

# 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VLN

## *Making Pro Bono Happen for 50 Years*



Volunteer Lawyers Network  
uses the power of volunteers  
to protect and enforce the  
legal rights of low-income  
Minnesotans.



annual report  
FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016





# 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VLN

## *Making Pro Bono Happen for 50 Years*

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Case Coordinator

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Volunteer Liaison, Database Manager, Case Coordinator

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Judge Nancy C Dreher Fellow

Alexis Phillips  
Case Coordinator

Cassandra Phillips  
Housing Court Pilot Project Coordinator

Greg Rachwal  
Case Coordinator

Emma Riese  
Intake and Community Clinic Coordinator

Emily Tanner  
Receptionist / Office Assistant

Julie Thelen  
Development Coordinator

CFPB FINANCIAL COACH  
Don Fulton AFC®, CRC®

**For 50 years,** VLN pro bono attorneys have embodied equal justice under law by counseling and representing individuals and families living in poverty. These are essential community services. Civil laws – including protection for tenants, workers, and parents – only work to the extent someone can access the court to enforce them. As one client said succinctly, “Without a lawyer, I don’t have rights.”

VLN’s work is grounded in the belief that all attorneys share in the profound professional responsibility to ensure that the rule of law extends to everyone. This is not work reserved just for legal aid attorneys and public defenders. When private-sector and government attorneys volunteer to represent those in poverty, they not only fulfill the aspirations in their professional code of conduct, more importantly, they connect on a human level with those who come from very different life experiences. This helps break stereotypes about poverty and gives volunteers a much broader perspective on the impact of the law and public policy.

For the past 50 years, VLN has worked to give volunteer attorneys the support and structure they need to make efficient and effective use of their time. Our staff designs programs that respond to emerging legal needs, such as the explosion of requests for creditor/debtor and bankruptcy problems that emerged in the wake of the 2009 recession. We screen and connect specific clients to volunteers based on the interests and skills of the volunteers. In recent years, we have increased our attorney training about poverty law issues and communication in cross-cultural relationships between volunteer attorneys and clients.

One way we measure VLN’s success is by the feedback we get from our volunteer attorneys. Our incredible volunteer attorney retention reflects the fact that volunteers enjoy what they do and feel like they are making a difference. Our volunteers often say they gain more than they give, including the chance to make a difference in someone’s life, to cross social barriers, and to gain first-hand knowledge about the experience of those living in poverty: their resilience and resourcefulness.

During the past 50 years, thousands of volunteers have participated in this work and purpose. And, while so much has changed since 1966, fairness and equal justice for all continue to be as essential for individual and community well-being as ever.



*“If you are a lawyer, public service is just something you do, using your training to provide a public benefit.”*

—Tom Tinkham, VLN volunteer



Founders of Legal Advice Clinics in 1966 (now Volunteer Lawyers Network) l-r: Bob Henson, Cecil Schmidt, Jim Halverson, John Levine, Boyd Ratchye

## The Beginning of Volunteer Lawyers Network

Legal Advice Clinic (LAC), now known as Volunteer Lawyers Network (VLN), was founded by a group of young lawyers who set out to create a pro bono legal program similar to one they had heard about in Chicago. Richard Aaron, Charles Dayton, James Halverson, Boyd Ratchye, Harlan Smith and Peter Weiss recruited 40 attorneys and formed LAC with a \$300 donation from the Pillsbury Company. LAC was incorporated in 1966 and met with clients at four “settlement houses” for two hours four nights a week.



**1966**  
Legal Advice Clinics, Ltd incorporates as a not-for-profit organization.

Annual Budget: \$600  
Volunteers: 45

**1972**

HCBA-LAC is awarded \$13,500 from the Governor's Crime Commission and hires its first half-time staff attorney for criminal law, Peter Albrecht.



**1982**

New Financial Guidelines due to increase in federal minimum wage to \$2.65/hour.

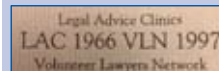
**1991**

**Celebrate 25 Years!**

Annual Budget: \$228,000  
Volunteers: 2,000

**1996**

Name changed to **Volunteer Lawyers Network**.



**2016**

**Celebrate 50 Years!**

Annual Budget: \$1,275,000  
Active Volunteers: 800  
Annual Services: 10,000

**2009**

First VLN **Riverfront Celebration** takes place!



1960s

1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s

2010s

**1970**

A formal affiliation agreement is entered into with Hennepin County Bar Association, and name is changed to **HCBA-LAC**.

**1977**

Annual Budget: \$46,000  
Volunteers: 250

**1992**

VLN serves residents beyond Hennepin County with its new bankruptcy program.

**2005**

The Spanish Legal Services program launches, initially called “Linea Legal Latina.”



**1985**

Reagan administration cuts LSC funding, which creates huge demand at LAC.

**2014**

New strategic plan and mission created:

**To protect and promote the basic needs of people in poverty through the power of legal volunteers.**

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## *Making Pro Bono Happen for 50 Years*



### Volunteer Lawyers Network Today

#### Bringing justice to Elizabeth – and other Minnesotans like her – who deserve a chance.

In the middle of our Minnesota winter, Elizabeth got the devastating news: she and her three young children were being evicted. And, in a tight housing market, they had nowhere to go, especially with an eviction now on her record. The cause for the eviction? She'd asked her landlord to take care of broken heaters and infestations of mice, cockroaches and bedbugs.

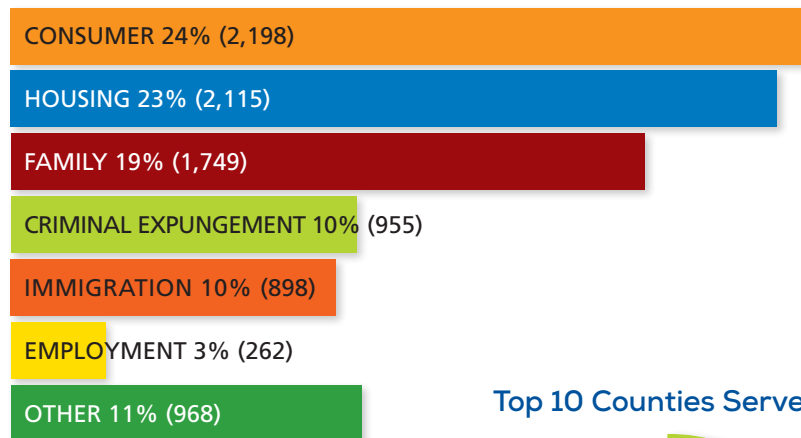
Minnesota has laws protecting tenants like Elizabeth from unsafe conditions, as well as from her landlord's retaliation. But Elizabeth had no way to invoke those protections; without a lawyer's help, she had no way of showing her facts to a judge.

On the verge of losing access to stable shelter, Elizabeth found VLN. And the rule of law came back into her life through attorney Michael Cockson of Faegre Baker Daniels (*pictured on cover*). Michael brought the facts and statutes before the court and not only prevented the eviction, but in Elizabeth's words, he brought hope back into her life.

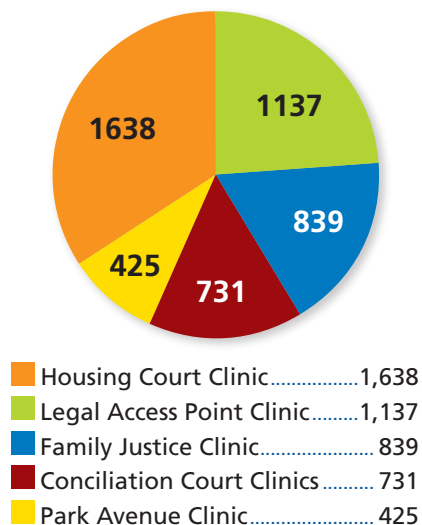
VLN envisions a community in which all have access to the legal services necessary for stability and well-being. If you are reading this, you probably volunteer or donate to VLN on a regular basis. YOU ARE VLN and YOU bring hope, stability and well-being to thousands in our community each year. Because of you, Elizabeth and her children, and many more like them, are safe, warm, and ready for another winter.

**766 attorneys** took a case during FY15-16: **9,145 services** were provided, including **6,027** received at clinics and events, and **1,648** received via telephone legal advice.

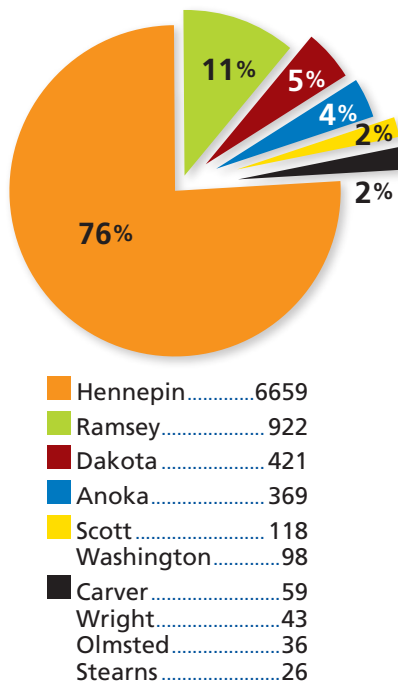
## Services Provided by Category of Law



## Number of Services Provided at Major Clinics



## Top 10 Counties Served



## Areas of Law Covered During Services

<b>CONSUMER</b> .....	<b>2,198</b>	<b>HOUSING</b> .....	<b>2,115</b>
Bankruptcy / Debtor Relief .....	873	Homeownership / Real Prop.....	116
Collect / Repo / Def / Garnsh.....	611	Housing Discrimination.....	1
Collection Practices /		Mort Predatory Lending Practices....	1
Creditor Harassment.....	72	Other Housing .....	24
Contracts / Warranties .....	100	Private Landlord / Tenant.....	1,916
Loans/Installment Purch.....	11	Public Housing .....	57
Other Consumer / Finance.....	509	<b>INCOME MAINTENANCE</b> .....	<b>71</b>
Predatory Lending .....	1	Other Income Maintenance.....	5
Unfair Sales Practices.....	21	Social Security (Not SSDI).....	4
<b>EDUCATION</b> .....	<b>26</b>	SSDI .....	6
Discipline (Exp & Susp).....	4	SSI.....	9
Education Other .....	5	State & Local Income Maint .....	11
Student Finc. Aid.....	17	Unemployment Compensation....	34
<b>EMPLOYMENT</b> .....	<b>262</b>	Veterans Benefits .....	2
Employment Discrimination .....	6	<b>INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS</b> .....	<b>2,062</b>
Employ Rights.....	115	Civil Rights .....	18
Other Employment.....	54	Immigration / Natural .....	898
Taxes Not EITC.....	21	Mental Health.....	3
Wage Claims & FLSA.....	66	Criminal Expungement.....	955
<b>FAMILY</b> .....	<b>1,749</b>	Other Individual Rights .....	118
Adoption.....	34	<b>JUVENILE</b> .....	<b>37</b>
Adult Guardianship.....	5	Delinquent.....	1
Custody / Visitation.....	823	Emancipation.....	1
Divorce / Sep / Annul.....	466	Minor Guardianship	
Domestic Abuse.....	47	Conservatorship.....	7
Name Change.....	22	Neglected / Abused / Depend .....	18
Other Family.....	51	Other Juvenile.....	10
Parental Rights Termin.....	16	<b>OTHER / MULTIPLE TOPICS</b> .....	<b>617</b>
Paternity.....	51	Adv Directives / Powers of Attorney...2	
Support .....	234	Criminal Referrals.....	79
<b>HEALTH</b> .....	<b>8</b>	Licenses (Drivers, Occ, Others) ...36	
Other Health .....	6	Other Miscellaneous.....	287
State and Local Health.....	2	Torts.....	169
		Wills & Estates.....	44
		<b>TOTAL</b> .....	<b>9,145</b>



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## *Making Pro Bono Happen for 50 Years*

### Many thanks to our generous donors!

Donations received July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016.

#### Individual Donors

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Anthony Baquero  
Jayne Barnard McCoy  
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Kristin Zinsmaster

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American College of  
Bankruptcy Foundation  
Anonymous Fund for  
Minneapolis  
Anthony Ostlund Baer &  
Louwagie P.A.  
Arthur, Chapman, Kettering,  
Smetak & Pikala, P.A.  
Associated Financial Group  
Barnes & Thornburg LLP  
Bassford Remele  
Benevity Community  
Impact Fund  
Best & Flanagan LLP  
Best Buy Co., Inc.  
Blackwell Burke P.A.  
Bowman and Brooke LLP  
Briggs and Morgan,  
Professional Association  
Call For Justice, LLC  
Cargill, Incorporated  
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Foundation  
Dykema Gossett PLLC  
F.R. Bigelow Foundation  
Faegre Baker Daniels  
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Faegre Baker Daniels LLP  
Fidelity Charitable  
Fish & Richardson P.C.  
Foley & Mansfield Charitable  
Foundation  
Fredrikson & Byron  
Foundation  
Fredrikson & Byron, P.A.  
Gray Plant Mooty  
Gray Plant Mooty Foundation  
Greene Espel PLLP

You changed **19,640 lives** during FY15-16, including **7,615 children**,  
through the delivery of pro bono legal services in Minnesota. \*

\*approximate numbers

Gustafson Gluek PLLC  
Halunen Law  
Hennepin County Bar Association  
Hennepin County Bar Foundation  
Henson & Efron, P.A.  
Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP  
HKM P.A.  
Lindquist & Vennum LLP  
Litigation Insights  
Lommen Abdo, P.A.  
Mardag Foundation  
Maslon LLP  
McKnight Foundation  
McNeely Foundation  
Meagher & Geer, PLLP  
Medica Foundation  
Merchant & Gould P.C.  
Minnesota Association of Black Lawyers  
Minnesota Chapter - Federal Bar Association  
Nichols Kaster, PLLP  
Nilan Johnson Lewis PA  
Oppenheimer Wolff & Donnelly LLP  
Pauly, DeVries Smith & Deffner, LLC  
RBC Foundation - USA  
Robins Kaplan LLP  
Saint Paul Foundation  
Saint Paul Foundation - Pan African Community Endowment  
Schwegman, Lundberg & Woessner  
Shepherd Data Services, Inc.  
Shields Legal Services, P.A.  
State of Minnesota

St. Jude Medical  
Stinson Leonard Street LLP  
Stoel Rives LLP  
Stroz Friedberg, an Aon Company  
TCF National Bank  
Thomson Reuters  
Thrivent Financial for Lutherans  
U.S. Bank  
U.S. Federal District Court  
United HealthCare Services, Inc.  
Winthrop & Weinstine, P.A.

#### In Memory of Bricker Lavik

Steven Carlson  
Paul Dieseth  
Nancy Fraser  
Lori Nielsen  
Lorraine Prindles  
Linda Skwiera  
David & Susan Wolfe  
Alysia Zens

#### In Memory of John Nevin

Marcy Harris

#### In Honor of Dianna Morrissey

Paul Floyd

#### In Honor of Scott Russell

Martha Lepore

#### In Honor of Allen Silver

Barbara Glaser

#### In-Kind Donations

65 Vines Winery  
Joy Anderson  
Matt Bazzano  
Black Sheep Coal Fired Pizza  
Brave New Workshop  
Breadsmith  
Karen Canon  
Mark Carter  
Chanhassen Dinner Theatres  
Continental Diamond  
Martha Delaney  
Kate DeVries Smith  
Mark DiPietro  
Dorsey & Whitney LLP  
Skip Durocher  
Fredrikson & Byron Foundation  
Peter Goss  
Guthrie Theater  
Marcy Harris  
Brenden Henehan  
Hennepin Theatre Trust  
Dan Herber  
Sten Hoidal  
Rachel Hughey  
Icehouse MPLS  
Illusion Theater  
In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre  
Kieran's Irish Pub  
Janet Lambert  
Laurel Learmonth  
Merchant & Gould P.C.

Minnesota Landscape Arboretum  
Minnesota Twins  
Minnesota Vikings  
Minnesota State Fair  
Fred Ojile  
Park Square Theatre  
Park Tavern  
Michael Reif  
The Saint Paul Hotel  
Mark Schneebeck  
Science Museum of MN  
SEA LIFE® Minnesota Aquarium at Mall of America  
Timothy Shields  
Elona Singroy  
Michael Skoglund  
Douglas Stafford  
Julie Thelen  
Thomson Reuters  
Twin Cities In Motion  
Mary Vasaly  
Mark Vyvyan  
Walt Disney World Co.  
Alysia Zens

We apologize for  
any names that may  
have been omitted  
from this list or  
have been listed  
incorrectly. If we  
missed you or made  
an error, please let  
us know so we can  
thank you properly.

## Services Provided at Clinics, Events, Programs & Workshops

Bankruptcy.....	147
Better Futures MN.....	1
Birth Certificate Project.....	85
Brian Coyle.....	96
Brooklyn Legal Clinic.....	34
CAPSH.....	274
Conciliation Court.....	592
Conciliation Court Appeal Clinic.....	50
Conciliation Court Consumer Debt Clinic.....	89
Consumer Protection Workshop & Legal Service Line.....	77
Criminal Expungement Clinics (3).....	164
Criminal Expungement Screening.....	576
Criminal Expungement Workshops.....	34
Dignity Center.....	209
Estate Planning Clinic.....	11
Family Justice Clinic.....	839
Family Unity Project.....	25
Housing Court.....	1,638
Jeremiah Clinics (2).....	3
Legal Access Point Clinic.....	1,137
LGBTQ Clinic.....	8
MIWRC.....	79
Park Avenue Clinic.....	425
Project Opportunity Connect.....	37
Real Estate.....	14
SJS (Special Immigrant Juvenile Status) Project...16	
Spanish Legal Services (SLS) Outreach Program....	51
StandDown.....	26
Youth Law Clinic.....	44
<b>TOTAL.....</b>	<b>6,781</b>

**All of our clinics** are designed to meet specific civil legal needs in partnership with other organizations.

- Bankruptcy Clinic, U.S. Federal Courthouse, St. Paul
- Bankruptcy Clinic, U.S. Federal Courthouse, Minneapolis
- Conciliation Court Clinic, Hennepin County Government Center
- Brian Coyle Community Center
- Legal Access Point Clinic, Hennepin County Government Center
- Park Avenue United Methodist Church Clinic
- Housing Court Project Clinic, Hennepin County Government Center
- Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center
- Youth Law Clinic, YouthLink, Minneapolis
- StandDown Clinic for homeless veterans
- Minneapolis Urban League Clinic
- Trans and LGBTQ Clinic, Family Tree Clinic
- Trans and LGBTQ Clinic, The Exchange/MN Health Trans Coalition
- People Serving People Clinic
- West African Community Law Clinic, Brooklyn United Methodist Church
- Better Futures Minnesota Clinic
- Jeremiah Program Clinic
- The Dignity Center Clinic
- Family Law Clinic
- Listening House
- Family Unity Clinic

We have criminal records expungement clinics at Sun Ray Library, Arlington Hills Library, Rondo Library, Twin Cities RISE!, Dakota County Law Library, Catholic Charities, Ramsey County Library – Roseville, and the Minneapolis Public Library.



Several of our new and innovative initiatives include:

- **Tenant Remedies Actions and Habitability/Rent Escrow Litigation Fund:**

VLN, Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid (MMLA), and HOME Line are partners in a project funded by the McKnight Foundation directed at addressing the need for safe and habitable housing in the City of Minneapolis. The Habitability Litigation Fund is one aspect of this project and is intended to provide tenants with access to money so they can pursue claims and/or assert defenses in relation to housing cases. The fund is administered by VLN. Eligibility for use of the fund is determined by VLN and/or MMLA, and if a client is eligible for use of the fund, VLN and/or MMLA will determine the amount to be used and VLN will pay this amount into court on the client's behalf. If the client wins the case and receives an award of money, the client's attorney will request that the amount paid by VLN be disbursed to the attorney's office, so the attorney's office can reimburse VLN. If the amount awarded is less than or equal to the amount paid by VLN, the entire award will be used to reimburse VLN. If the amount awarded is more than the amount paid by VLN, the award will first be used to reimburse VLN. The client is not responsible for paying VLN back for the amount VLN paid into court if the client does not receive an award of money.



*“My favorite client so far is a grandmother who assumed custody of her 6-year-old grandson after his father was killed a year ago. I prepared a paternity action for her. It appears she will get the permanent custody of the boy; the biological mother has lots of issues, and sounds like the boy is doing well in his grandmother’s care.”*

—VLN volunteer

## Our volunteers are the best!

- **Expansion of Full Representation Chapter 7 Bankruptcy Services:**

We created a new model for delivering full representation Chapter 7 bankruptcy services to residents of northwest Minnesota. Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota is actively referring clients to us for participation. The court provides us with meeting space in the federal courthouse in Fergus Falls, to allow multiple petition filings at one time and to conduct the creditors’ meetings by telephone.

- **Southern Minnesota Initiative:**

The goal of VLN’s Southern Minnesota Initiative is to respond to the civil legal needs of underserved immigrant communities, specifically undocumented individuals in southern Minnesota, in partnership with other legal aid and social service agencies of southern Minnesota.

During FY15-16, a total of 1021 legal professionals and others volunteered their valuable time to invoke the law’s protections on behalf of others. A testament to their dedication and VLN’s support, 399 of these had volunteered three years in a row. Of the many deserving of awards, two we especially recognized last year were Carole Megarry (Volunteer of the Year) and James Baillie (John D. Levine Pro Bono Distinguished Service Award).



Carole Megarry

Carole is a cornerstone at VLN’s busy Family Law Clinic in both quantity and quality. She volunteers there nearly twice per week on average! And while there, she provides not only excellent advice but, when helpful, a brief service as well – such as pleading, drafting, additional research or even court appearances. These brief services are so much more impactful than advice alone. She is a role model for us all – reliable, compassionate, competent, and proactive. Thank you, Carole!



Jim Baillie

And Jim Baillie? He is quite simply a rock star of our pro bono and legal community, with involvement in VLN since the late 1960s. Over the years, he has served thousands of VLN clients in every way possible, including direct legal services, program development (including LAP), board service (including board chair), and benefactor board service (including board chair). He is a champion of justice in other ways too, serving on numerous national committees (e.g., American College of Bankruptcy Pro Bono Committee and the ABA special committee on Disaster Response and Preparedness) and state membership organizations (e.g., HCBA and MSBA). We simply can’t list here all the ways in which Jim has served our community, but we can’t imagine anyone more exemplary of public service than Jim, and we are deeply grateful for all his work to support the rule of law in our community.

## Recognizing those who truly make an impact.

Our awards over the past year reflect the quality of our organization and the impact that we are making together:



- **2015 Corporate Pro Bono (CPBO) Pro Bono Partner Award – Small Law** for the Best Buy and VLN partnership. Since 2004, Best Buy has partnered with us, assisting in our Housing Court Project and Conciliation Court Clinic to provide legal advice to low-income persons. Nearly one third of Best Buy attorneys have dedicated more than 500 hours annually to assist us with these two efforts.
- **Minnesota Lawyer Attorney of the Year** 2015 award to Glen Drew, VLN Civil Resource Attorney. Each year, *Minnesota Lawyer* recognizes the best achievements in the Minnesota legal profession with the Attorneys of the Year awards. Attorneys are chosen based on their leadership, involvement in major cases or other newsworthy events, excellence in corporate or transactional services, and public service. Glen recruits, mentors and trains volunteer attorneys on how to effectively advise and represent low-income clients in district court proceedings. His knowledge and dedication to excellence in legal services are respected by all who meet him. Among other tasks, he coordinates the participation of law firms, corporate legal departments, and individual attorneys at the free walk-in clinics located at the 4th Judicial District Court's Self Help Center and the Conciliation Court.
- **Hennepin County Bar Association Pro Bono Publico Award of Excellence as a Public Attorney** to Tom Walsh, VLN Resource Attorney for Family Law and Bankruptcy. This award is given annually to attorneys who have made significant contributions to the delivery of legal services to disadvantaged people and law-related education for the public. Tom has demonstrated consistent excellence in recruiting, training and supporting volunteer attorneys to handle cases in two challenging areas of law – family and bankruptcy – impacting thousands of clients annually. An essential member of the VLN leadership team, Tom supervises the family and bankruptcy law programs at VLN with high standards, hard work, and a disarming sense of humor.
- **The Tanya Neiman Pro Bono Professional of the Year Award** for 2016 by the National Association of Pro Bono Professionals to Martha Delaney, VLN Deputy Director. This award is given annually to an individual who demonstrates steadfast commitment and exceptional contributions to the delivery of pro bono legal services. Martha received this award, in part, due to her work in reframing pro bono services in a broader context of social justice and basic human rights. She also, in partnership with others, created the nationally distributed training curriculum on poverty for attorneys to promote more impactful legal services. Locally, she's known for her ability to draw upon a variety of best practice and strategic resources to improve pro bono service delivery.
- **The Steven A. Pihlaja Justice Partner Award** for 2015 by the Fourth Judicial District for the dedication, commitment, and selfless support provided by the organization and its volunteer attorneys.

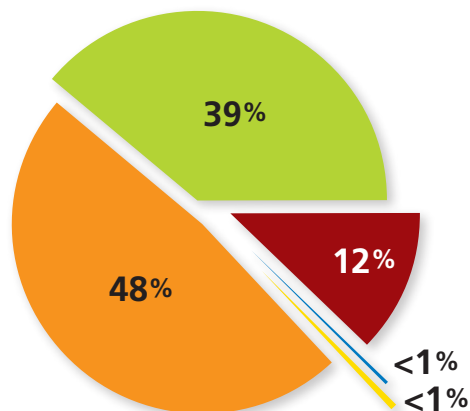


*“VLN gave me hope,  
gave me a chance to start over.”*  
—Courtney, VLN client

## FINANCIAL REPORT

July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016

Income

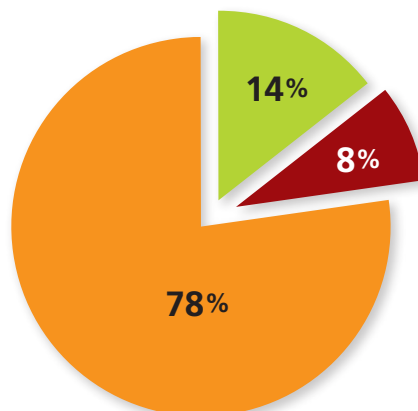


Contributions	583,741
Service Grants	467,868
Special Events	147,391
Workshops & Seminars	3,008
Interest	6,249
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$1,208,257</b>

### Assets

Cash & Cash Equivalents	642,733
Accounts Receivable	170,742
Prepaid Expenses	13,780
Other Assets	4,568
Net Property and Equipment	26,277
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$858,100</b>

Expenses



Program Services	961,949
Management & General	176,766
Fundraising	103,196
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$1,241,911</b>

### Liabilities and Net Assets

Payroll Liabilities	84,345
Accounts Payable	19,661
Deferred Revenue	13,640
Net Assets	740,454
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$858,100</b>

## board of directors 2015-2016

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Dorsey & Whitney

Mark Schneebeck, Vice Chair / Treasurer  
Fox Rothschild LLP

Julian Zebot, Secretary  
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# 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VLN

## *Making Pro Bono Happen for 50 Years*

Together, VLN and thousands of volunteers have served more than 200,000 clients in the past 50 years.



**Thank you for supporting VLN!**  
VLN's success is your personal accomplishment and commitment to pro bono legal services to Minnesotans.

Thank you for helping us fight for fairness and justice for struggling families and individuals in Minnesota who deserve a chance to thrive and achieve self-sufficiency. To help VLN, please go to [vlnmn.org](http://vlnmn.org) to make a secure tax-deductible donation.