and ensure justice. Through it all, the clients inspired our work with their courage and determination.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lee Richardson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lee Richardson
Executive Director

ABOUT US

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.

OUR MISSION

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

CALL US

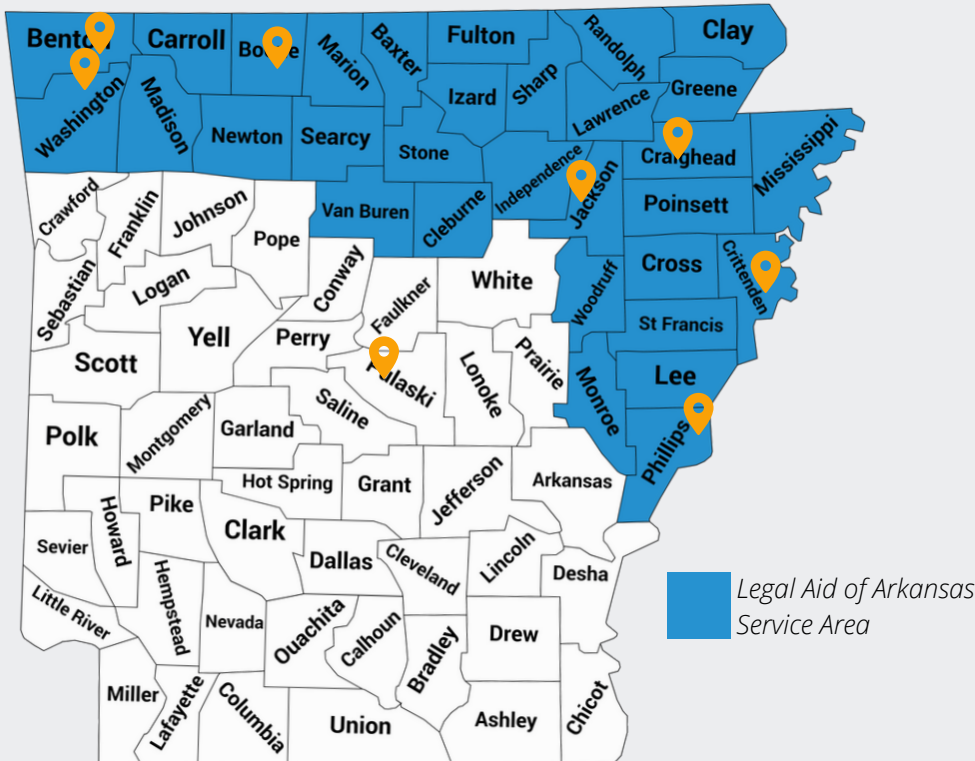
Helpline:

1-800-952-9243

Office:

1-870-972-9224

LOCATIONS



Harrison

205 West Stephenson
Harrison, AR 72601

Helena-West Helena

622 Pecan
Helena, AR 72342

Jonesboro

714 South Main Street
Jonesboro, AR 72401

Newport

202 Walnut Street
Newport, AR 72112

Springdale

1200 Henryetta
Springdale, AR 72762

West Memphis

310 Mid Continent Plaza, Ste 420
West Memphis, AR 72301

Arkansas Children's Hospital

1 Children's Way, Slot 695
Little Rock, AR 72202

Fair Housing Office

2725 Cantrell, Ste 104
Little Rock, AR 72202

Administration Office

1200 W. Walnut, Ste 3101-3107
Rogers, AR 72756

OUR IMPACT

CASES & REACH

CLOSED

7,966

CASES



IMPACTING

20,489

PEOPLE



INCLUDING

9,072

CHILDREN

ECONOMIC IMPACT



TOTAL
RECOVERED

\$3,923,747



ASSETS
INCREASED

\$2,071,075



DEBT
DECREASED

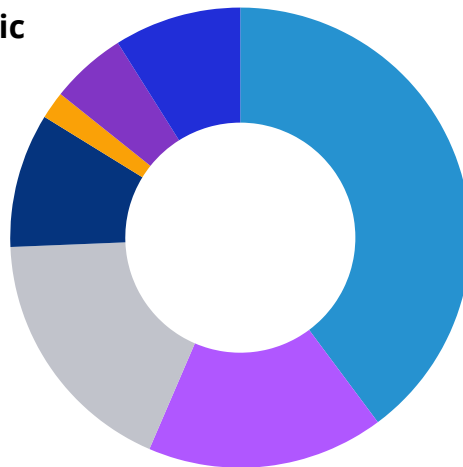
\$1,852,672

PRACTICE AREAS

Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic
154 (1.9%)

Medical-Legal Partnership
425 (5.3%)

Pro Bono
712 (8.9%)



Domestic Justice
3,171 (39.8%)

Consumer Protection
1,327 (16.7%)

Housing
1,425 (17.9%)

Economic Justice
725 (9.4%)

**Project case totals are not included in
workgroup case totals*

POPULATIONS SERVED

VETERANS SERVED



4%

OUD/SUD SERVICES



7%

DV SURVIVORS



27%

SENIOR SERVICES



20%

OUR PROGRAMS

DOMESTIC JUSTICE

The Legal Aid of Arkansas's Domestic Justice (DJ) Workgroup protects vulnerable individuals and families with family law issues including divorces, protective orders, and child custody issues where there is an immediate or ongoing risk of harm. The DJ group also assists in other areas including, but not limited to, guardianships for adults and minors, issues with birth certificates, child support, name changes, and child maltreatment registry issues.

LEGAL AID FIGHTS FOR SINGLE MOM'S DUE PROCESS RIGHTS

Char* never neglected or abused her children, but in 2013, someone reported her to the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) for using drugs. There were no allegations she used drugs around her kids, but she knew the results of her voluntary drug test would be positive. She asked her mother to care for her children while she entered rehab. She reunited with her children when she finished rehab and then enrolled in college.

She did not hear from DCFS again until she applied for her nursing license 9 years later. It was at that point that DCFS decided it was necessary to place her on the Child Maltreatment Registry based on a 10-year-old report of drug misuse, which would keep her from getting her license. Char reached out to Legal Aid for help.

Legal Aid attorneys, Lindsey Schmeidler and Katharine Manuel from the Domestic Justice workgroup worked together to help her. They appealed the belated DCFS registry placement and filed a motion to dismiss based on due process violations. The DCFS findings were reversed and Char is now able to be licensed and move forward with her life.

**Name has been changed to protect confidentiality*

Legal Aid of Arkansas

DOMESTIC JUSTICE IN 2023

The Domestic Justice group closed 3,171 cases impacting 8,527 household members, including 4,331 children. The DJ group's work in 2023 had a direct impact on individuals and families while also focusing on broader legal frameworks:

Protected Survivors:

Assisted 952 domestic violence and sexual assault victims with orders of protection to ensure fair treatment and justice.

Championed Due Process:

Successfully challenged placement on the child maltreatment registry due to lack of proper notice and discrimination against an individual in recovery, upholding due process and disability rights.

Strengthened Title IX Enforcement:

Secured favorable outcomes in a Title IX case (campus-based), setting a precedent for evidence admissibility and recognizing strangulation as dating violence. This also led to policy changes at the University of Arkansas.

Legal Aid helped
446 families
with **guardianships**



OUR PROGRAMS

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Legal Aid of Arkansas's Consumer Protection Workgroup empowers low-income Arkansans by helping them navigate legal challenges related to protecting their assets, income, and other essential resources. The workgroup focuses on protecting consumers from unfair trade and debt collection practices, preventing the loss of resources by filing Chapter 13 bankruptcies, and reducing barriers to accessing essential resources by expanding re-entry practices and sealing criminal records.

CONSUMER PROTECTION WORK IN 2023

The Consumer group closed 1,327 cases, an increase of 27% from 2022, impacting 3,211 household members, including 1,945 children. The group's work in 2023 provided tangible benefits for both individuals and the communities we serve:

Reduced Barriers for Societal Re-entry:
Assisted 474 individuals with sealing criminal records, unlocking opportunities for housing and employment.

Prevented the Loss of Resources:
Successfully filed bankruptcies for 163 individuals and families to prevent the loss of crucial resources, such as housing.

Combated Predatory Lending:
Challenged unfair practices by "Buy-Here-Pay-Here" automobile dealerships, securing settlements and reversing defective service.



Legal Aid helped
474 individuals
with **record sealing**

SAFE AT HOME: LEGAL AID HELPS FAMILY KEEP INHERITED HOME

Amanda* wasn't wealthy, but she was sure she would always be fine. Her mother had left her and her brother their childhood home when she died. It was a perfect house on a beautiful piece of land and she was raising her children there. Life was sweet and as long as she paid her brother fairly for his part of their inheritance. Until that is, her brother filed for bankruptcy and did not exempt his fractional interest in the property.

The bankruptcy Trustee filed a motion to sell Amanda's home out from under her. Amanda came to Legal Aid because she feared she would lose the only home she and her children had ever known.

Forrest Stoltzer, a Legal Aid attorney who is experienced in bankruptcy matters helped Amanda protest the sale under the Bankruptcy Code, citing the hardship they were causing and how the land was uniquely suited to meet the needs of her children who were stable and should be allowed to remain so. The Plaintiff ultimately dismissed their complaint and Amanda and her children will always have their home.

**Name has been changed to protect confidentiality*

OUR PROGRAMS

HOUSING

Legal Aid of Arkansas's Housing Workgroup is dedicated to ensuring access to safe and affordable housing for low-income Arkansans through legal representation, advocacy, and education.

LEGAL AID HELPS A VETERAN MAINTAIN STABLE HOUSING

Dan*, a veteran, ran out of his medications while traveling to Arkansas from California. He knew this all would end badly if he didn't get some timely help. He tried hard to make that happen to no avail. Dan predictably began having episodic events wherein he contacted the Veterans Administration (VA) Hotline and made terroristic threats. This alerted the VA Hotline staff to problems they could help with, but not the kind of problems Dan encountered when he next emailed his apartment manager making similar threats. The property management company filed an Emergency Petition for an immediate Writ of Possession (e.g., eviction) which would leave Dan fending for himself on the streets.

Gaylynn Alden, Legal Aid's Paralegal, worked with the client and his therapist to outline a reasonable accommodation letter (promising Dan would take his medications) which was forwarded to Cory Crawford, a Legal Aid attorney, to present to opposing counsel. This quick thinking led to a reasonable accommodation agreement based on Dan following his treatment plan while remaining on his medications for a specified period – and then the apartment management would consider rescinding his eviction.

**Name has been changed to protect confidentiality*

HOUSING IN 2023

The Housing group closed 1,425 cases impacting 3,265 household members, including 1,964 children. The workgroup's efforts in 2023 had a tangible impact on individuals and communities:

Focused on Housing Security:

Advocated for 687 individuals and families in landlord-tenant disputes to avoid displacement or homelessness.

Promoted Homeownership Stability:

Assisted 17 homeowners facing foreclosure in accessing essential financial assistance, preserving homeownership and stability.

Helped Plan for the Future:

Assisted 250 individuals and families with estate planning services, ensuring families and resources are protected.

Expanded Legal Representation:

Pioneered new litigation areas such as real property contract enforcement, breaking new legal ground, and addressing emerging needs.

Promoted Legal Awareness:

Delivered educational presentations on tenant rights and fair housing to empower Arkansans with knowledge of their legal rights.



Legal Aid helped
687 families
with **rental issues**

OUR PROGRAMS

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The Legal Aid of Arkansas's Economic Justice (EJ) Workgroup is dedicated to combating economic insecurity and inequality through comprehensive legal representation, advocacy, and community outreach. The group's primary focus in 2023 was centered on ensuring access to healthcare. Through strategic initiatives and impactful interventions, the EJ group achieved significant milestones in advancing economic justice and safeguarding the rights of the most vulnerable populations.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE IN 2023

The Economic workgroup closed a total of 752 cases impacting 1,719 household members including 1,111 children. The impact of the EJ group's work in 2023 reverberated across both individual lives and broader policy landscapes:

Preventing Medicaid Terminations:

Assisted 266 clients facing potential Medicaid termination, garnering national recognition for our outreach efforts and intervention.

Landmark Legal Precedent:

Secured a landmark victory in the Eighth Circuit case of *Elder v. Gillespie*, establishing the precedent for statewide systemic relief.

Increased Access to Income:

Provided 258 individuals and families with assistance in keeping or obtaining income benefits such as Social Security, Food Stamps, unemployment compensation, and veteran benefits.



Legal Aid helped
258 individuals
with **public benefits**

LEGAL AID HELPS HOMELESS PREGNANT WOMAN WITH MEDICAID ISSUES

Kayla was adopted as a child. She had a baby at a young age and the infant was adopted by a local family. At about the same time, Kayla suffered some mental health issues and her adoptive parents decided that, at 18 years old, it was time for her to move on. Kayla found herself completely unsheltered and in need of help soon thereafter.

Living on the streets leaves a young girl vulnerable. Her only identification was stolen from her one night in October and it took months for her to be able to replace it. She'd felt lucky to have Medicaid because she was adopted, but that ended when she came of age.

Kayla came to Legal Aid for help after she had been denied Medicaid when she applied on her own. She knew she was pregnant again and needed help applying for Medicaid. DHS had asked her for a birth certificate, social security card, and other identification to which she had no access.

Melissa McManus, an attorney for Legal Aid, contacted Kayla's estranged adoptive mother and obtained the documents she needed to get her Medicaid application approved.

**Name has been changed to protect confidentiality*

OUR PROJECTS

BEYOND OPIOIDS PROJECT

Since 2020, the Beyond Opioids Project has provided vital civil legal services to individuals and families residing in rural areas and confronting the challenges of Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) and Substance Use Disorder (SUD). Legal Aid of Arkansas, in collaboration with the Center for Arkansas Legal Services, has focused on:

Enhancing Recovery Outcomes:

Legal assistance helps to remove barriers and facilitates access to critical resources that support successful recovery journeys.

Strengthening Family Stability:

Legal assistance safeguards children and prevents permanent family separation, leading to stability and well-being for vulnerable families.

Reducing Stigma:

Increased awareness and advocacy challenge negative perceptions surrounding OUD and SUD, fostering a supportive environment for recovery.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE BEYOND OPIOIDS PROJECT



SCAN ME

BEYOND OPIOIDS IN 2023

The Beyond Opioids Project closed 532 cases, serving 1,311 people impacted by OUD or SUD. In 2023, the project served individuals and families in all areas of practice:

- 79% Domestic Justice
- 14% Consumer Protection
- 5% Housing
- 2% Economic Justice

The Beyond Opioids Project provided tangible benefits for individuals, families, and the community:

Protected Children and Families:

Helped 76 families protect the children of active users to obtain Temporary custody orders until the parent entered recovery.

Reduced Barriers to Societal Re-entry:

Assisted 49 people recovering from OUD or SUD with record sealing and obtaining mainstream benefits.

Increased Community Awareness:

Enhanced outreach and education efforts by 36% from 2022. The Beyond Opioids project attended 19 outreach events and gave 3 presentations to educate the community on Opioid Use Disorder and Substance Use Disorder.

OUR PROJECTS

LOW-INCOME TAXPAYER CLINIC

The Legal Aid of Arkansas's Low Income Taxpayer Clinic (LITC) stands as a beacon of support for low-income individuals and those with limited English proficiency, providing critical tax assistance in partnership with the IRS Taxpayer Advocate Service and local Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites. Through innovative outreach endeavors and dedicated client engagement, LITC has made significant strides in empowering individuals and safeguarding their financial well-being. The success of the LITC can be attributed to strategic initiatives including:

LOW-INCOME TAXPAYER CLINIC IN 2023

The LITC closed a total of 154 cases impacting 506 household members, including 235 children. The LITC's impactful efforts have resulted in tangible outcomes in 2023:

Recovered Funds:

Successfully recovered \$550,000 in federal tax refunds for low-income individuals, providing much-needed financial relief.

Avoided Liabilities:

Prevented \$450,000 in tax liabilities for low-income Arkansans, shielding them from undue financial burdens.

Direct Client Assistance:

Provided personalized case assistance to individuals like the client who received support with past tax filings, resulting in a \$3,200 tax refund and fostering stability in his life.

Increased Engagement:

Achieved a remarkable 27.8% increase in social media content interaction and expanded reach by 33%.

Prioritizing Outreach:

The LITC prioritizes providing informative Facebook Live seminars throughout the year, addressing pertinent tax-related topics for low-income individuals.

Increasing Social Media Engagement:

Leveraging the power of social media, the LITC disseminates valuable tax information and fosters community engagement, leading to significant increases in interaction and reach.

Building Collaborative Partnerships:

Maintaining robust partnerships with the IRS Taxpayer Advocate Service and VITA sites ensures seamless access to tax assistance services for Arkansans, enhancing the effectiveness of LITC operations.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR LOW-INCOME TAXPAYER CLINIC



OUR PROJECTS

FAIR HOUSING PROJECT

Legal Aid of Arkansas's Fair Housing Project works to eliminate housing discrimination and to ensure equal housing opportunities across the state by:

Conducting Fair Housing Tests:

Fair housing testing on rental and sales properties, lenders, assisted living facilities, and homeless shelters is important to identify and address discriminatory practices.

Providing Legal Advocacy:

Legal advocacy and representation safeguards people facing housing discrimination.

Educating the Community:

Providing specialized training sessions for Arkansas Realtors, landlords, public housing authorities, and the general public, promotes fair housing awareness.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT HOW TO BECOME A FAIR HOUSING TESTER



SCAN ME

FAIR HOUSING PROJECT IN 2023

The Fair Housing Project's work in 2023 resulted in tangible outcomes for individuals and the communities that we serve:

Conducted Systemic Investigations:

The project conducted 110 fair housing tests across Arkansas and 15% of those tests found discriminatory practices. The project also began conducting tests in assisted living facilities and homeless shelters.

Secured Reasonable Accommodations:

Assisted 31 individuals with disabilities in securing reasonable accommodations and modifications, ensuring access to fair housing.

Represented Discrimination Victims:

Secured settlements for victims of discriminatory practices and collaborated with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Increased Awareness:

Held 18 presentations to educate Arkansas realtors, landlords, property companies, housing authorities, and the public on fair housing rights.

Advocated for Mold Remediation:

Applied for funding to help the project provide free mold testing in rental units for clients experiencing related illnesses.



OUR PROJECTS

MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIPS (MLP)

In the pursuit of fostering the health and well-being of Arkansans, Legal Aid of Arkansas continues to pioneer innovative initiatives, notably through our Medical-Legal Partnerships (MLPs). These partnerships, forged with esteemed medical providers such as Arkansas

LEGAL AID MLPS IN 2023

Legal Aid of Arkansas' MLP programs closed a total of 425 cases impacting 1,605 household members, including 855 children. Our MLP served individuals and families in all areas of practice:

- 45% Economic Justice
- 31% Domestic Justice
- 20% Housing
- 4% Consumer Protection

Our MLPs provided tangible benefits for families in 2023:

Adult Guardianships:

Helped 45 families navigate the legal complexities of assuming guardianship of an adult loved one.

Special Education:

Assisted 17 families with special education issues, ensuring children with learning disabilities received a quality education.

Offered Comprehensive Legal Support:

Provided a spectrum of legal services, families can overcome all civil issues they face for a brighter tomorrow.

Improved Health Outcomes:

Our MLPs addressed the underlying social determinants of health that act as a barrier to accessing quality healthcare.

Children's Hospital, Mid-Delta Health Systems, and Boston Mountain Rural Health Center, represent a pivotal bridge between health and law.

LEGAL AID FIGHTS FOR FAMILY AGAINST AN UNJUST EXPULSION

Riley* is a 15-year-boy with behavioral and mental issues, who was expelled from school after he refused to turn down his music. He eventually turned his music down after an extended argument, but the Resource Officer proceeded to take him to detention. A fight between him and the officer broke out, and he spent three days in detention.

The school contacted his guardian and insisted she sign papers to teach him at home for a short period. The guardian resisted, but the school told her there was no other choice. She reluctantly signed it. Riley had not received the Manifest Determination Review required after an incident, and the school refused the guardian's repeated requests to have him return to the classroom.

The guardian relayed this story to Riley's medical provider during a visit, and that doctor referred Riley and his guardian to the MLP for help. Legal Aid attorney, Abigail Weiss, contacted the school and requested Riley's records. The next day, the school agreed to allow Riley to return to school.

**Name has been changed to protect confidentiality*

OUR PROJECTS

NEW VETERAN LEGAL SERVICES PROJECT

In August 2023, Legal Aid of Arkansas launched its newest project: Providing legal services to homeless veterans and veterans at risk for homelessness.

Veterans are disproportionately at higher risk for pervasive social and legal issues. Many times, the intersections of poverty, mental health challenges, Substance Use Disorders, and physical maladies lead to instability and result in a housing crisis and eventual homelessness.

It often takes a village to aid a Veteran in finding and maintaining stability. Homeless Veterans and Veterans at risk of becoming homeless need multi-faceted, assistance tailored specifically to help them.

Our Veteran Legal Services Project aims to meet each Veteran where they are:

- Veterans Treatment Courts
- Veteran Administration Medical Centers
- Domestic Violence Shelters

Working in partnership with the Veterans Administration, veteran organizations, and our community partners, we are empowering Veterans who are struggling at these intersections of instability.

Legal Aid's goal is to protect Veterans from displacement and homelessness through effective legal representation and advocacy, by providing immediate intervention in housing issues and eliminating barriers that can lead to housing instability.

GETTING STARTED IN 2023

In the first four months of the project, we served 20 Veterans facing homelessness or other significant barriers to housing stability that could lead to homelessness.

Additionally, we also focused on creating collaborative community partnerships and providing Veteran legal clinics:

Veterans Treatment Courts:

Legal Aid of Arkansas created its first partnership with the Veterans Treatment Court in Northwest Arkansas and made strides to expand to other court programs in our service area.

Medical-Legal Partnership:

Through collaboration with the VA Medical Facility in Fayetteville, AR, Legal Aid of Arkansas addresses the underlying social determinants that act as a barrier to accessing or maintaining housing stability.

Veterans Clinics:

Legal Aid of Arkansas started a monthly Veterans Clinic in Jonesboro AR where Pro Bono attorneys provide limited services including document preparation, advice, and tax information to Veterans.



CLIENT STORY

LANDMARK ELDER V. GILLESPIE CASE

In 2019, Arkansas implemented a new assessment system for determining eligibility for the ARChoices Medicaid program, leading to a wave of service cuts and terminations. ARChoices provides in-home care to help with their daily care tasks so that our clients can live independently in their homes instead of going to a nursing home. Under the U.S. Constitution's due process clause, people who face benefit changes can appeal the decision and keep their benefits in place while the appeal is pending. Between 2016 and 2019, Legal Aid of Arkansas informed DHS at least 18 times that the agency routinely failed to keep these vital benefits in place when ARChoices recipients appealed.

Unfortunately, the agency never fixed the recurring problem, ultimately leading Legal Aid attorneys Kevin De Liban and Trevor Hawkins to file suit on behalf of three plaintiffs against the state agency and its directors in both their official and individual capacities. The three plaintiffs suffered for months without needed care, baths, food, and medical treatments despite timely appeals of erroneous adverse actions related to the program changes.

The suit sought to ensure beneficiaries receive continuing benefits and hold those state actors personally responsible for the harm caused by the problem. Under federal law, state governments are immune from financial liability except in narrow situations not applicable here. However, state officials possess only qualified immunity and can be individually liable for monetary damages if they violate clearly established constitutional rights.

In December 2022, the federal Eight Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in a 3-0 decision—one of the first of its kind—that the plaintiffs overcame the officials' qualified immunity and that the suit could move forward. After the favorable decision from the Eighth Circuit, Legal Aid was able to negotiate a favorable settlement for its client community. The settlement required a \$460,000 payment to compensate the plaintiffs for the harms they suffered, as well as attorney's fees and costs expended by Legal Aid.

Additionally, the settlement requires that the state agency update its appeal procedures so that the problem does not recur, train staff, provide regular reports to Legal Aid, change its notices to recipients, extend the time recipients can file appeals and keep receiving benefits, and meet quarterly with Legal Aid. This historic case resulted in sweeping changes to improve the state's Medicaid program for everyone. Also, it opened the door for new advocacy tools that may be used for legal aid organizations across the country.



Jackie Dearmore, one of Legal Aid's clients in the case, celebrates her win.

CLIENT STORY

JAYNE'S PURSUIT OF JUSTICE

In the quiet dormitories of the University of Arkansas, Jayne's* world shattered one fateful evening. What began as a casual hangout with a supposed friend swiftly turned into a nightmare as she became a victim of sexual assault. Jayne filed a claim of sexual assault with the University and was advised to stay silent and wait. For almost a year, Jayne grappled with the trauma in silence, as the university pretty much ignored her complaint - taking no action on her case.



Making her life even more difficult, her attacker falsified text messages in an attempt to protect himself while also impugning Jayne's credibility. Jayne was beside herself and not sure what she could do. Eventually, Jayne heard of Legal Aid and reached out for help. With her Legal Aid attorney, Lindsey Schmeidler, by her side, she was able to navigate this complex legal landscape. Legal Aid exceeded her expectations - working to protect her throughout the process while also advocating for changes in the University's Title IX rules going forward.

First, through meticulous investigation and steadfast advocacy, Legal Aid was able to expose the truth of the fraudulent text messages. Presenting evidence of the altered texts worked to restore her credibility with the Hearing Officer and resulted in her attacker being sanctioned for his bad acts. Second, Attorney Schmeidler thoroughly researched the issues of Jayne's case. She found existing Federal case law from a different jurisdiction that she used to successfully argue that medical documentation of Jayne's injuries could be submitted at the Title IX hearing without subjecting her to the trauma of cross-examination by her attacker's defense attorney. This landmark victory not only secured a less invasive path to justice for Jayne but prompted a paradigm shift in the University's Title IX policy. Future gender-based assault survivors can now seek redress without fear of re-traumatization based on the medical evidence.

Third, Jayne's pursuit of justice allowed Legal Aid to address the University of Arkansas' Title IX program regarding the insidious nature of dating violence. Jayne's attacker had strangled her during the sexual assault and we advocated rigorously for the recognition of strangulation as a distinct form of abuse within the Title IX framework. And we prevailed! We compelled the University to formally acknowledge the full extent of Jayne's suffering and the charges against her perpetrator were amended.

Legal Aid stands united in our mission to champion the rights of survivors like Jayne, and we are committed to dismantling systems of oppression that fail to take sexual assault seriously. We abide by an unwavering commitment to hold perpetrators accountable while amplifying the voices of survivors. Jayne prevailed and, thanks to her perseverance and Legal Aid's services, finally found justice.

**Name has been changed to protect confidentiality*

PRO BONO IMPACT

MORE CLINICS, MORE SERVED

In 2023, Legal Aid of Arkansas held 32 clinics, double the number held in 2022. In addition, we were present in 22 of our 31 counties and assisted more than 600 clients.

The Pro Bono team offered many different clinics throughout the year:

- 4 Estate Planning Clinics
- 5 Record Sealing Clinics
- 12 Multi-disciplinary Clinics providing Estate Planning and Record Sealing services
- 9 Name and Gender Change Clinics
- 1 Naturalization Clinic
- 1 Guardianship Clinic

Volunteer attorneys, law students, and others donated over 825 hours to make these events possible. This work is in addition to the 113 extended cases our volunteers closed in 2023.

NEW PRO BONO APPEALS PROGRAM

A noteworthy new program was introduced in 2023: the Pro Bono Appeals Program. The program is a cooperative program between the Supreme Court of Arkansas, Legal Aid of Arkansas, and the Center for Arkansas Legal Services. The Pro Bono Appeals Program allows the qualifying client a free consultation with a volunteer attorney about legal issues and the appellate process.

SPRING BREAK ON THE ROAD TO JUSTICE IS BACK!

Legal Aid of Arkansas' Spring Break on the Road to Justice is a popular program that aims to provide low-income Arkansans access to civil legal services while giving law students valuable experience for the future.

Due to the pandemic, the program was modified to provide services virtually. In 2023, the Spring Break Road to Justice program was back in the community, and Arkansas law students visited Marianna, Elaine, and Helena. In total, the students:

- Served over 40 clients
- Prepared over 100 legal documents
- Earned over 20 hours of Pro Bono service

Students from the University of Memphis School of Law completed both Fair Housing and Name Change Clinic tracks, helping many more.

Arkansas has the fewest attorneys per capita in the United States with one attorney for every 435 people according to the American Bar Association. Programs like Legal Aid of Arkansas' Spring Break on the Road to Justice make it possible to provide services despite the deficiency.

VOLUNTEERS
ATTORNEYS &
LAW STUDENTS



225+

**VOLUNTEER
HOURS**



1,645+

CASH VALUE
OF ATTORNEY
VOLUNTEER TIME



\$313,000+

CLIENTS SERVED
CASES, CLINICS &
HELP DESKS

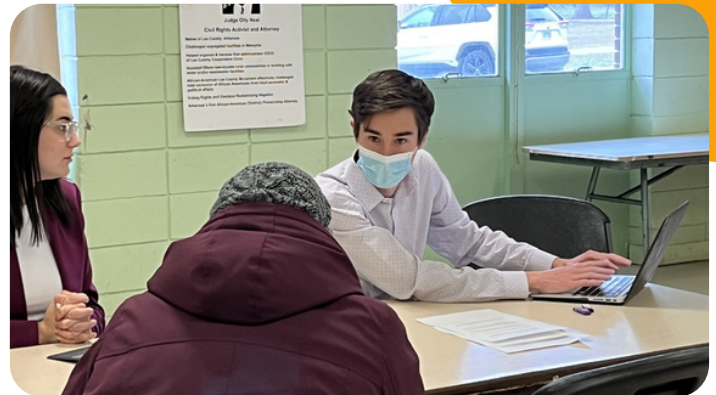


1,130+

PRO BONO IMPACT



Law Student and Attorney Volunteers, Constitution Day Record Sealing Clinic, 2023.



University of Arkansas Law students Gabriela Lopez-Gardner and Thomas Hubbard assist a client in Elaine, AR, as part of our 2023 On the Road to Justice Program.



Attorney, Mason Gates, gives a presentation on Estate Planning in conjunction with East Arkansas Area Agency on Aging.



Volunteers, attorneys, judges, and prosecutors from our Record Sealing Clinic in Blytheville, Arkansas, in August 2023.



Pro Bono Director, Ashley Norman, with Law Student Volunteers and Legal Aid Staff attorneys, Josh Jackson, Matt Ward, and Mason Gates, at our 2023 on the Road to Justice.



Attorney, Josh Eide, with client at the Fayetteville record sealing clinic.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Throughout the pandemic, Legal Aid of Arkansas continued to stay engaged with our community partners and the communities we serve using platforms such as Zoom and Facebook. While we are grateful technology allowed us to remain engaged in our community over the past few years, we focused on getting back into the community.

In 2023, Legal Aid of Arkansas participated in nearly 450 outreach events, presentations, and clinics, which is a 54% increase from 2022 and puts our engagement efforts close to pre-pandemic levels. We are committed to growing our presence in our community and building partnerships with other community organizations. Offering free civil legal services in the community, providing education, and creating valuable partnerships is an important avenue to ensuring justice is available for all.

CLE PRESENTATIONS



5

COMMUNITY CLINICS



32

COMMUNITY EVENTS



97

PRESENTATIONS



80



LITC Director, Jennifer Gardiner, gives a Facebook Live presentation on family law and taxes.



Heiling Ortega and Ashley Norman, along with the Mayor of Elaine, Arkansas, as part of Juneteenth Celebration.



Legal Aid attorneys, Susan Purtle and Spence Soule, attend the 16th Annual CDBG in the Park.



Melissa McManus, Legal Aid attorney, and Molina Bien, Marshallese interpreter, attend the Stroll the Atolls in Springdale, AR.

STAFF RECOGNITION



David Bowman, Fiscal Officer

David Bowman is our Fiscal Officer in our Rogers office. He joined Legal Aid in 2006.

LYNDA WARE SOCIAL JUSTICE AWARD

The Lynda Ware Social Justice Award is given to a Legal Aid support or administrative staff member who has shown a commitment to access to justice for all people, has helped Legal Aid significantly advance its mission, and whose life and professional accomplishments serve as an inspiration to others in the community. This award is given in honor of a long-time staff member who passed away in 2018.

PAST LYNDA WARE AWARD RECIPIENTS

- MyKayla Ladd (2022)
- Neyra Galvez (2021)
- Kori Lancaster (2020)
- Elizabeth King (2019)



Lela Davison, Domestic Justice Attorney

Lela Davison is a Domestic Justice attorney in our West Memphis Office. She joined Legal Aid in 2008.

VERSALEE WYATT ALTRUISM AWARD

The Versalee Wyatt Altruism Award is given to a Legal Aid attorney or paralegal who has shown exemplary commitment to equal justice, has made a significant contribution to the enhancement of the fair administration of justice, and whose life and professional accomplishments serve as an inspiration to the entire legal profession. This award is in honor of a longtime client board member who passed away in 2014.

PAST VERSALEE WYATT AWARD RECIPIENTS

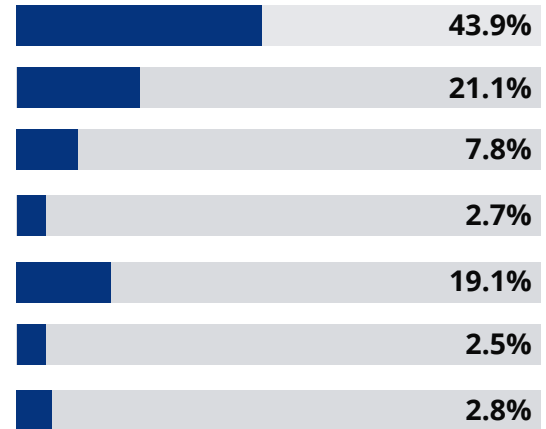
- Gaylynn Alden (2022)
- Jason Auer (2021)
- Andrea Walker (2020)
- Kevin De Liban (2019)

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The financial data was derived from Legal Aid of Arkansas's financial statements. The financial statements of Legal Aid are audited annually and are available upon request.

REVENUE

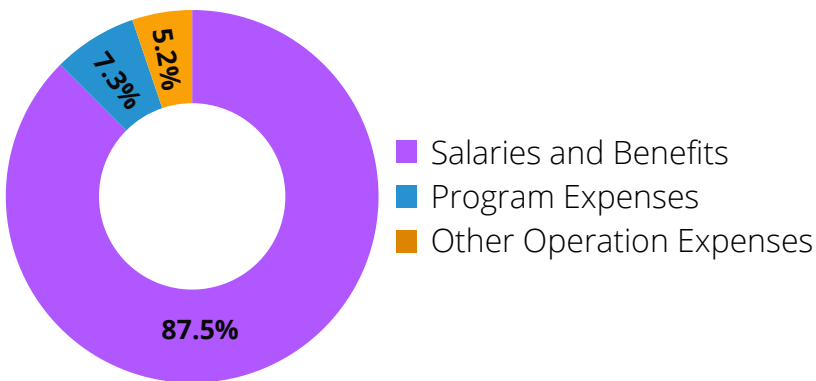
Legal Services Corporation	\$2,132,844.00
Other Federal Funds	\$1,026,784.10
State Funds	\$380,994.14
Access to Justice Foundation	\$130,000.00
Other Grants and Contracts	\$927,122.10
Donations	\$122,425.40
Other Revenue	\$136,134.07
Total Revenue	\$4,856,303.81



Percent of Total Funding

EXPENSES

Salaries and Benefits	\$4,355,905.71
Program Expenses	\$362,851.30
Other Operation Expenses	\$260,891.30
Total Expenses	\$4,979,648.31



“ We live within our means. Our funding per potential eligible client is at the bottom nationally. In some states, legal aid receives eight times more funding per client-eligible individual than we do.

With this seeming disadvantage, our case closures per 10,000 eligible clients are near the top nationally, and our impact has been second to none. ”

- Lee Richardson, Executive Director

BOARD MEMBERS

Legal Aid of Arkansas depends on its volunteer Board of Directors to provide oversight, accountability, and high-level strategic planning. We want to thank our board members for their guidance and insight. The Board Member information below is as of December 31, 2023.

BOARD MEMBERS

Annie B. Smith

Board Chair

University of Arkansas
School of Law

Ashlie Thacker

Vice Chair

NEA Family Crisis Center

Pamela Haun

Secretary-Treasurer

Craighead County Bar Assoc.

Maggie Benson

Washington County Bar
Assoc.

Michelle Pedro

Arkansas Coalition of
Marshallese

Curtis Walker

Blytheville Bar Assoc.

Lori Chumbler

Benton County Bar Assoc.

Val Price

Independence County Bar
Assoc.

Rene Ward

East Arkansas Area Agency on
Aging

Steven Davis

Boone County Bar Assoc.

Donna Price

Van Buren County Bar Assoc.

Garry Ward

DiVA & DuDe Community
Outreach/Training Center

KayLee Hayes

Hub of Hope

Kyle Stoner

Phillips County Bar Assoc.

Ronald Wilson

Crittenden County Bar Assoc.

Keisha Hazelwood

Jackson County Bar Assoc.

Bill Waddell

Arkansas Bar Assoc.

COMMITTEES

Executive Committee

Maggie Benson, Lori Chumbler, Pamela Haun,
Annie B. Smith, Ashlie Thacker, Ronald Wilson

Personnel/Client Grievance Committee

Lori Chumbler, Pamela Haun, KayLee Hayes,
Val Price

Search/Appointments Committee

Steven Davis, Pamela Haun, Ashlie Thacker,
Curtis Walker

Audit/Finance Committee

Lori Chumbler, Pamela Haun, Annie B. Smith,
Michelle Pedro

Legal Services-Litigation Committee

Steven Davis, Lori Chumbler, Pamela Haun,
Annie B. Smith

Development Committee

Ashlie Thacker, Ronald Wilson, Bill Waddell,
Rene Ward

PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

Legal Aid of Arkansas' Pro Bono program enhances our ability to provide equal access to justice for our clients. We refer hundreds of cases a year to attorneys working in private practice and corporations, and we depend on law students to help clients in our clinic setting. Legal Aid appreciates the commitment to serving Arkansans that pro bono attorneys and law students bring to our organization. We thank our volunteers for the contribution of their time and talents.

VOLUNTEER ATTORNEYS

Travis Adams	Laura Ferner	Greda Johnson	Jonathan Nichols
Katelynn Admire	Armando J Fonticiella	Jamie Huffman Jones	W. Ray Nickle
R. Dawn Allen	Robert Frazier	Oscar Jones	Mary Nuckles
Blair Arnold	Katie L Freeman	Robert Jones	Conrad Odom
Angela Artherton	Rachel Freeman	Martin Kasten	Chad Oldham
Jeffery Baker	Caleb Garcia	Eun Sol Kim	Ken Osborne
Barry Baker	Alissa Gardenswartz	David Koehler	J. Chad Owens
King Benson	Sara Gay	Kristen Komander	Kristin Pawlik
David Biondolillo	Robert Gibson	David Lee	Joe Perry
Kelsey Boggan	Catherine Golden	Michael Lilly	Donna Price
Edward Boyce III	Maya Goree	Jim Lyons	Scott Provencher
Donna Branch	Lauren Graham	Paula Martucci	Jeffrey Puryear
Shannon Briese	Jim Gramling Jr.	Kathy McCarroll	Emily Reed
Christopher Brown	Mary E. Green	Harry McDermott	Robert Riley
George Butler Jr.	Vincent E. Guest	Joey McGehee	Stacy Robinson
Mark K Cameron	Victoria Hargis Bruton	Michael McGill	Mallory Sanders
Kimberly Canova	Chris Harris	Amelia McGowen	Ted Sanders
Kristi Caple	Charles Harwell	Destiny McHughes	Edward Schieffler
Suzanne Clark	Andrew Hatfield	Jim McLarty	Mary Schnieder
Kevin Cole	Pamela Haun	George McManus	Jordan Sharp
April Cotton	W. Curt Hawkins	Roger McNeil	Megan Simkins
Patrick R Culver	Keisha Hazelwood	Joshua Meister	J. Timothy Smith
Greg Cuzick	Aaron Heller	Timothy Meitzen	Thomas Smith
Rhonda Davis	Mauricio Herrera	Craig Merutka	Frederick S Spencer
Frederick Davis	Hadley Hindmarsh	Drew Miller	Tyler Squires
Steve Davis	Curtis Hitt	Randel Miller	Scott Stalker
Mike DeLoache	David Hogue	Richard Miller	Mandy Stanton
Sarah Dokken	Caleb Hollinger	Donn Mixon	Imogen Stegall
Ann Donovan	James Hornsey Jr.	H. Clarke Mixon	Jodi Strother
Richard Downing	Kasper Huber	Harry Truman Moore	Kathleen Talbott
Amy Driver	Chris Hussein	Victoria K. Morris	Amber Thompson
Susan Duell	Jenny Jackson	Keith Morrison	Robert Thompson III
Austin Easley	Christopher Jester	Carla Nadzam	Ray Towne

PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

VOLUNTEER ATTORNEYS

Kyle Unser	Jeff Watson	Amie Wilcox	Morgan Woelke
Lindsey Vechik	James E Weeks	Todd Williams	Jared Woodard
Samantha Vital	Phillip Wells	Kelsie Wilson	Marshall Wright
Bill Waddell	Dequeshia Prude Wheeler	Ronald C. Wilson	Steven S. Zega
Bill Watkins III	Lorie Whitby	Marquisa Wince	

LAW STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

Jeremy Ashton	Grace Ann Green	Gabriella Lopez Gardner	Jackie Redmond
Julia Bollin	Elizabeth Green	Callie Marsh	Caitlin Robb
Kate Braboy	Katie Guhman	Kevin D Marshall	Lexi Robertson
Mills Bryant	Ellis Hairston	Lindsay Mast	Celeste Robinette
Ben Cameron	Audra Halbert	Marquela McClellan	Courtney Singleton
Cameron Comer	Payton Hamric	Minoah Milam	Amber Skinner
Tatum Cooper	Lauren Harris	Marcus Montgomery	Michelle Smith
Lauren Davis	Dillion Harris	Tori Moore	Elizabeth Strickland
Raquel de Castro	Brandon Hartman	Chloe Nelson	Pierce Teewen
Jacob Deveney	Brittany Hawkins	Rytchard Nunez	Pierce Teewen
Jacob DuBose	Eleanor Henry	Michaela Parks	Erin Wadley
Courtney Duck	Erin Hoffman	Marcos Perez	Amber Watson
Eghosa Eguakun	Helen Hope	Hailey Petit	Tanner Webber
Jissel Esparta	Thomas Hubbard	Dominique Phillips	Matthew Willard
Grace Faulkenberry	Franklin Hudspeth	Stephanie Ponzanelli	Justyce Yuille
Hailey Garner	Gabrielle Lewis	Haley Rainwater	
Martha Garner	Braden Little	Hollis Redden	

OTHER VOLUNTEERS

Karen Alvarado	Graciela Monica Diaz	Lemine Mbarek	Katrina Soria
Alma Beltran	Abby Jones	James Norman	Maria Westbrook
Ingrid Castrillo			

Volunteer names include attorneys, law students, and others who provided case services, clinic work, and help desk services in 2023. We extend our deepest gratitude to the volunteers who provided services but are not represented on this list.

OUR DONORS

Legal Aid of Arkansas relies on the support of individuals, foundations, corporations, and the local community to continue the fight for equal justice. We are grateful for every contribution.

DONORS

Circle of Friends for Equal Justice

Up to \$499

Amazon Smile
American Online Giving
Anonymous Donors
Maria Ashner
Sarah Barnett
John Barttelt
Kirsten Bernhardt
David Bowman
Melinda Braslavsky
Shannon Brooks
M Nicole Butler
Joan Camerlingo
Jordan Camp
Vincent Chadick
Carol Crawford
Cory Crawford
Starr Crow
Wanda Currier
Josh Eide
Elliott & Smith Law Firm
Teresa Franklin
Traci Hackler
Karen Hanchey Koelemay
Pamela Haun
Trevor Hawkins
Andrea Howard
Connie Johnson
Greneda Johnson
Robert & Mary Jones

Dale Kidwell
Stephanie King
Elizabeth King
Kroger
Lacy Law Firm
Eric Lopez
Andy Lujan
John & Mary Masterson
Emily Matteson
Heather McKinney
Melissa McManus
Lisa Melton
Susan Mitchell
Tasha Nelson
Network for Good
Louis Nisenbaum
Ozark Beer Company
Sueann Pace
Susan Purtle
Jane Purtle
Jayden Ragsdale
Kristopher Ramsfield
Courtney & Chris Reed
Margaret Reger
Ginger Risner
Luz Rivera
Jamie Roberson
Austin Robinson
Hannah Roe
Misty Rogers
Rogers, Brackin & Davis
LaQuita Saunders

Eric Saunders
Allison Sehika
Lynn Senn
Beth Shoupe
Chet Siegel
Pam Simpson
Spiral Financial
Karen Stack
Sherri Stewart
Anna Strong
Mirna Trabanino Tobar
Tyson Foods
Garry Ward
Brandy Ward
Terry Wilson
Jessica Zelbst



Supporters for Equal Justice

\$500 - \$999

Jason Auer
Jennifer Gardiner
Jordan Garner
Kathryn Platt
Lee Richardson
The Payroll Company
Brooke Thompson
Sherry Thompson
Andrea Walker

Advocates for Equal Justice

\$1,000 - \$4,999

Matthew Cameron
Lori Chumbler
DLA Piper
Margaret Foster
Tyson Legal Dept
Bill & Patty Waddell

Crusader for Equal Justice

\$5,000 - \$9,999

Rose Law Firm (LR)

Defenders for Equal Justice

\$10,000 - \$24,999

Arkansas Access to Justice Foundation

Champions for Equal Justice

\$50,000+

Walmart Legal Team



OUR DONORS

JUSTICE CLUB MEMBERS

Justice Club members make monthly donations to Legal Aid, providing sustaining support for our programs.

Jason Auer
David Bowman
Shannon Brooks
Matthew Cameron

Cory Crawford
Teresa Franklin
Pamela Haun
Elizabeth King

Susan Purtle
Kristopher Ramsfield
Lee Richardson
Ginger Risner

Beth Shoupe
Brooke Thompson
Sherry Thompson
Andrea Walker

TRIBUTE GIFTS

IN HONOR OF:

Kevin De Liban
Bill Waddell

Annie B Smith & Doug Walsh
Maria Ashner

IN MEMORY OF:

Monzer Mansour
Elliot & Smith Law Firm, Karen Stack

Faye Reed
Lynn Senn

ADVOCATE WITH US

VOLUNTEER

Are you an attorney looking for rewarding volunteer opportunities? We offer our volunteer attorneys significant benefits, including free continuing education programs.

Scan the QR code to register to become a pro bono volunteer or visit us [here](#)



DONATE

Donations are the heart of Legal Aid. Please help us build a strong heart for your community. Please donate today!

Scan the QR code to make a donation or visit us [here](#)



STAY IN THE LOOP

Something is always going on at Legal Aid! Subscribe to The Legal Aid Loop and keep up with all of our newsworthy advocacy, clinics, and outreach events.

Scan the QR code to sign up for the Legal Aid Loop or visit us [here](#)



A YEAR IN REVIEW



Attorney, Mason Gates, and law student volunteers at the Legal Aid Road to Justice Estate Planning and Record Sealing Clinic in Elaine, AR.



Lee Richardson, Executive Director, and Jaden Atkins, Economic Justice attorney, assist at the Name and Gender Correction and Estate Planning Clinic at the Jones Center in Springdale, AR.



Legal Aid staff, Jaden Atkins, Kris Ramsfield, and Neyra Galvez, participated in the Hispanic Women's Organization Cinco de Mayo event in Washington county.



Legal Aid of Arkansas's Fair Housing Project Billboard in Marshall in Springdale, AR.



Housing attorney Kate Rieber, Pro Bono Coordinator Billy McKenzie, and Disaster Resilience Fellow Adrieanna Hutson at the Estate Planning and Record Sealing Clinic in Marvell, AR.



Economic Justice attorney, Trevor Hawkins, assists client at our Estate Planning and Record Sealing Clinic in Marvell, AR, in June, 2023.

A YEAR IN REVIEW



Legal Aid attorneys, Trevor Hawkins, Jaden Atkins, Victoria Frazier, and Nikki Clark at the Little Rock Federal Courthouse for the Elder V. Gillespie Lawsuit Settlement Conference.



Josh Jackson, Beyond Opioids attorney, and MyKayla Ladd, Legal Aid Intake specialist, meet with the Mayor of Augusta Jeff Collins and City Clerk Essie Nichols.



Attorney, Melissa McManus, at the 2023 Tyson Festival.



Domestic Justice attorney, Kris Ramsfield, and Law Student Tatum Cooper, attend the Latino-Hispanic Wellness Fair.



Lee Richardson, Legal Aid of Arkansas's Executive Director, and Cassandra Gossett, Center for Arkansas Legal Service's Beyond Opioids Paralegal, at the Benton County Arkansas Walmart Drug Take Back Day.



Consumer Workgroup's Paralegal meets with the Arkansas Department of Corrections on Re-Entry Week in April 2023 to discuss our services and resources for individuals who are on probation or transitioning out of incarceration.

A YEAR IN REVIEW



Attorney Susan Purtle, Pro Bono Director Ashley Norman, and Law Student Intern Tatum Cooper speak to undergraduate students at SPPARK program, the summer pre-law program at the University of Arkansas.



Deputy Director, Andrea Walker, at the Jonesboro Pride Celebration.



Pro Bono Coordinator Heiling Ortega and Pro Bono Director Ashley Norman at the Fayetteville PRIDE Event.



Legal Aid staff has a successful Record Sealing Clinic in Fayetteville, AR, on July 8th.



Attorney, Melissa McManus, attends the 2023 Veteran's Health Summit at the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks in Fayetteville, AR.



Kathy Grady, Economic Justice Paralegal, Kevin De Liban, Special Project attorney, Andrea Hope Howard, Story Collective Writer, and Trevor Hawkins, Economic Justice attorney, re-unite at the Statewide Conference in Memphis, TN.

STATEWIDE CONFERENCE IN MEMPHIS



Legal Aid of Arkansas and Center for Arkansas Legal Services take a tour of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee.



Legal Aid advocates enjoy time at the Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee.



Walking in Memphis: On the Road to Equal Justice Conference presenters included Hampton Sides, author of *Hellhound on His Trail, The Assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King*, and Attorney at Law, Bill Waddell, as moderator.



James Duke, IMAKEMADBEATS, shares his story at the Statewide Conference in Memphis, Tennessee.



Legal Aid attorney, Richard Wolford, wins the main prize at the Statewide Conference.



Legal Aid of Arkansas's staff re-unite at the Statewide Conference.