



# Justice *is* *Not Cancelled*

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



annual report  
FISCAL YEAR 2019-2020



VLN staff safely attends community outreach events following civil unrest to connect with clients in need.  
Inset (at left): VLN's housing team meets via Zoom.

684 attorneys took a new case during FY19-20: 7,808 services were provided, including 5,473 provided at clinics and events, and 2,335 provided via telephone legal advice.

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### staff 2019-2020

- Tom Walsh  
Executive Director
- Glen Drew  
Program Director
- Colleen Beebe  
Resource Attorney/Program Manager, ILSP
- Becky Beerling  
Housing Project Attorney
- John Beutler  
Resource Attorney/Program Manager, Criminal Expungement
- Barb Cruz  
Case Coordinator, Criminal Expungement
- Brigid Freed  
Administrative/Development Assistant / Housing Court Project Coordinator
- Ana Aleman Gonzalez  
Case Coordinator, ILSP
- Luca Guillén-Givins  
Intake Specialist/Case Coordinator, SJS
- Heidi Huber  
Volunteer Liaison / Data Manager / Case Coordinator, Employment/Letters to Creditors
- Nancy Johnson  
Administrative Director
- Anabel Kapelke  
Intake Coordinator
- Elizabeth Kelly  
Housing Project Attorney
- Chris Kramer  
Resource Attorney/Program Manager, Bankruptcy
- Muria Kruger  
Resource Attorney/Program Manager, Housing
- Megan McKinney  
Case Coordinator, Civil
- Stephanie Morales  
Immigration Project Attorney
- Greg Rachwal  
Case Coordinator, Bankruptcy/Family
- Kara Rieke  
Resource Attorney/Program Manager, Family
- Kait Ripley  
Case Coordinator, Housing
- Maleeha Rizwy  
Resource Attorney/Program Manager, Civil
- Molly Whelan  
Communications & Development Manager



A housing clinic client attends a remote hearing via tablet at the Ramsey County Courthouse. This year, VLN served more tenants in housing court than projected.

## Challenges and Opportunities

As we reflect on 2020, our minds instantly turn to the challenges we faced, challenges unlike anything our community has ever seen in our lifetime. The pandemic and civil unrest affected our clients perhaps more than anyone.

However, our Annual Report gives me the unique opportunity to focus on the many amazing things that transpired between July 2019 and June 2020. The world was turned on its head during these 12 short months, and yet we accomplished so much as a community.

This fiscal year started with a bold new partnership to provide criminal expungement services to survivors of human trafficking and sexual and domestic violence, whose convictions often stem from situations in which they were victimized. We went on to start a new eviction expungement clinic in the western suburbs, and shortly after that we attended the swearing-in ceremony of our first Citizenship Project client. Our More Representation Minneapolis initiative with the City of Minneapolis hit its goals early, helping more tenants in housing

court than projected. Our housing program was highlighted as a model for serving tenants at risk of eviction by the Urban Institute, and we opened a new housing clinic at the Anoka County Courthouse.

When the pandemic hit, VLN went virtual. Our phone-advice services skyrocketed thanks to clinic volunteers' willingness to adapt to new circumstances. Each program adapted to their clients' needs by facilitating and attending virtual hearings, providing services and referrals at community outreach events, and working with our partners to improve the way our justice system works in this new reality.

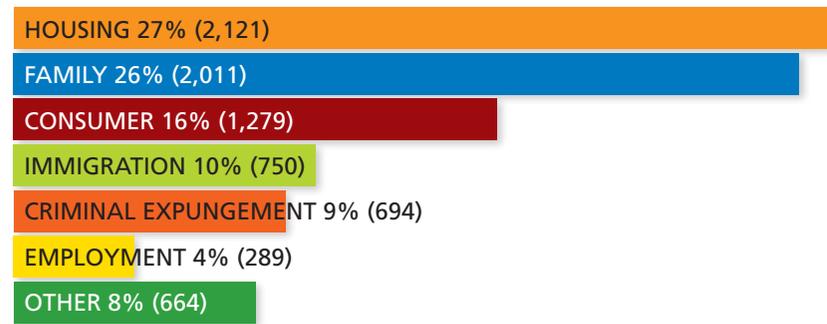
You did not miss a beat in providing services and support as the world turned upside down. Thank you for seeing that our clients' needs do not disappear when life as we know it changes.

Here's to better things, which are sure to come.

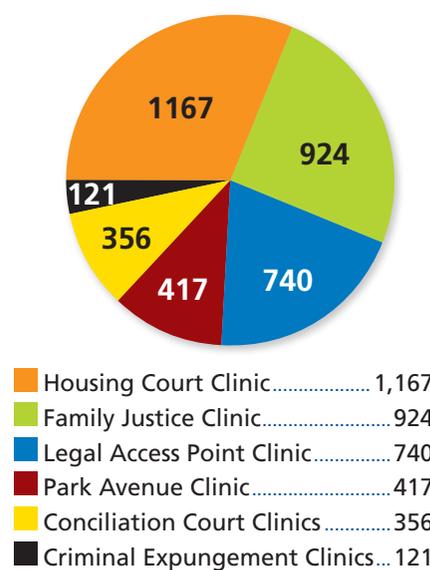
—Thomas Walsh, VLN Executive Director



## Services Provided by Category of Law

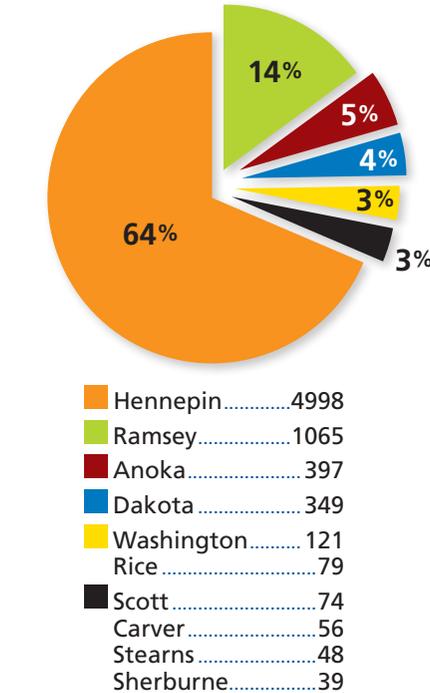


### Number of Services Provided at Major Clinics



Due to Covid-19, VLN clinic services decreased drastically after mid-March 2020.

### Top 10 MN Counties Served



## Areas of Law Covered During Services

<b>CONSUMER</b>	<b>1,279</b>	Landlord	115
Bankruptcy / Debtor Relief	625	Mortgage Foreclosure	2
Collect / Repo / Def / Garnsh	273	Motion to Vacate	2
Collection Practices / Creditor Harassment	94	Other Housing	151
Contracts / Warranties	70	Pre-Eviction/Writ	121
Loans / Installment Purch	6	Pre-Eviction (Notice to Quit)	54
Other Consumer / Finance	97	Private LL/T Access	19
Predatory Lending	1	Private LL/T Evictions	679
Unfair Sales Practices	113	Private LL/T Rpr / Qual	132
<b>CRIMINAL RECORD EXPUNGEMENT</b>	<b>694</b>	Retail Install Contract	1
<b>EDUCATION</b>	<b>2</b>	Section 8	1
<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>289</b>	Security Deposit	100
Employment Discrimination	18	UD Expungement	441
Empty Rights	156	(Blank)	279
Other Employment	44	<b>IMMIGRATION / NATURALIZATION</b>	<b>750</b>
Taxes Not EITC	7	<b>INCOME MAINTENANCE</b>	<b>40</b>
Wage Claims & FLSA	64	Other Income Maintenance	2
<b>FAMILY</b>	<b>2,011</b>	Social Security (Not SSDI)	1
Adoption	22	SSDI	2
Adult Guardianship	1	SSI	5
Custody / Visitation	869	Unemployment Compensation	30
Divorce / Sep / Annul	527	<b>INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS</b>	<b>33</b>
Domestic Abuse	97	Civil Rights	8
Name Change	9	Other Individual Rights	25
Other Family	175	<b>JUVENILE</b>	<b>48</b>
Parental Rights Termin	16	Minor Guardianship	
Paternity	42	Other Family Conservatorship	2
Support	253	Neglected / Abused / Depend	10
<b>HEALTH</b>	<b>3</b>	Other Juvenile	36
Medicare	1	<b>OTHER / MULTIPLE TOPICS</b>	<b>539</b>
Other Health	2	Advance Directives / Powers of Attorney	4
<b>HOUSING</b>	<b>2,120</b>	Criminal Referrals	73
Conciliation Court	6	Licenses (Drivers, Occ, Others)	37
Contract for Deed	2	Other Miscellaneous	200
District Court	14	Torts	216
Homeownership/Real Property	1	Wills & Estates	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,808</b>		



Pre-pandemic, volunteers with VLN's Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness (LRIFA) team work hard for immigration justice.

*"I felt like my attorney cared about me and my situation, and he wouldn't let my case go."*

## VLN Volunteers go the Extra Mile

Last year, more than 700 legal professionals provided 9,148 services to our clients. VLN honored two of these extraordinary volunteers during our annual Riverfront Celebration.



### 2020 VLN Volunteer of the Year

To say **Wendy Willson Legge** has been busy since her retirement in June 2018 is an understatement.

Wendy has spent well over 200 hours assisting more than 200 VLN clients with housing issues in the last two years. She is regularly scheduled to cover three housing court clinic shifts a month, and she's often the first to agree to take other open shifts – so it's easy to see why she's a favorite among VLN's housing staff.

In addition to her thoughtful and thorough clinic advice work, Wendy has regularly provided full-representation services for many clients she has encountered at the clinics. A client she met at an eviction hearing had paid all of their rent before the day of court, but didn't speak English and needed help arguing for the expungement of their case due to the language barrier. Wendy represented them in court that morning and ensured that the case was expunged.

As VLN transitioned to phone clinics due to the pandemic, Wendy displayed flexibility and a willingness to do whatever is needed to help low-income tenants. She assisted in training our new volunteers and allowed them to shadow her at clinics. Even during such an uncertain time, Wendy consistently picked up several advice shifts a month and provided additional or extended services for nearly half of all the clients she has been assigned, which is far beyond VLN's expectations.

In one of Wendy's current cases, a client can't get out of his lease, despite securing a new place to live. His current landlord refused to take action on serious safety issues or address the client's need for an elevator due to a disability. Wendy has taken this complicated case on and is working diligently to help this client move to safer housing.

The variety and complexity of Wendy's cases highlight that when it comes to helping low-income tenants, no challenge is too great. Wendy's services to impoverished Minnesotans are invaluable, and her tenacity and commitment to justice are inspirational.



### 2020 John D. Levine Pro Bono Distinguished Service Award

**Jodie Boderman** is the pro bono manager at Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP and has been active in the Twin Cities pro bono community for more than 25 years. With Jodie's assistance, Faegre is very active at many VLN clinics: Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Clinic, the Legal Access Point Clinic, the Queer and Trans Legal Clinic, the Hennepin County Housing Court Project, Ramsey County Housing Court Project, and many more. Jodie has been an ardent supporter of VLN throughout the years.

When VLN closed its offices and clinics and shifted to remote services, Jodie was the first person to respond to our call for remote volunteers. She consistently consulted and stepped up to recruit and coordinate pro bono attorneys. She has accommodated our shifting needs with a nimble timeliness that has allowed us to test and calibrate the best ways to meet the community's legal needs during this time. Jodie was truly instrumental in helping us to get our remote civil services off the ground as quickly as we did.

When VLN staff bring up new projects, Jodie is always right there brainstorming on how to leverage her and Faegre's resources to help Minnesotans experiencing poverty.

Jodie's commitment to pro bono extends beyond VLN. She played a pivotal role in organizing and managing the legal community's involvement at Project Homeless Connect



Minneapolis, an annual one-day event that served homeless and precariously housed Minnesotans. The legal team served more than 100 clients at each event. She coordinated volunteer recruitment and training, handled logistical issues such as ensuring the availability of printers, computers, and internet and was the onsite coordinator/manager for the legal section. She has also served on numerous boards, committees and task forces including LegalCorps, the Pro Bono Institute's Minnesota Collaborative Justice on Re-entry Committee, and the Hennepin County Pro Bono Group.

Jodie's forceful presence is felt by all who work in the world of legal services. VLN has been privileged to count her as a volunteer and fierce supporter of our organization, and we are honored to present her with the 2020 John D. Levine Pro Bono Distinguished Service Award.

## A Family Keeps Their Home

Shaunta Bailey, a mother pregnant with twins, was facing homelessness despite paying her rent in full.

She had proof she had given a money order to her landlord's agent, and yet they claimed she was delinquent and asked the court to evict her and her young children. They won a default judgment before Shaunta could get a lawyer.

"Without Volunteer Lawyers Network, I would have been homeless. Because I was just ready to give up and move out," she said.

But when our 2020 Volunteer of the Year, Wendy Willson Legge, heard about the case, she assured Shaunta she would not let that happen.

Based on Wendy's filings, the court vacated the default judgment and Shaunta and Wendy took the case to trial.

Wendy presented evidence and witnesses in support of Shaunta's case. After she completed closing arguments, the landlord's agent told the court to simply "give her what she wants." Shaunta and her family got to stay in their home.

"That's the only time in my career that the other side's ever given up after a closing argument," Wendy said. "So that was kind of fun."

Shaunta is very grateful for Wendy's help, and for Volunteer Lawyers Network's services. "They make it their business to get the job done," she said.



Pre-pandemic, our pro se asylum project members met to provide help to asylees who may not otherwise qualify for assistance.



# Justice *is* Not Cancelled

You changed **16,817 lives** during FY19-20, including **6,768 children**,  
through the delivery of pro bono legal services in Minnesota.\*

\*approximate numbers

## Many thanks to our generous donors!

Donations received July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020

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Wells Fargo  
Wild Mountain  
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## Services Provided at Clinics, Events, Workshops

Bankruptcy	104
Brian Coyle	17
Brooklyn Legal Clinic	53
Cannon Valley Clinic	51
CLUES	60
Conciliation Court	311
Conciliation Court Appeal Clinic	45
Criminal Expungement - 2nd Chance Saturday	77
Criminal Expungement - St Paul Clinic	37
Criminal Expungement - other clinics	7
Criminal Expungement Screenings	271
Criminal Expungement Workshops	24
Dignity Center	31
DOPA (ILSP program project)	22
Ecuador Consulate	53
Family Justice Clinic	924
Family Unity Project	19
Housing Court Clinic	1,167
Housing Clinic - Anoka County	15
Housing Clinic - Ramsey County	230
Jeremiah Clinic - Minneapolis	9
Jeremiah Clinic - St Paul	1
Legal Access Point Clinic	740
LGBTQ Clinic	14
Miscellaneous Clinics	8
MIWRC	24
Park Avenue Clinic	417
Real Estate	12
Rural Access Clinic	9
SIJS (Special Immigrant Juvenile Status) Project	44
Waite House	70
Youth Law Clinic	16
<b>TOTAL SERVICES</b>	<b>4,521</b>

We apologize if we missed you or made an error; please let us know so we can thank you properly.

Due to Covid-19, VLN clinic services decreased drastically after mid-March 2020.

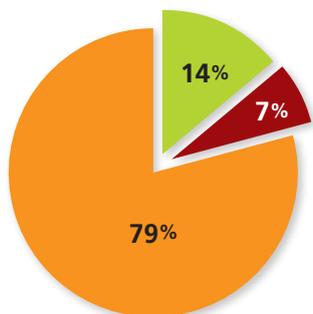


# Justice is Not Cancelled

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Minneapolis, MN 55402

## FINANCIAL REPORT July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020

### Expenses

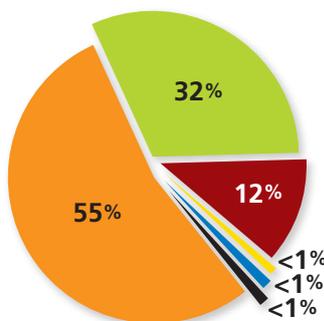


Program Services .....	1,109,493
Management & General .....	199,745
Fundraising .....	92,822
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES .....</b>	<b>\$1,402,060</b>

### Assets

Cash & Cash Equivalents .....	1,008,080
Contributions Receivable .....	77,537
Service Grants Receivable .....	112,500
Prepaid Expenses .....	26,027
Net Property & Equipment .....	89,397
Other Assets .....	4,568
<b>TOTAL ASSETS .....</b>	<b>\$1,318,109</b>
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS .....</b>	<b>\$1,008,701</b>

### Income



Contributions .....	769,906
Service Grants .....	449,468
Special Events .....	172,487
Interest Income .....	6,228
Other Income .....	5,210
Seminar Fees & Manuals .....	280
<b>TOTAL INCOME .....</b>	<b>\$1,403,579</b>

### Liabilities

Accounts Payable .....	6,593
Accrued Payroll .....	27,086
Accrued Compensated Absences ...	42,580
Long-Term Debt .....	233,149
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES .....</b>	<b>\$309,408</b>

## 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/donate](https://VLNmn.org/donate) to make a secure tax-deductible donation.

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