



The Legal Aid Society
of ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

THE SEEDS OF JUSTICE



ANNUAL REPORT • 2020 | 2021

DEAR FRIENDS...

A MESSAGE FROM CARLA & ANNE

We would love to be able to report on our 99th year without having to mention the pandemic, but that is simply not possible. Fortunately, we will report that, thanks to an amazing team of dedicated staff, Board of Directors and community partners, LASROC is as strong as it has ever been.

The LASROC team did not miss a beat when we went to remote work in mid-March of last year. We remained fully open even in the early months of the pandemic, setting up staff with the technology required to work on their cases, communicate with the court system, and stay in touch with each other and our clients.

The pandemic changed some of the legal needs of our community, and LASROC responded quickly and effectively. We set up a domestic violence hotline for victims forced to shelter with their abusers, offering individualized legal advice and immediate court action, if necessary. Similarly, faced with illegal evictions despite a moratorium, LASROC worked with the Administrative Justice Craig Doran to implement a county-wide Tenant Defense Project. A special

Covid Intervention part was set up for judges to hear eviction cases, and LASROC expanded its housing representation to clients outside of the City of Rochester for the first time.

We could not have accomplished so much without the financial support of State and local government as well as community partners. In addition to helping us respond to the increase in Covid-related demands, we were also able to expand services in the areas of education law and immigration law for people with disabilities, thanks to the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation.

While the annual report is inevitably about looking back, we are more excited about looking forward. We are very proud of the resilience and accomplishments of our tremendous staff in 2020-21, but we know that there will be much more to celebrate in 2021-22. In addition to a myriad of events recognizing our 100th anniversary, we will take what we've learned in the last year and adapt our services accordingly. Whatever the year brings, we know that our team's commitment, talent and flexibility will continue to serve our clients well.



CARLA M. PALUMBO PRESIDENT AND CEO

Carla M. Palumbo



ANNE DYRING RILEY CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Anne D. Riley

2020-21 PROGRAM OVERVIEWS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

LASROC faced unique challenges this year. The closure of much of New York State, including courts for a significant period, impacted the number of clients who sought services during this time and affected the movement of cases, particularly in the areas of Family Law and Housing. Despite these challenges, our attorneys and staff deftly pivoted to providing services remotely and obtained more than \$1 million for the benefit of our clients through child support and maintenance awards, equitable distribution, preventing improper judgments and foreclosures, and assisting with debt relief.

3667
CASES

ATTORNEY FOR THE CHILD | PROVIDED DIRECT REPRESENTATION IN 3667 CASES

Our **Attorney for the Child Unit** is appointed by the court to provide free legal representation to children in a variety of cases, including abuse, custody, foster care, juvenile delinquency, or Person in Need of Supervision (PINS). The wishes and feelings of the child are the primary concern of the Attorney for the Child. Our attorneys, social workers, and advocates are passionately committed to the care and safeguarding of children.

271
CASES

EDUCATIONAL LAW | PROVIDED DIRECT REPRESENTATION IN 271 CASES

Our **Education Law Unit** supports children from birth to 21 years old in Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, and Wayne Counties with legal representation and advocacy in education-related matters. This includes 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 the appropriate school or community services. Our attorneys and advocates worked to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities were met during remote and hybrid model schooling.

915
CASES

FAMILY LAW | PROVIDED DIRECT REPRESENTATION IN 915 CASES

Our **Family Law Unit** provides high-quality legal representation and advocacy to low-income residents of Genesee, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, and Wayne Counties. We strive to support survivors, end domestic violence, and reduce poverty among our clients through legal representation in divorce, custody, visitation, child support, and other family law matters. Our domestic violence legal services are provided in collaboration with Willow Domestic Violence Center and other domestic violence providers. Our family law attorneys were able to provide immediate legal advice to clients unable to seek assistance during pandemic shutdowns through the establishment of a Domestic Violence Helpline.

632
CASES

HOUSING & CONSUMER LAW | PROVIDED DIRECT REPRESENTATION IN 632 CASES

Our **Housing and Consumer Law Unit** provides a continuum of housing and transactional services, including eviction prevention, foreclosure prevention, bankruptcy, and consumer law, representation of first-time home buyers and wills, and advance directives for seniors and homeowners. The Housing & Consumer Law Unit has recently developed and implemented the Tenant Defense Project, a collaborative effort aimed at providing all tenants facing eviction in the greater Rochester area with free access to an attorney.

160
CASES

IMMIGRATION LAW | PROVIDED DIRECT REPRESENTATION IN 160 CASES

Our **Immigration Law Unit** 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. Although immigration law was especially fluid during the pandemic, our attorneys and advocates continued to provide services, counseling and advice to clients in need.

PLANTING THE SEEDS OF JUSTICE

Centennial Celebration Kick-Off | Thursday, April 22, 2021

Neither snow, wind, or the CEO's hip replacement could keep LASROC supporters away from the kickoff of a year-long celebration of our 100th anniversary serving the Rochester and surrounding communities!

Elected officials, community partners, and LASROC Board of Directors and staff gathered at Highland Park to hear from leaders about LASROC's impacts and watch while they planted a magnolia tree. The tree signifies LASROC's roots in Rochester while symbolizing the theme of our centennial year, "Planting the Seeds of Justice."

"We are proud of our place in Rochester's history," said LASROC President and CEO Carla Palumbo. "From our beginning as a project of Susan B. Anthony to our current advocacy on issues ranging from housing security to domestic violence, Legal Aid has been at the forefront of ensuring that Rochester area residents get the legal representation they need and deserve."

Seventh Judicial District Administrative Judge Craig Doran talked about LASROC's leadership in fighting for access to justice for its clients, especially during the pandemic, and Mayor Lovely Warren presented Palumbo with a City of Rochester proclamation in recognition of all of the agency's work.

This is just the first of several events celebrating our first one hundred years – watch for news of others, culminating with our Centennial Gala in April, 2022!



100
CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION 1921-2021

The Legal Aid Society
of ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

Nothing Stops Team LASROC from Helping Clients - **IN COURT AND AT HOME!**

HELPING A DISABLED REFUGEE GAIN CITIZENSHIP

Rafael* arrived in the United States in 2010 as a refugee. He was denied citizenship because his lifelong disability was not indicated on his immigration record and other medical information was missing. After reaching out to Rafael's physician, **LASROC accredited representative Florian Seger** successfully argued that there had not been adequate testing of Rafael's disability, but it had been present all along. The United States Customs and Immigration Service accepted LASROC's argument and granted Rafael full U.S. citizenship, with all of its associated benefits.

FIGHTING ILLEGAL PANDEMIC EVICTIONS

Most people know that there has been a moratorium on tenant evictions since the beginning of the pandemic. Unfortunately, it has not always been honored by property owners and managers. Donna* sought LASROC assistance when her property manager locked her out of her rooming house, cutting off access to her belongings, including her medication. When Donna subsequently got sick, LASROC attorneys **Leigh Ann Chute and Lily Sarkisian** secured a judicial order to restore her rights to the property. These cases are common but rarely straightforward, requiring a LASROC team effort to get our clients the relief they need.

ADVOCATING FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Linda*, the parent of a student with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), called LASROC to explore her legal options after her son suffered repeated bullying at the hands of a tenured teacher. Thanks to the advice she received, she was able to get her child transferred to another classroom smoothly and without repercussion. Unfortunately, soon after the transfer, Linda's son was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer, but LASROC attorney **Jonathan Falk** was still there for the family. He made sure that the student's educational needs continued to be met in the hospital and while under treatment at home, as required under by law.

**Clients names have been changed for confidentiality purposes.*



Carla Alvarado, a receptionist, seen answering a phone call from potential clients from her home office.



Brendan Boehner, a legal assistant in the Housing and Consumer Law Unit, featuring his at-home work setup.



Kristen Porpora, the Program Director of the Family Law Unit, seen working on a client's case from her home office.



One of our Family Law Unit attorneys, **Colleen Moonan**, working her shift on the Domestic Violence Hotline.



Leslie Torres, a receptionist, seen working from home, answering calls from potential clients and passing them along to the appropriate departments.

2020-2021 LEADERSHIP AND SUPERVISORY STAFF

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Anne Dyring Riley, Esq. – *Chair*
Kitty Bressington – *Vice Chair*
Michael R. Parrinello – *Treasurer*
Chris Yuskiw – *Secretary*
Carla M. Palumbo, Esq. – *President & CEO*

Duwayne T. Bascoe, Esq.
Denine Carr, Esq.
June Castellano, Esq.
Richard Chapman, Esq.
Brian Mahoney, Esq.
Patrick M. Malgieri, Esq.
Colleen McCarthy
Lindsay Rabitz, Esq.
David Seeley
Kathryn L. Smith, Esq.
Hon. Joseph Valentino, Esq.

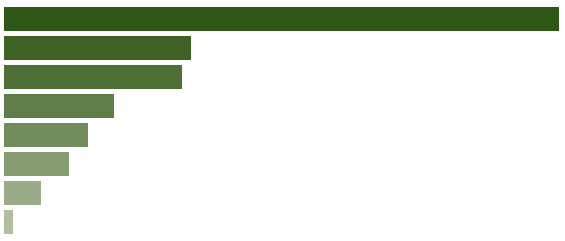
LEADERSHIP & SUPERVISORY STAFF

Carla M. Palumbo, Esq. – President & CEO
Bill Davis – Director, Administration & CFO
Zachary J. Pike, Esq. – Director, Civil Division
Steve R. Weisbeck, Esq. – Director, Juvenile Justice Division
Angela Brodie – Director, Employee Engagement & Compensation
Sara Horeth – Director, Grants & Program Administration
Jonathan Falk, Esq. – Program Director, Education Law Unit
Mark Muoio, Esq. – Program Director, Housing & Consumer Law Unit
Blanca A. Owen – Program Director, Immigration Law Unit
Kristen Porpora, Esq. – Program Director, Family Law Unit
Deral Givens, Esq. – Supervising Attorney, Attorney for the Child Unit
Jennifer Hilburger – Intern & Mentor Coordinator, Attorney for the Child Unit
Mary Hope Benedict – Supervising Attorney, Attorney for the Child Unit
Lindsey Jackson, LMSW – Supervising Social Worker, Attorney for the Child Unit
Jaqueline Klube, MSW – Social Work Coordinator, Attorney for the Child Unit
Vipan S. Lang, Esq. – Staff Support Supervising Attorney, Family Law Unit
Lauren Pienkowski – Intern & Mentor Coordinator, Attorney for the Child Unit
Maureen Polen, Esq. – Child Protection Coordinator, Attorney for the Child Unit
Michelle Rivera – Supervising Secretary, Attorney for the Child Unit
Stephanie Wolter, Esq. – Supervising Attorney, Family Law Unit
Katie Woodruff, Esq. – Youth Justice Coordinator, Attorney for the Child Unit

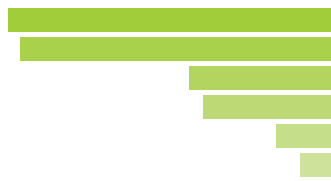


FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Operation Revenue **\$7,716,351**

NYS Government Grants (OCA,OAG, OILS, ONA, OVS, DOH, DCJS)	\$4,776,985	
New York State Interest on Lawyer's Accounts	\$800,000	
Fundraising & Miscellaneous Revenue	\$798,022	
Federal Grants (USDOJ, HUD)	\$553,180	
Monroe County, City of Rochester	\$350,538	
United Way of Greater Rochester, Monroe and Livingston Counties	\$317,340	
Case Fees	\$74,056	
Foundations	\$46,230	

Operation Expenses **\$7,711,351**

	Family Law	\$2,722,215
	Attorney for Child	\$2,428,184
	Housing	\$907,277
	Management & General Expenses	\$850,108
	Immigration	\$562,081
	Youth Advocacy Program	\$241,486
	<i>Excess/(Deficiency) of Operating Revenue over Expenses</i>	\$5,000

NATURE OF OUR PROGRAMS

- 39.68%** Family Law Unit
- 35.39%** Attorney for Child Unit
- 13.22%** Housing & Consumer Law Unit
- 8.19%** Immigration Law Unit
- 3.52%** Educational Law Unit



HOW WE USE OUR FUNDS

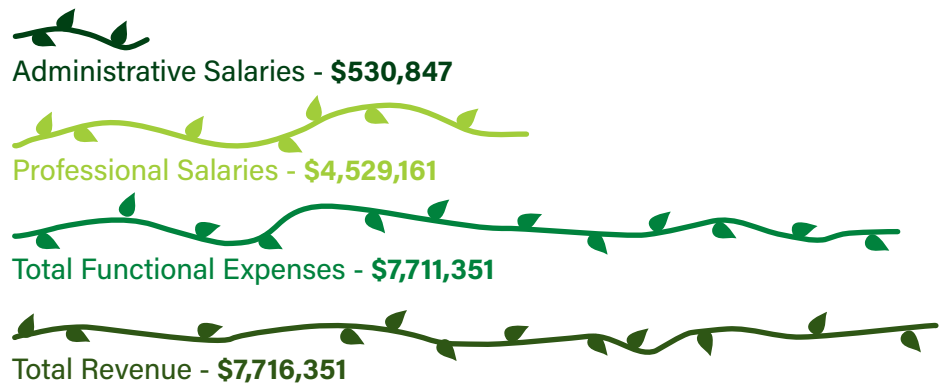
Program **\$6,861,243**

88.98% 

Administration **\$850,108**

11.02% 

COMPARISON OF TOTAL REVENUE, TOTAL FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES, PROFESSIONAL SALARIES AND ADMINISTRATIVE SALARIES



MISSION

The Legal Aid Society of Rochester, NY 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.

VISION

The Legal Aid Society of Rochester, NY believes in the guarantees of due process and equal protection as promised in our State and Federal constitutions. To ensure that these 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.



The Legal Aid Society
— of ROCHESTER, NEW YORK —

Telesca Center For Justice | One WEST Main St., Rochester, NY 14614 | (585) 232-4090 | lasroc.org