



The Legal Aid Society  
— of ROCHESTER, NEW YORK —

95  
YEARS

of advocating for those who need it most

20  
16  
Annual Report



# The Legal Aid Society

of ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

## Dear Friends,

The year 2015 was one of record-breaking growth for The Legal Aid Society of Rochester! For the first time in its history, Legal Aid closed more than 11,000 cases and our budget surpassed the \$5 million mark. And most importantly, our attorneys and staff continued to provide the highest quality legal services for all our clients.

Legal Aid's reputation and track record made it possible for us to secure the funding necessary to hire seven new staff members to serve the nine-county Greater Rochester area. Among others, we added one attorney in our Education Law section to address the educational needs of children in school-based matters such as long-term suspension and Committee on Special Education, and two others to expand our Immigration division. Thanks to the support of the Office of Indigent Legal Services, we will be providing advice and counsel to area criminal defenders whose clients have criminal matters that impact their immigration issues.

Internally, we continue to improve our systems to better serve our clients. This year, we implemented a customized case management system that allows

attorneys and staff easy access to client information and case history through a secure web-based system. In the near future, people looking for legal assistance will be able to access our services online and begin the intake process for Legal Aid.

We continue to be grateful for our strong working relationships with Willow Domestic Violence Center, Volunteer Legal Services Project, Rochester Housing Council at Pathstone, Empire Justice Center, LawNY, the City of Rochester, the County of Monroe, United Way, and the Monroe County Bar Association, among others. Together, we are making a difference for area residents with complex legal needs.

This year, The Legal Aid Society of Rochester will celebrate 95 years of advocating for those who need it most. We will honor our history and those who continue to make our work possible at an event in October and hope you will join us to celebrate this milestone.

On behalf of the staff and Board of Directors of the Legal Aid Society of Rochester, we thank you for your ongoing commitment to our agency.

## Sincerely,

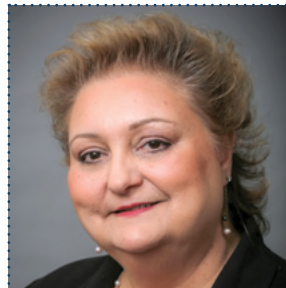
June M. Castellano

Chair, Board of Directors



Carla M. Palumbo

President and Chief Executive Officer



# Programs and Accomplishments

## Civil Division

In addition to providing representation to 8,421 individuals in 11,269 cases in 2015-16, LASROC saved taxpayers an estimated \$953,909. Our attorneys and staff obtained more than \$2,992,500 for the benefit of our clients through child support and maintenance awards, preventing improper judgements and foreclosures, and assisting with debt relief.

**Our FAMILY LAW UNIT provides legal representation to victims of domestic violence and litigants seeking assistance with divorce, custody, visitation and child support. The Family Law Unit assisted 1,534 individuals in 2015-16.**

- **Domestic Violence Legal Services** provides legal services and counseling to victims of domestic violence in Monroe, Wayne, Genesee, and Orleans County Family Courts to assist victims of domestic violence obtain and enforce orders of protection to prevent continued violence. The Domestic Violence Program also provides legal representation in divorce, custody, or visitation cases when domestic violence is the predominant issue. In 2015-2016 LASROC added Family Law representation in Wayne County. Our focus is on the victims of interpersonal violence, stalking, sexual assault, family violence and elder abuse.



*"My attorney helped me have a new life. She got me safe (a 2 year order of protection), my kids (custody), and money to take care of my kids. Whenever I have to go back to court, my attorney fights for me and does a very good job. I'm so thankful for your help."*

Through our funding partners we also provide:

- Representation for victims in housing, immigration, privacy, crime victim's compensation and other civil matters such as name changes, which enhance the safety and well-being of victims of violence. This program focuses on other civil legal needs which, if left unresolved, compromise victim safety.
- **Child Support Program** provides representation in Supreme Court matrimonial actions and Family Court child support actions to obtain, maintain or increase child support, medical insurance coverage, child care expenses, and uninsured medical expenses.
- **Limited Means Program** provides affordable civil legal representation to people of moderate means in the area of family and matrimonial law. Clients pay a flat fee retainer based on a sliding scale at the onset of their cases.
- **Assigned Counsel Program** provides assigned counsel in Supreme Court matrimonial matters where custody, visitation or domestic violence is an issue. Services are provided in Monroe, Genesee, Orleans and Wayne Counties.



*"Legal Aid helped me tremendously after my daughter was born to keep us safe and make sure that she was taken care of! Thank you so much!"*

Our **GENERAL LAW UNIT** provides legal representation to litigants seeking assistance in the area of immigration, or those referred by the Monroe County Health Department collaborative, which provides legal services to clients with AIDS/HIV. The General Law Unit assisted 394 individuals in 2015-16.

**Immigration Legal Services Program** provides legal representation and technical assistance in immigration-related matters to persons residing in a 32-county area of western New York. Representation includes cases involving asylum, permanent residence, removal defense, meritorious appeals, extension of immigration status, and work authorization both at the main office and on site in migrant clinics. Representation also included assistance for 208 persons seeking to adjust their status through the Deferred Action Program for Children funded by the New York Immigration Coalition.

- Through a new collaborative with Volunteer Lawyers of Erie County, funded by the Office of Indigent Legal Services, LASROC provides technical legal assistance on immigration law to indigent defenders representing individuals in criminal matters. Since the program started in November 2015, we have assisted 22 clients and trained 156 attorneys and judges.

**Department of Health Program** provides legal services in the area of family law, housing and immigration to clients with HIV/AIDS.

Our **HOUSING UNIT** provides a continuum of housing and transactional services, from eviction prevention to first-time home buyer assistance. The Housing Unit represented 1,565 individuals this year.

- **Tenant Advocacy Program** provides representation to qualified tenants who face eviction in Rochester City Court. We also offer in-court intake at the beginning of the Rochester City Court's Landlord Tenant Part calendar.
- **Foreclosure Prevention Program** provides legal representation to homeowners in foreclosure. Representation includes loan modifications, short sales, deeds-in-lieu of foreclosure, or bankruptcy as part of a plan to save the home.
- **Home Ownership Initiative** provides representation for home purchases, home preservation matters, consumer credit issues and complex legal cases. It also addresses illegal evictions, home purchases, foreclosure prevention, and bankruptcy. The primary goal of the Home Owner Initiative is to create or maintain sustainable homeownership.



*"I am so grateful for the difference Ms Campbell has made in our lives -- she has provided hope for a bright future for me and my son."*

- **Landlord Services** provides alternative dispute resolution and mediation services to eligible landlords and tenants who reside in the City of Rochester. It also provides landlords with training and pro se clinics designed to raise the quality of housing and increase housing stability in city neighborhoods.
- **Wills and Advance Directives for Seniors and Homeowners** provides assistance with drafting wills and advance directives such as health care proxies for seniors and first-time home buyers. This initiative, funded in part by the New York Bar Foundation, assisted 20 clients during this fiscal year.

## Juvenile Justice Division:

**Our Attorney for the Child Unit** provided legal representation to 4,685 children who are involved in proceedings before the Monroe County Family Court. The child may be the respondent in a Person In Need Of Supervision or Juvenile Delinquency matter. The child may also be the subject of a child abuse, neglect, custody, visitation or foster care petition. The Attorney for the Child is appointed only by an order of a Family Court Judge.

**Our Educational Law Program** provided 234 youth and their families with legal representation and advocacy in education matters in Monroe, Genesee and Livingston Counties. This included representation for Committees on Special Education (CSE), school suspensions, reasonable accommodations for children with disabilities, eligibility for school enrollment, enrollment for homeless students, and access to appropriate school or community services.

Dear Legal Aid,

"When you have children, the last thing you think about is that someday you might end up in family court.

Having to go in front of a judge who doesn't know anything about you or your kids is terrifying. A million things race through your mind from the moment you get the notice of your court date: What if you lose your kids for some crazy reason? What if the judge gets the wrong impression? Are you making the right choice?

It was by far the most stressful thing I have ever been through. Some people have opinions about court-appointed lawyers and Legal Aid. Those people must never have met Brenda Campbell. She went so far above and beyond the scope of what you would expect from ANY lawyer. I was never left wondering about what to expect.

Being a single mom, trying to go to school, all while recovering from a devastating back injury is hard enough, going through a court case might have been more than any one person could handle on top of all that.

Luckily, I wasn't alone. I had a great supporter.

I was able to gain sole custody of my two little girls. I was able to prevent their lives from being turned upside down. Thanks to Brenda, we were able to come up with an arrangement that was in the best interests of all parties involved without going through the stress of a trial. She wasn't afraid to tell me when I was being unrealistic, yet she did it in a way that was more encouraging than criticizing. She always accompanied her professional opinions with realistic suggestions, solutions, and support. I feel very blessed to have been represented by her."

"I am FOREVER thankful that you were there for me 26 years ago when I was falling into the blackest of black holes. You were, and still are, my lifesaver. I was so scared and you stood beside me the WHOLE WAY. You were my counsel, my support, my voice, and then became my friend. You went way beyond for me and my children and we will always be indebted to you."



## Management Team

Carla M. Palumbo, President & CEO  
Kathia Casion, Director, Civil Division  
William Davis, CFO & Director of Administration  
Stephen Weisbeck, Director, Juvenile Justice Division

## Administration

Jay Aldrich, Human Resource Administrator  
David Erb, Systems Administrator  
Sara Horeth, Grants and Program Administrator  
Kathleen James, Operations Administrator  
Aaron O'Neal, Controller  
Krystal Bertrand, DVC Coordinator  
Marianne Naylor, Administrative Assistant  
Barbara Fachini, Receptionist  
Yolanda Irizarry, Receptionist  
Leslie Torres, Receptionist

## Civil Division

Walter Ruehle, Program Director, Immigration Program  
Zachary Pike, Program Director, Housing Unit  
Angela Szewczyk, Program Director, Family Law Unit  
Daniel Burke, Senior Attorney (Retired)  
Brenda Campbell, Senior Attorney  
Cynthia Nolan, Senior Litigation Attorney  
Wedade Abdallah, Staff Attorney  
Vivian Aquilina, Staff Attorney  
Denise Buscemi, Staff Attorney  
Leigh Ann Chute, Staff Attorney  
Meagan Dean, Staff Attorney  
Michael Furlano, Staff Attorney  
Christina Gullo, Staff Attorney  
Christa Hibbard, Staff Attorney  
Vipan Lang, Staff Attorney  
Mark Muoio, Staff Attorney  
Lauren Pienkowski, Staff Attorney  
Shannon Pozzuolo, Staff Attorney  
Camille Quattrini, Staff Attorney  
Yolanda Rios, Staff Attorney  
Hannah Vickner Hough, Staff Attorney  
Stephanie Wolter, Staff Attorney  
Jamee Bennett, Legal Assistant  
Emilie Cadin, Advocate  
Ariel Cruz, Program Coordinator  
Angela Jackson, Intake Coordinator  
Robyn LaClair, Intake Coordinator  
Inca Mang, Legal Assistant  
Kayla Mattern, Legal Assistant  
Mary Miller, Legal Assistant  
Yolanda Montalvo, Accredited Representative  
Amber Niewiemi, Legal Assistant  
Loraine Marie Ortiz Suarez, Legal Assistant  
Tami Politza, Legal Assistant  
Nancy Whiting, Legal Assistant

## 2015-16 Board of Directors

### Officers

June M. Castellano, Chair  
Kathryn L. Smith, Vice-Chair  
Michael R. Parrinello, Treasurer  
Richard N. Chapman, Secretary  
Carla M. Palumbo, President and CEO

### Directors

A. Vincent Buzard  
Jose Cruz  
Thomas M. Farace  
Hon. Evelyn Frazee  
Donald W. O'Brien, Jr.  
Anne Dyring Riley  
James Sheppard  
Dr. Heidi Witmer Smith  
Lorraine Strem  
Samuel O. Tilton  
Robert P. Turner

## Juvenile Justice Division

### Attorney For The Child

Tanya Guglin, Supervisor of Appeals and Training  
Deral Givens, Supervising Attorney  
Joni Brandon, Attorney  
Tonia Ettinger, Attorney  
Tamara Guglin, Attorney  
Jennifer Hilburger, Attorney  
Gerard LaRusso, Attorney  
Kathy Perrault, Attorney  
Maureen Polen, Attorney  
Kristen Porpora-Sturgis, Attorney  
Maria Reed, Attorney  
Hannah Scoville, Attorney  
Katie Woodruff, Attorney  
Eric Huppert, Investigator  
Lindsey Jackson, Supervising Social Worker  
Patrice Battle, Social Worker  
Elizabeth Escobar, Social Worker  
Jacqueline Klube, Social Worker  
Michelle Rivera, Supervising Secretary  
Prudence Banker, Secretary  
Judith Borzilleri, Clerk  
Yolanda Irizarry, Clerk

### Education Law Program

Rachel Summer, Staff Attorney  
Stewart Atkin, Advocate  
Laura Calla, Advocate

# 2015-2016 Financial Statement

These figures are preliminary and subject to audit. Financial records are audited by Thaney & Associates, CPA's, P.C.

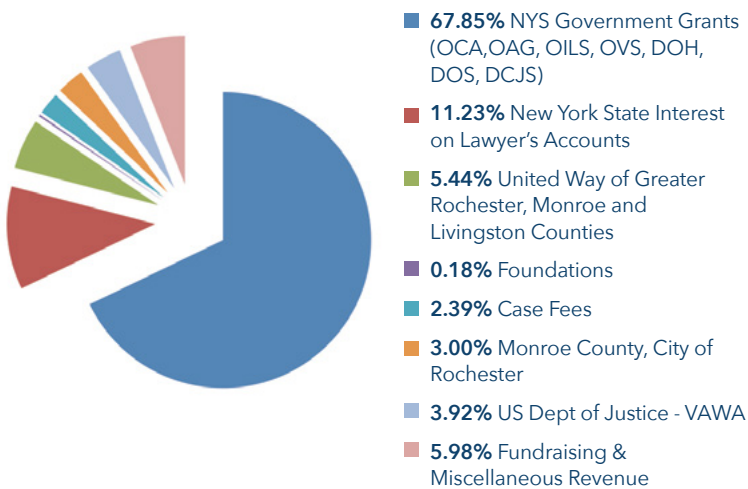
## Revenue

NYS Government Grants (OCA,OAG, OILS, OVS, DOH, DOS, DCJS)	\$3,424,882.00
New York State Interest on Lawyer's Accounts	\$575,000.00
United Way of Greater Rochester, Monroe and Livingston Counties	\$278,613.00
Youth Bureaus - Monroe and Livingston Counties	\$47,787.00
Foundations	\$9,400.00
Case Fees	\$122,178.00
Monroe County, City of Rochester	\$153,769.00
US Dept of Justice - VAWA GTEA	\$70,354.00
US Dept of Justice - VAWA LAV	\$130,140.00
Fundraising & Special Events	\$60,577.00
Miscellaneous/Interest/Other Income	\$245,679.00
<b>TOTAL OPERATION REVENUE</b>	<b>\$5,118,379.00</b>

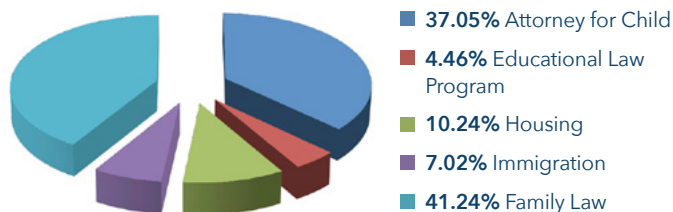
## Expenses

Salary	\$3,475,930.00
Payroll taxes and Benefits	\$702,645.00
Contractual Expenses	\$80,088.00
Collaborative Partners	\$126,149.00
Supplies and Postage	\$101,862.00
Occupancy	\$314,236.00
Travel, training and dues	\$130,669.00
Equipment purchases	\$34,241.00
Insurance, Recruitment, other miscellaneous expenses	\$120,083.00
Specific Assistance on behalf of client	\$16,623.00
<b>TOTAL FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$5,102,526.00</b>

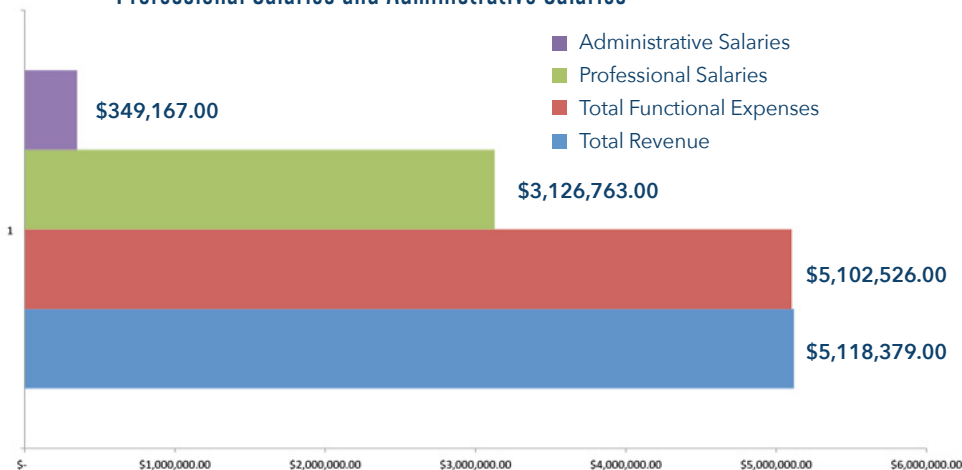
## How Our Funds Arrive



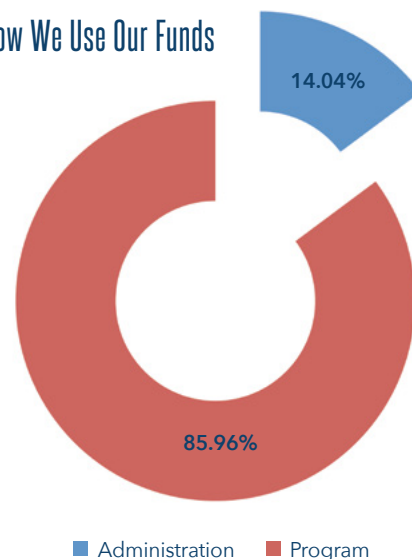
## Nature of Our Programs



## Comparison of Total Revenue, Total Functional Expenses, Professional Salaries and Administrative Salaries



## How We Use Our Funds





## The Legal Aid Society of ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

The Legal Aid Society of Rochester, New York  
One West Main Street, Suite 800  
Rochester, NY 14614

### Our Mission

The Legal Aid Society of Rochester is a not-for-profit organization that provides direct civil legal services, including lay advocacy and related human services, to adults and children. We ensure that those who seek justice have an opportunity to receive a fair and full hearing. We obtain legal solutions that have a beneficial impact on our clients and the community.

### Our Vision

The Legal Aid Society of Rochester believes in the guarantees of due process and equal protection as promised in our State and Federal constitutions.

To ensure that those rights have real meaning, we will strive to provide a highly qualified and zealous advocate to anyone who cannot otherwise obtain representation in civil legal matters.

We will create an environment in our community that values access to legal counsel, so every person is treated with dignity, equality, and fairness.

# 2016

## Annual Report