



Better*Together*

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



annual report
FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021



Keynote speaker Jerry W. Blackwell at the VLN 2021
Riverfront Celebration

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The Tough (Keep) Going

If 2020 was trying, 2021 could best be described as fickle. Just as things seemed to be looking up, another roadblock was thrown in our path.

What are we to do now that the novelty of Zoom has well past worn out, the most restrictive early pandemic safety measures fail us, and new variants pop up seemingly out of nowhere?

If we take our guidance from you, our loyal and generous volunteers and donors, the answer is simple: we carry on.

VLN volunteers have been there for VLN clients for more than 50 years. As our community has faced record wealth inequality, historic housing shortages, job markets from nonexistent to robust, and civil rights protections that lag behind the realities of everyday life, you have been there.

Our various programs have made incredible strides this year. The Immigration Legal Services Program has helped dozens of Afghan refugees and their families. The Bankruptcy Program expanded its criteria to help more clients, often seniors, take powerful and decisive action against harassing creditors. The Housing Program has spread

the word far and wide about every possible legal protection to keep people in their homes. When education was not enough, our staff and volunteers went to court to enforce those protections.

Times are tough, but so are we. So are you. So are our clients.

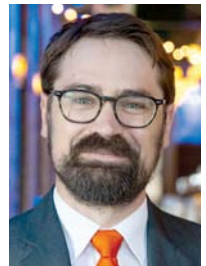
These current crises are unlike any we've faced before. But face them we must. You continue to inspire me with your commitment to equal justice, a worthy pursuit that nonetheless requires enduring fortitude and patience in a time when even the present feels uncertain.

If there is one thing we have learned from the last few years, it's that, together, we can handle whatever comes our way. Thank you for making that a reality.

With gratitude,



Thomas Walsh
VLN Executive Director

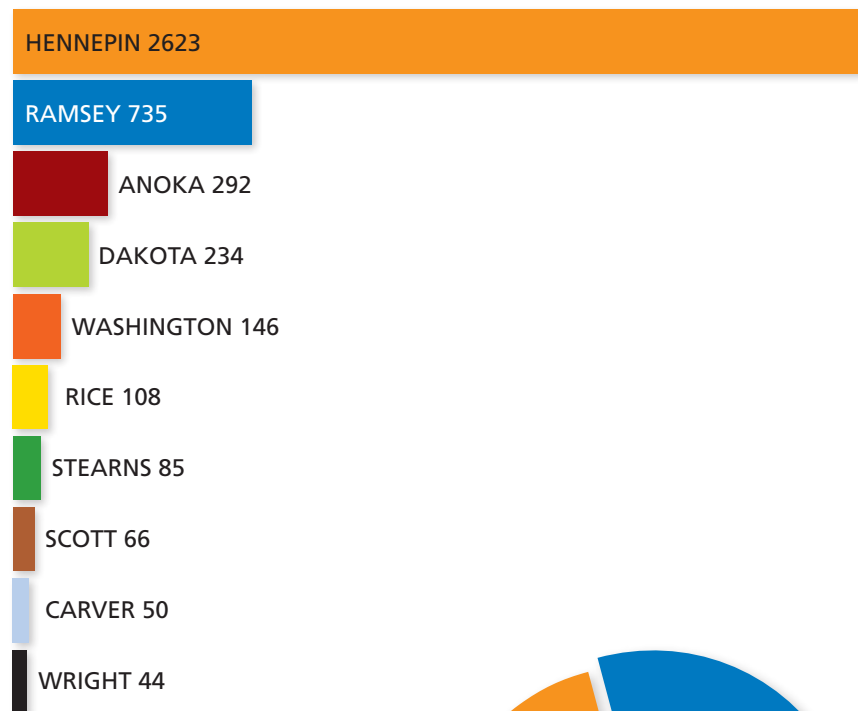


"I had no help, and Volunteer Lawyers Network was truly a lifesaver for me!"

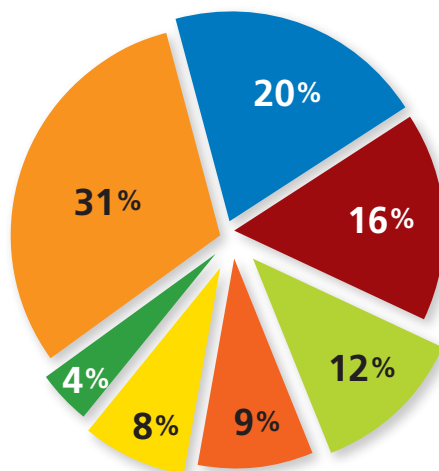
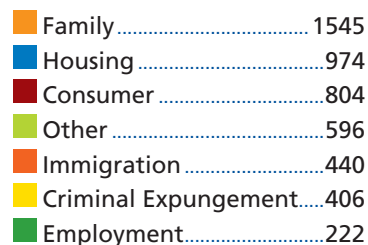
—Family Law client

483 attorneys took a new case during FY20-21: **4,987 services** were provided, including **145** provided at clinics and events, and **4,169** provided via telephone legal advice.

Top 10 MN Counties Served



Services Provided by Category of Law



Areas of Law Covered During Services

CONSUMER	804	HOUSING	974
Bankruptcy / Debtor Relief	334	Contract for Deed	1
Collect / Repo / Def / Garnsh.....	116	Evictions	162
Collection Practices /		Homeownership/Real Property.....	4
Creditor Harassment.....	110	Landlord.....	23
Contracts / Warranties	22	Mortgage Foreclosure	4
Loans / Installment Purchases.....	4	Post-Eviction/Writ	4
Predatory Lending	1	Pre-Eviction (Notice to Quit).....	19
Unfair Sales Practices	62	Title	3
Other Consumer / Finance.....	155	Lockout.....	3
		Repairs.....	100
CRIMINAL RECORD EXPUNGEMENT ...	406	Utilities	1
		Security Deposit	48
EDUCATION	1	UD Expungement	274
Student Financial Aid.....	1	(Blank)	253
		Other Housing	75
EMPLOYMENT	222	IMMIGRATION / NATURALIZATION ...	440
Employment Discrimination	19		
Employee Rights.....	130	INCOME MAINTENANCE	68
Taxes (Not EITC)	10	Unemployment Compensation.....	68
Wage Claims & FLSA	41		
Other Employment.....	22	INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS	34
		Civil Rights	1
FAMILY	1,545	Other Individual Rights	33
Adoption	15		
Custody / Visitation.....	679	JUVENILE	58
Divorce / Sep / Annul.....	491	Minor Guardianship	
Domestic Abuse.....	60	Conservatorship.....	3
Name Change.....	12	Neglected / Abused / Depend	2
Parental Rights Termin.....	21	Other Juvenile.....	53
Paternity.....	27		
Support	152	OTHER / MISCELLANEOUS	435
Other Family.....	88	Criminal Referrals.....	19
		Licenses (Drivers, Occ, Others) ...	21
		Torts	144
		Wills & Estates.....	2
		Tribal Court - Criminal	2
		Other Miscellaneous.....	247
		TOTAL	4,987

VLN Volunteers go the Extra Mile

Despite the ongoing pandemic, nearly 500 legal professional volunteers provided 4,987 services to our clients last year. VLN honored two of these extraordinary volunteers during our annual Riverfront Celebration.

2021 VLN Volunteer of the Year



Roxanne Thorelli
Fredrikson & Byron, P.A.

Roxanne earned her J.D. from the University of Minnesota in 2017, cum laude. Roxanne works closely with her firm clients to understand their businesses and to ensure the overall fit and strategy of a transaction. Roxanne is also dedicated to pro bono work; she advises entrepreneurs and start-ups on a variety

of business issues in addition to her work representing clients regarding unemployment-benefit appeal matters.

Roxanne's Volunteer of the Year story is truly remarkable. She joined VLN's volunteer force just last year, and in her application, she said she wanted to complete the HCBA's Centennial Pro Bono Challenge – that would require her to complete 57 hours of pro bono before June 30, 2020. Now may be a good time to mention: she applied to volunteer on May 4, 2020!

She volunteered in an area of great need in Spring 2020: employment. She began to take calls almost weekly, and took on several cases for full representation. Roxanne not only met her HCBA Centennial goal, but she still continued taking two VLN phone shifts per month after doing so. If she misses a client on the phone, she does not give up – she leaves messages and follows up with clients over the course of days and even weeks. Her care for her clients is an inspiration and goes far above and beyond our greatest expectations. We are so grateful to have her in the VLN community and are thrilled to see how much more amazing work she will do in the coming years.

2021 John D. Levine Pro Bono Distinguished Service Award



Dennis Ryan
Retired, Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP

Dennis has served Volunteer Lawyers Network in many capacities over the years. Despite recently retiring, he has not slowed down as a volunteer. In fact, he currently chairs the VLN Board of Directors.

Dennis received his AB from Dartmouth College in 1981 and his JD from the University of Iowa College of Law in 1984. He was an editor of the Iowa Law Review and a member of the Order of the Coif.

Dennis practiced in the areas of bankruptcy, business reorganizations, distressed M&A and commercial finance until his retirement last year. Dennis co-chaired the Firm's Bankruptcy Practice Team from 2012 to 2019. The American College of Bankruptcy elected Dennis as a Fellow in 2012, and he served on the US Bankruptcy Court Practice Committee from 2012 through 2018.

Dennis started at VLN in the early 1990s and was instrumental in founding the Debtor Screening Project. He is also an active member of the Benefactors' Board, the body responsible for planning the Riverfront Celebration every year. On the Board of Directors, Dennis has led efforts to revamp the board nomination process to include an emphasis on recruiting new board members from diverse personal and professional backgrounds. He volunteered to fill a vacancy left by another board member who had to step down for the leadership track.

Dennis is wise, thoughtful, and a tireless supporter of VLN and pro bono services. We are very grateful for his presence in and dedication to our community.



We were thrilled to safely host our 2021 Riverfront Celebration in person last year at the Nicollet Island Pavilion. We look forward to seeing you there again on Thursday, September 8, 2022!

Lifting a Burden to Change a Life

At a young age, Ashley* ended up in jail due to circumstances surrounding her mental health. She sought treatment and has since received extensive help, overcome her challenges and turned her life around.

Which is why it was so difficult to lose out on great jobs because of her past.

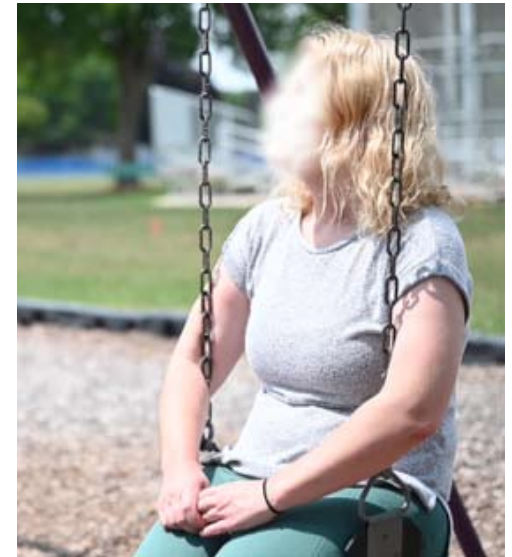
"I applied to a tutoring service and they were about to hire me, but after the background check, they said they could not," Ashley said. "They were disappointed; I was disappointed. It was very disheartening."

That particular loss led her to Volunteer Lawyers Network for help. Ashley sought criminal expungement, a remedy under Minnesota law that seals certain criminal records after careful review by a judge.

Thanks to her and her attorney's hard work and dedication, Ashley now enjoys a clean slate that enables her to do a job she loves: an activities assistant for older adults. She hopes one day to ascend to a director position.

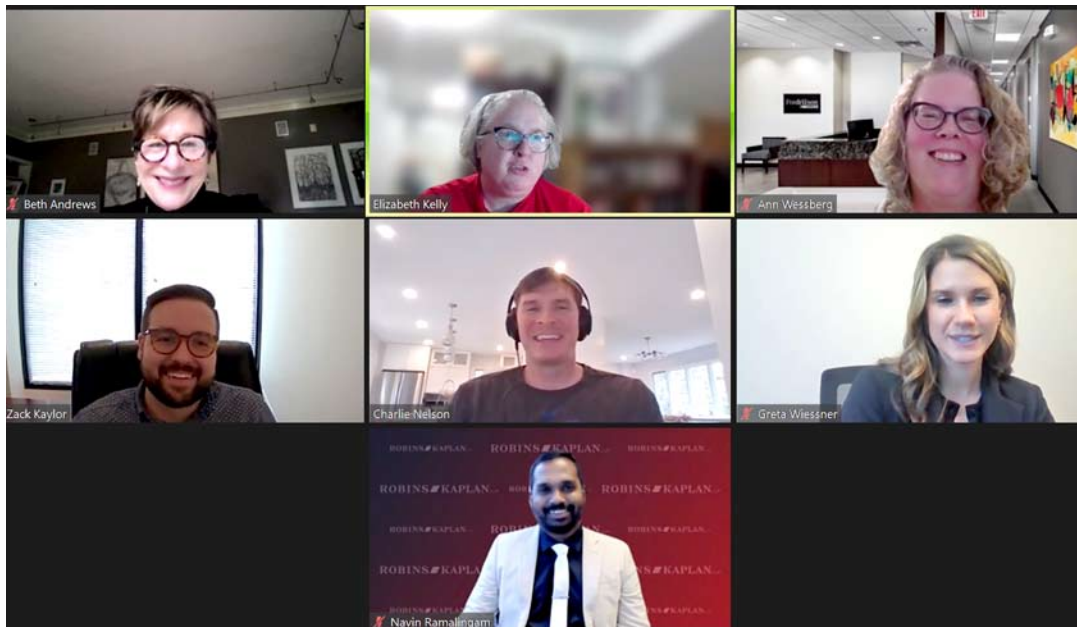
"I feel like a heavy burden has been lifted off my shoulders," Ashley said. "I don't have this dark mark on my record."

*Client's name has been changed to protect their identity



"Without this program, low-income people like me could not get a chance to change their life without paying thousands of dollars."

—Criminal Expungement client



left: VLN Housing Project Attorney Beth Kelly delivers one of many virtual CLEs from the past year, this one on Eviction Expungement.



Better*Together*

Many thanks to our generous donors!

Donations received July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

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You changed **9,874 lives** during FY20-21, including **4,176 children**,
through the delivery of pro bono legal services in Minnesota. *

*approximate numbers

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Sue Kjelvik
Tonja Orr
Carla Tollefsrud
Hon. Mary Vasaly
Claire Zeise
Alysia Zens

In Memory of

George Carpenter for Juliet
Holmes-Smith
the Judges and Magistrate Judges
of the United States District Court
for the District of Minnesota for
Kris Kreuziger

In Honor of

Robert Amos for the Kruger/Amos
Family
Charlie Nelson for Hannah Brown

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Xcel Energy
Zelle LLP

Services Provided at Clinics, Events, Workshops

Covid-19 Pop Up Clinic.....	3
Dignity Center Clinic	11
Eviction Expungement Clinic	2
Housing Court Clinic.....	50
Housing - Anoka County.....	15
Housing - Ramsey County.....	47
Jeremiah House Clinic.....	9
Just Deeds.....	1
Legal Access Point Clinic.....	1
Park Avenue Clinic.....	6
SIJS (Special Immigrant Juvenile Status) Project.....	18
TOTAL	163

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

*“I’m so thankful
because finally
my kid has good
[immigration]
status.”*

—Immigration client

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

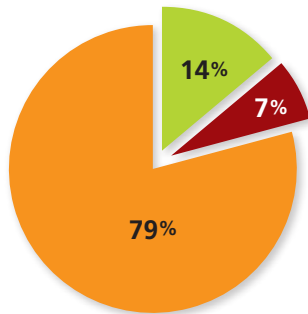


BetterTogether

600 Nicollet Mall, Suite 390A
Minneapolis, MN 55402

FINANCIAL REPORT *July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021*

Expenses

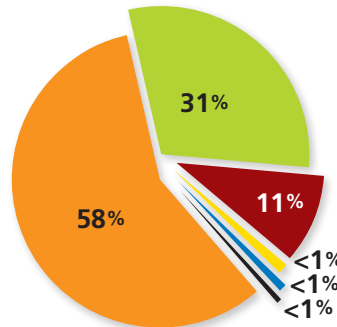


Program Services	1,188,586
Management & General	215,736
Fundraising	94,270
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,498,592

Assets

Cash & Cash Equivalents	1,009,310
Contributions Receivable	77,294
Service Grants Receivable	113,750
Prepaid Expenses	25,127
Net Property & Equipment	91,601
Other Assets	4,568
TOTAL ASSETS	\$1,321,650
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$988,501

Income



Contributions	851,252
Service Grants	463,968
Special Events	159,716
Other Income	3,253
Interest Income	128
Seminar Fees & Manuals	75
TOTAL INCOME	\$1,478,392

Liabilities

Accounts Payable	9,824
Accrued Payroll	23,340
Accrued Compensated Absences	38,336
Contract Liabilities	28,500
Long-Term Debt	233,149
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$333,149

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 to make a secure tax-deductible donation.

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