



100  
CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION 1921-2021

**The Legal Aid Society**  
— of ROCHESTER, NEW YORK —

ANNUAL REPORT • 2021 | 2022

# A Message From...



**Carla M. Palumbo**  
*President and CEO*



**Anne Dyring Riley**  
*Chair, Board of Directors*

Dear Friends,

This year marked a very special moment in our history as we celebrated The Legal Aid Society of Rochester's 100th anniversary. And what a celebration it was! This milestone was a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the countless staff, board members, donors, and community partners who have shaped LASROC over the years and enabled us to help so many thousands of clients. We are excited to share more about LASROC's history and the joyous evening we spent celebrating together in the coming pages.

While this was a year of celebration it was also a test of endurance. The pandemic and circumstances around the world continued to profoundly impact both clients and staff alike. Despite challenges, LASROC is stronger than ever and relentlessly committed to our mission that, at its core, has been the same for 100 years. Access to justice for all.

Access to justice has proven critical for so many of our clients, in particular for tenants facing eviction. As an eviction crisis looms, LASROC's Housing and Consumer Law Attorneys are working in collaboration with our Telesca Center for Justice partners to face it head-on. This year, Tenant Defense Project attorneys represented every single tenant facing eviction in Rochester City Court who wanted assistance.

LASROC was grateful for the ability to provide over \$400,000 in emergency funds directly to our clients thanks to the United Way's Project Uplift, the City of Rochester's COVID-related Housing Relief Fund, NYS Pandemic Emergency Assistance Funds, and the generosity of a private donor. These dollars benefitted clients facing immediate crisis – they prevented homelessness, allowed for the purchase of food and necessities like eyeglasses and toiletries, repaired cars needed to get to work, and kept heat and electricity on for families in need.

We are so proud of all we achieved for our clients this year. LASROC provided direct civil legal assistance in over 7,500 cases benefitting almost 25,000 clients and their families. A myriad of stressors took a toll on the physical, mental, and financial health of our clients, unlike anything we've seen in recent years. Team LASROC's dedication, talent, and flexibility served these clients well, providing much-needed legal services and support during a challenging time.

All that has been achieved this century, the countless lives that have been changed for the better – it's astounding! It is with much gratitude that we stand here today, stronger than ever. **Thank you for celebrating our 100th birthday with us and for continuing to stand with LASROC as we embark on the next 100 years of ensuring equal access to justice for all.**

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*Carla M. Palumbo*      *Anne D. Riley*

# Program Overviews and Accomplishments

Our attorneys and staff obtained almost \$2.5 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.

**Attorney for the Child**  
*Provided direct representation in 5021 cases*

5021

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.

308

**Educational Law**  
*Provided direct representation in 308 cases*

Our **Education Law Unit** supports children from birth to 21 years old in Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Steuben, 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.

**Family Law**  
*Provided direct representation in 1031 cases*

1031

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.

923

**Housing & Consumer Law**  
*Provided direct representation in 923 cases*

Our **Housing and Consumer Law Unit** provides a continuum of housing and transactional services, including eviction prevention, foreclosure prevention, bankruptcy, consumer law, representation of first-time home buyers, wills, and advance directives for older adults.

**Immigration Law**  
*Provided direct representation in 267 cases*

267

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.



# 100 *Years* The Legal Aid Society of Rochester of Service to the Community

## A Historical Perspective

**For more than 100 years, The Legal Aid Society of Rochester, NY (LASROC) has been a voice of justice in the Greater Rochester Community. LASROC is one of the oldest Legal Aid Societies in the country, celebrating 100 years of incorporation this past year. We have remained proudly committed to the principle of equal justice for all, providing civil legal services to the disenfranchised for over a century.**

LASROC traces its origins to the Rochester Women's Education and Industrial Union (WEIU). The WEIU, founded in 1893 in part by Susan B. Anthony, was established to improve educational, social, and economic conditions for women and children. To this end, the WEIU formed a Legal Protection Committee that strove to "...command the social and legal rights of women to public attention... assist in all measures which may be taken to secure the (legal) rights of any who may apply..." The WEIU not only advocated for the rights of women in the justice system but also in education and all aspects of society that treated women as "less than." That legacy continues today in many areas of our community but most notably at The Legal Aid Society of Rochester.

Demand for Legal Protection Committee services grew and, in 1914, those services expanded to include both men and women. In 1918, the Legal Protection Committee became known as the Legal Aid Bureau. In April of 1921, The Legal Aid Bureau was incorporated into The Legal Aid Society of Rochester, NY. The first LASROC Executive Director was Carolyn Crane, and the first Board Chair was Fannie Bigelow. Fannie Bigelow was a friend of Susan B. Anthony's and

a fellow worker in the causes of women's suffrage, education, and independence. She fought on behalf of women prisoners in the Monroe County jail, worked at the Baden Street Settlement House, and championed the creation of a Children's Court in New York State, now the Family Court. Bigelow was chair of the Women's Education Fund. We are proud to give an award in her honor to members of our community who exemplify her ideals.

The Legal Aid Society of Rochester vigorously represented the indigent and advocated for change in the legal system, promoting pro bono services and legislative reform in the 1920s. Displaying resiliency during the Great Depression, LASROC expanded services to all of Monroe County. After World War II, the agency addressed the legal needs of Veterans. LASROC started the Law Guardian Program with the Office of Court Administration in 1962 to represent the interests of children in Family Court. In the 1980s, LASROC expanded services into Livingston, Genesee, and Orleans Counties.

Through 100 years of growth and change, LASROC remains committed to the original mission of the WEIU's Legal Protection Committee: to assist in all measures needed to secure the legal rights of all who apply. We believe in the guarantees of due process and equal protection as promised in our State and Federal Constitutions and work every day to make these ideals a reality. Providing access to legal counsel for thousands of community members each year, LASROC opens doors to the legal system for those who otherwise could not afford to do so, ensuring dignity and fairness to those who need it.



# An Evening of Celebration!

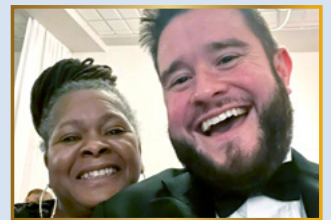
On April 29, 2022, we celebrated our 100th Anniversary with a regal Gala at the Arbor at the Port overlooking Lake Ontario.

Elected officials, community partners, and LASROC Board of Directors and staff gathered to celebrate the accomplishments of the last 100 years. Assemblymembers Bronson and Lunsford presented LASROC with a proclamation on behalf of the entire New York State Assembly. B.J. Scanlon, an aide to the County Executive, presented a proclamation on behalf of the County. We heard from Chief Judge Janet DiFiore, Mayor Malik Evans, and State Senator Jeremy Cooney, and listened to powerful testimonials from clients our agency has assisted over the years. Two former LASROC Board members were presented with Fannie Bigelow Awards recognizing their outstanding commitment to the work of ensuring equal access to justice for all – Honorable Evelyn Frazee, Supreme Court Justice, Retired, and

Donald O'Brien, Esq. We enjoyed fantastic food, exceptional company, and danced the night away to the magnificent sounds of Guiseppe' Scungili and the Screamin' Seagull Revue.

"We are all here because we believe in the mission of The Legal Aid Society," said LASROC President and CEO, Carla Palumbo. "Today I celebrate the dedicated board and staff who have served this community for the past one hundred years, and those who will serve for the next one hundred years to come."

The Anniversary Gala was sponsored by 35 different agencies, community members, and firms from around the Greater Rochester Area. A special thank you to the Glover-Crask Foundation who matched donations dollar-for-dollar up to \$50,000. From the generosity of our sponsors and individual donors, we raised over \$100,000!



# Board of Directors and Leadership

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

Duwaine 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

## Leadership and Supervisory Staff

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Carla M. Palumbo, Esq., *President & CEO*  
William M.F. 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*  
Lauren Pienkowski, Esq., *Director of Legal Recruitment & Professional Development*  
Dave Erb, *Systems Administrator*  
Kathy James, *Operations Administrator*  
Leigh Ann Chute, Esq., *Intern & Mentor Coordinator, Housing & Consumer Law Unit*  
Jonathan Falk, Esq., *Program Director, Education Law Unit*  
Vipan Lang, Esq., *Program Director, Education Law Unit*  
Mark Muoio, Esq., *Program Director, Housing & Consumer Law Unit*  
Blanca A. Owen, Esq., *Program Director, Immigration Law Unit*  
Aomer Mohamed, Esq., *Coordinating Attorney, Immigration Law Unit*  
Kristen Porpora, Esq., *Program Director, Family Law Unit*  
Stephanie Wolter, Esq., *Supervising Attorney, Family Law Unit*  
Vivian Aquilina, Esq., *Attorney Team Coordinator, Family Law Unit*  
Brittany Gawlak, Esq., *Attorney Team Coordinator, Family Law Unit*  
Kathleen O'Brien, *Legal Assistant Team Coordinator, Family Law Unit*  
Cindy Nolan, Esq., *Training Coordinator, Family Law Unit*  
Deral Givens, Esq., *Supervising Attorney, Attorney for the Child Unit*  
Mary Hope Benedict, Esq., *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*  
Maureen Polen, Esq., *Child Protection Coordinator, Attorney for the Child Unit*  
Michelle Rivera, *Supervising Secretary, Attorney for the Child Unit*  
Katie Woodruff, Esq., *Youth Justice Coordinator, Attorney for the Child Unit*  
Natasha Burdick, Esq., *Custody Coordinator, Attorney for the Child Unit*

# Financial Statement

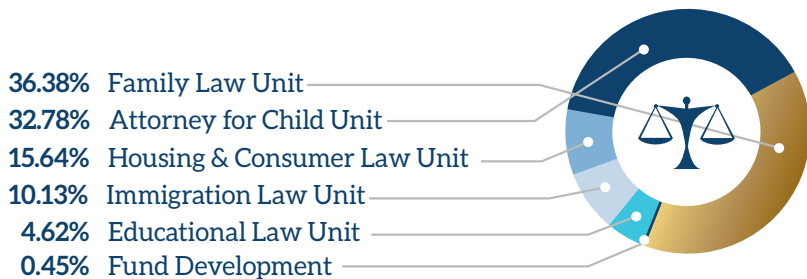
## Operating Revenue \$8,419,448

NYS Government Grants (OCA,OAG, OILS, ONA, OVS, DOH, DCJS)	\$5,236,834
Federal Grants (USDOJ, HUD)	\$1,331,705
New York State Interest on Lawyer's Accounts	\$833,582
Foundations	\$369,610
United Way of Greater Rochester, Monroe and Livingston Counties	\$358,828
Fundraising & Miscellaneous Revenue	\$173,160
Case Fees	\$82,808
Monroe County, City of Rochester	\$32,921

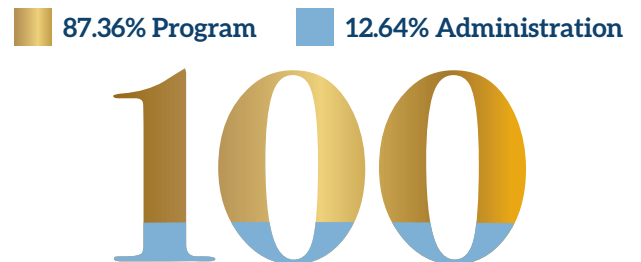
## Operating Expenses \$8,414,448

Family Law	\$2,674,258
Attorney for Child	\$2,409,192
Housing	\$1,149,871
Management & General Expenses	\$1,063,814
Immigration	\$744,578
Youth Advocacy Program	\$339,693
Fund Development	\$33,042
<i>Excess/(Deficiency) of Operating Revenue over Expenses</i>	<i>\$5,000</i>

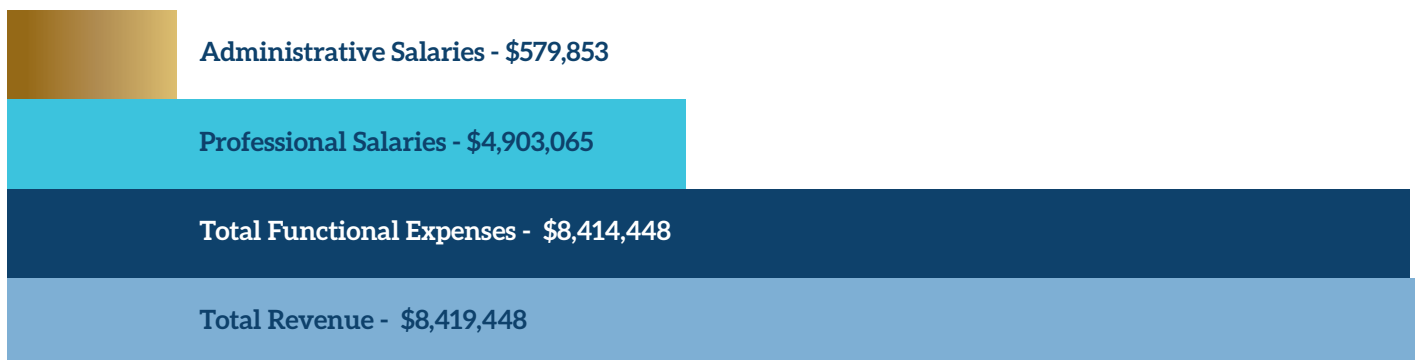
## Nature of Our Programs



## How We Use Our Funds



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



*These figures are preliminary and subject to audit. Financial records are audited by RDG + Partners Accounting and CPA Services.*



## 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.

[lasroc.org/give](https://lasroc.org/give)

