

Pro Bono...

Now More Than Ever



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



annual report
FISCAL YEAR 2016-2017



Tony finishes a consultation
with an attorney at the Family
Justice Center legal clinic.



Pro Bono... *Now More Than Ever*

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Silver Linings

This has been a year of remarkable change for VLN, legal aid services and the whole country for that matter. Some of these changes were more anticipated than others. Some, depending on your perspective, were less positive than others.

As a result, we have seen negative discourse and divisiveness in our communities that is discouraging and disheartening – but there is a silver lining, and that silver lining is you. We have witnessed an outpouring of incredible support from our volunteers who want to help and uplift those in our community who would be targets of oppression and discrimination.

In the past year our volunteers have given voice to those who lived in substandard housing but were afraid to ask for repairs. Our volunteers have given protection to those who are harassed as they walk down the street simply because they speak or appear different. Our volunteers have helped those who are seeking a second chance at meaningful participation in our society, which they have been told is their right, yet is dangled out of reach despite their best efforts to play by all the rules.

So as you read the stories in this report, as you review the statistics of our services, we hope you take satisfaction in knowing that not only were people's lives improved, but that together we have taken a stand for compassion, dignity and integrity. Because of you.

Thank you.
Suzanne Pontinen, VLN Executive Director

Making a Lasting Impact

2016 Immigrant Law Center Pro Bono Partner of the Year

In 2015, VLN partnered with ILCM to establish the Family Unity Self-Help Clinic as a response to the tremendous demand for assistance with family reunification for immigrants and refugees. The clinic provides brief legal counsel for low-income immigrant and refugee families seeking the legal assistance necessary to reunite spouses, children, and parents across borders.



Delaney Russell

The Minnesota State Bar Association Bernard P. Becker Legacy of Excellence is presented each year to four individuals who have demonstrated a commitment to providing skilled and zealous legal representation and advocacy to low-income Minnesotans. During her 14-year tenure at VLN, Delaney Russell has established the popular Family Law Clinic at the Hennepin County Family Justice Center; improved VLN's service delivery model by creating high-quality attorney education programs, including the widely popular Breaking Poverty Barriers training; and improved the way VLN measures client outcomes. She has a national presence in the area of pro bono service delivery and she works to collaborate with client groups.



“The attorney I spoke with was kind, on my side, knowledgeable, and really helped. In fact, everyone I spoke with was this way.”

—VLN bankruptcy client



Park Avenue Legal Clinic

Twenty years ago, Volunteer Lawyers Network partnered with Park Avenue Church to start the Park Avenue Legal Clinic, one of several on-site community legal clinics run by VLN to provide brief advice, service, and referral in civil law matters. One of the longest-running and best-established projects of its kind in the Twin Cities, other legal services, government agencies, social service organizations, community members and others rely on the Clinic as a referral for clients to obtain on-the-spot access to competent legal advice and service.

Committed volunteer lawyers play a key role in the Clinic’s success, and since 1997 have helped over 8,000 low-income community members navigate the legal system. Colleen Beebe Purisaca (pictured below), now a program manager and resource attorney for VLN’s Immigrant Legal Services Program, is an original founder of the Clinic. As a volunteer, she helped start the Clinic right after she graduated from law school.

Over the years, the Clinic has become a safe place to refer clients with immigration questions, and many of the volunteers staffing the clinic are immigration lawyers. In the current climate of uncertainty and fear, the Clinic’s services are needed more than ever to ensure easy access to reliable legal information and help from caring and trustworthy lawyers.



Located in South Minneapolis, the Park Avenue Legal Clinic has served pro bono clients since 1997.

Helping Francisco Gain Citizenship

Years ago, Francisco Marquez, a Mexican citizen, fell in love with a U.S. citizen. When they married, Francisco legally immigrated to the U.S.A. to be with his new wife. The couple had a child who is now an adolescent.

A few years ago, Francisco visited the Park Avenue Legal Clinic to take the next step in his immigration journey and apply for U.S. citizenship. He did not fully understand the process – any immigration process can be very intimidating and confusing – and he needed some help to get started. Over the course of several months he visited the legal clinic with different questions. Volunteer lawyers answered his questions and encouraged him to apply for citizenship – he was ready!

Time passed, and then one day Francisco appeared at the Clinic with a beautiful cake in hand – he wanted to celebrate because he had just been sworn in as a U.S. citizen. “I couldn’t have done this without the Clinic’s help,” he said, “I don’t have a lot of family in the U.S., so I wanted to celebrate this moment with all you here at the Clinic because you treated me like family.”

Today, Francisco lives, works and raises his son in Minneapolis with all the rights and responsibilities accorded a U.S. citizen. He couldn’t be more proud!



Francisco Marquez (at right) shares a moment with Colleen Beebe Purisaca, VLN’s Immigrant Legal Services Program manager, and Jeff Larson, the volunteer attorney who helped Francisco attain US citizenship through VLN’s Park Avenue Legal Clinic.

Our Response to the Urgent Needs of Immigrants and Refugees

During FY16-17, our Immigrant Circle of Justice program responded to the urgent needs of immigrants and refugees resulting from new immigration-related policies, executive orders, and laws. Our program addressed a full range of client needs, from empowerment to resolution, in the seven-county metro area and parts of Southern Minnesota. We have responded to what this community has faced:

Threat of Deportation

- ➔ We provided weekly Know Your Rights presentations at the Mexican Consulate with an opportunity for each attendee to meet with an attorney. We also traveled with the Mexican Consulate throughout Minnesota with the "Consulados Moviles."
- ➔ Our immigration attorney was featured in a weekly Hispanic radio show, called "Charla Legal."
- ➔ We provided legal education presentations through churches and community groups.
- ➔ We conducted 13 Delegation of Parental Authority (DOPA) workshops, helping 200 parents complete 530 DOPAs, providing them with a legal plan for their children and assets in case of deportation.
- ➔ We provided screening, legal advice, and legal services related to U-Visa, VAWA, and other possible immigration options available under the law.
- ➔ We piloted our Resident to Citizenship Project at our Waite House Legal Clinic.

Expiration of Temporary Protected Status

- ➔ We helped Liberians whose Temporary Protected Status expired in May understand the immigration options available to them at our community-based clinic at Brooklyn United Methodist Church.

Travel Ban

- ➔ We were available at our community-based legal clinics to answer questions regarding the travel ban.

Special Immigrant Juvenile Status

- ➔ Our Journey of Hope program helped potential custodians of children who have crossed the border to obtain legal guardianship for these children. We also provided specialized risk screenings for potential custodians.

Hats Off to our Volunteers

During FY16-17, more than 700 people donated their time, and we needed them more than ever. These lawyers, paralegals, interpreters, clinic assistants and others provided 9,145 services to our clients. Each and every volunteer deserves recognition, but two in particular stood out last year to be honored at our annual Riverfront Celebration.



Stephen Rathke

Stephen Rathke, the **2017 Volunteer of the Year**, is an exemplary criminal expungement and housing volunteer. He has been actively volunteering at VLN since 2015, working on more than 900 cases and donating more than a thousand hours. In 2016 alone, Steve volunteered 400 hours, providing 443 services. Steve's dedication to VLN and the clients we serve has no bounds. He rarely turns

down a case and is always willing to act as a mentor to other volunteers. In addition to his full-representation pro bono case load, Steve is a regular at the Housing Court Project clinic and volunteers at expungement seminars and clinics as needed.



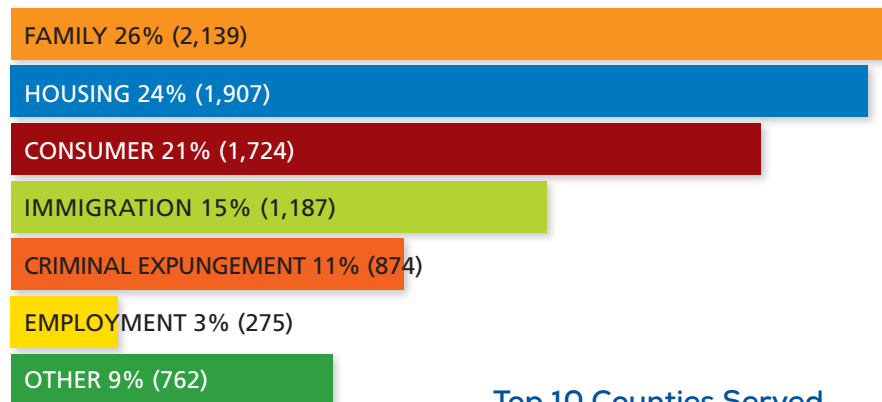
Joseph Dixon

The **2017 John D. Levine Distinguished Service Award** went to long-time VLN supporter and volunteer Joseph T. Dixon, Jr., of Henson & Efron, P.A. Joe began volunteering for VLN in 1971, and his most recent area of concentration is in family law. For the past several years Joe has mostly provided advice and brief services, but records show that Joe used to take on many full-representation family law

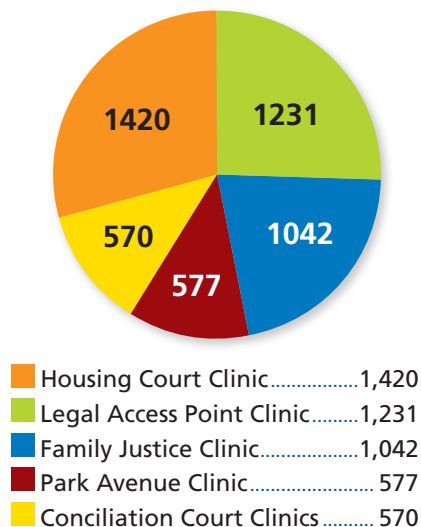
cases – which as we all know, is an area of great need in our community, but produces high burn-out among volunteer attorneys. Considering that only a handful of volunteers have been providing pro bono direct representation for nearly 50 years, it is fitting for Joe to receive this year's VLN John Levine Distinguished Service Award.

688 attorneys took a case during FY16-17: *9,112 services* were provided, including *6,106* received at clinics and events, and *1,591* received via telephone legal advice.

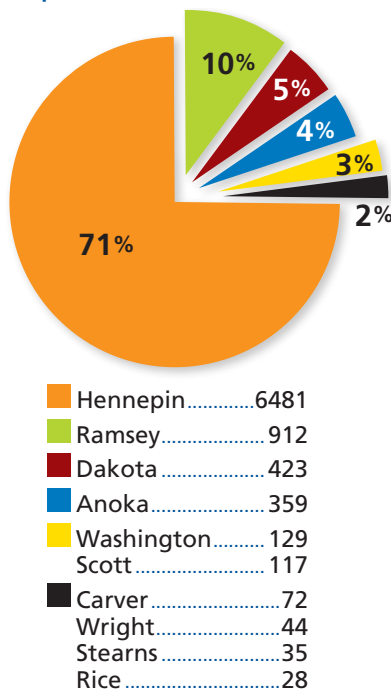
Services Provided by Category of Law



Number of Services Provided at Major Clinics



Top 10 Counties Served



Areas of Law Covered During Services

CONSUMER	1,724	HOUSING	1,907
Bankruptcy / Debtor Relief	792	Fed Subsidized Housing	11
Collect / Repo / Def / Garnsh.....	420	Homeownership / Real Prop.....	78
Collection Practices /		Mort Foreclosure not Pred Lending ...	3
Creditor Harassment.....	91	Other Housing	59
Contracts / Warranties	123	Private Landlord / Tenant	1,729
Loans/Installment Purch.....	1	Public Housing	27
Other Consumer / Finance.....	209		
Unfair Sales Practices.....	88	IMMIGRATION / NATURALIZATION ...	1,187
CRIMINAL RECORD EXPUNGEMENT ...	874	INCOME MAINTENANCE	53
EDUCATION	4	Other Income Maintenance.....	10
Education Other	1	Social Security (Not SSDI).....	4
Student Finc. Aid.....	3	SSDI	4
EMPLOYMENT	275	SSI.....	14
Employment Discrimination	10	State & Local Income Maint	2
Empty Rights.....	125	Unemployment Compensation.....	19
Other Employment.....	45	INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS	153
Sex Discrimination / Job	7	Civil Rights	10
Taxes Not EITC.....	23	Mental Health.....	5
Wage Claims & FLSA.....	65	Other Individual Rights	136
FAMILY	2,139	Physically Disabled Rights	2
Adoption.....	37	JUVENILE	34
Adult Guardianship.....	6	Delinquent.....	1
Custody / Visitation.....	842	Emancipation.....	1
Divorce / Sep / Annul.....	495	Minor Guardianship	
Domestic Abuse.....	87	Conservatorship.....	4
Name Change.....	25	Neglected / Abused / Depend	14
Other Family.....	337	Other Juvenile.....	14
Parental Rights Termin.....	10	OTHER / MULTIPLE TOPICS	762
Paternity.....	49	Adv Directives / Powers of Attorney...3	
Support	251	Criminal Referrals.....	114
		Licenses (Drivers, Occ, Others) ...	59
		Other Miscellaneous.....	324
		Torts	241
		Wills & Estates.....	21
		TOTAL	9,112



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Many thanks to our generous donors!

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You changed **20,437 lives** during FY16-17, including **8,100 children**,
through the delivery of pro bono legal services in Minnesota. *

*approximate numbers

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so we can thank
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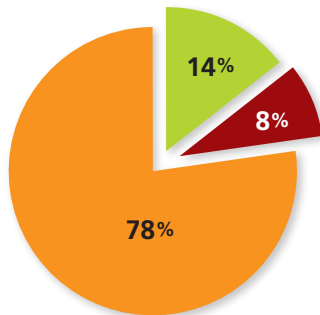
Bankruptcy.....	121
Better Futures MN.....	4
Birth Certificate Project.....	42
Brian Coyle.....	91
Brooklyn Legal Clinic.....	63
CAPSH.....	187
Conciliation Court.....	538
Conciliation Court Appeal Clinic.....	32
Consumer Protection Workshop & Legal Service Line.....	61
Criminal Expungement - 2nd Chance Saturday....	88
Criminal Expungement - St Paul Clinic.....	49
Criminal Expungement Screening.....	516
Dignity Center.....	182
Family Justice Clinic.....	1,052
Family Unity Project.....	38
HAP / MNAPABA Legal Clinic.....	28
Housing Clinic - Neighborhood Hub.....	6
Housing Court Project Clinic.....	1,420
Jeremiah Clinics (2).....	3
Legal Access Point Clinic.....	1,231
LGBTQ Clinic.....	59
MIWRC.....	49
Park Avenue Clinic.....	577
Project Opportunity Connect.....	46
Real Estate.....	50
SJS (Special Immigrant Juvenile Status) Project ...	38
Spanish Legal Services (SLS) Outreach Program....	162
StandDown.....	23
Waite House.....	84
Youth Law Clinic.....	42
YWCA Clinic.....	1
TOTAL SERVICES	6,106



600 Nicollet Mall, Suite 390A
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FINANCIAL REPORT *July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017*

Expenses

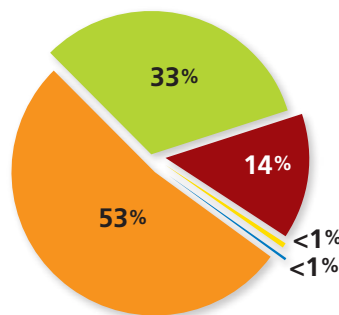


Program Services	964,820
Fundraising.....	173,014
Management & General.....	104,415
TOTAL EXPENSES.....	\$1,242,249

Assets

Cash & Cash Equivalents.....	358,817
Accounts Receivable.....	186,783
Prepaid Expenses.....	11,404
Other Assets	296,295
Property and Equipment.....	98,887
TOTAL ASSETS.....	\$952,186

Income



Contributions	729,131
Service Grants.....	454,265
Special Events.....	196,070
Workshops & Seminars.....	6,503
Interest	1,933
Other	503
TOTAL INCOME.....	\$1,388,405

Liabilities and Net Assets

Payroll Liabilities	59,076
Deferred Revenue	6,500
Net Assets	886,610
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS.....	\$952,186

Thank you!

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 to make a secure tax-deductible donation.

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