



Crossing the Digital Divide



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Members of the Legal Aid of Nebraska Board of Directors. Back row, from left, William Foley, Ron Oleson, Mike Willet, Larry Baumann, Hon. Patricia Lamberty and Hon. David Piester. Seated, from left, Mike Schleich, Susie Chief Bear, Janice Brown, Matt Dunning and Katherine Voorhees.

Executive Director's Message

Strong Words from President Obama

"Keep it up."

Those were the parting words of President Obama today, April 17, 2012, at the end of the White House Summit on the State of Civil Legal Aid of the poor. He was speaking to the various stakeholders from the legal aid community, and he offered words of encouragement – and support for our mission – despite the major crises our cause faces.



Dave Pantos

As I write this message on the flight back from Washington, and I reflect on the struggles we faced in 2011, it's good to have a positive message in the back of my mind. Certainly 2011 presented legal aid nationally with its greatest challenge in a generation.

Back-to-back cuts in federal funding resulted in about 20 percent less money appropriated to legal services for the less fortunate. IOLTA funds continued their downward trajectory. And the economic recovery was uneven, with an increase in the overall poverty level and more legal needs.

In Nebraska, we faced the brunt of the national issues and some local ones, as well. The most notable was in Omaha. Homeless people in Omaha lost a true champion when Legal Aid Attorney Pat Ford suffered a permanently debilitating stroke in 2011. The loss to Legal Aid, and our community, cannot be measured.

Indeed, with all of that, we did keep it up in 2011, and we entered 2012 in a strong position. We began several new initiatives in 2011 that debuted in the beginning of 2012: automated legal pleadings; on-line intake; a Spanish language Website. We also secured several key victories in court in 2011, the most prominent of which was the Lidell-Toney case in the Nebraska Supreme Court, which will positively impact the welfare of hundreds of disabled people in Nebraska. Our A2J Center hit its first year in Omaha as a resounding success, spurring the creation of similar efforts in Lincoln, North Platte, and elsewhere.

Most remarkably, we provided legal services to 14,000 clients in 2011, the most ever, despite the staff reductions we endured in 2011.

In the wake of Pat's stroke, the broader legal community responded with life-affirming assistance. Through the encouragement of former NSBA President Mike Kinney we put out the call for help through the SOLACE program. Within a week, all of Pat's cases were re-assigned to volunteers and staff, and several additional volunteers came to the A2J Center to take on his hours.

We were also able to blunt the impact of funding cuts by increasing the support from private donors, community foundations, and United Way. In fact, the total annual dollar amount of private support outside of our bar campaign has doubled compared to 2008. I appreciate this vote of confidence from the communities in which we serve, and I hope to double this support next year.

What makes this all possible is the commitment and passion for our mission that our excellent staff brings to the office and our courts every day. Their dedication to our clients and to the cause of access to justice is unparalleled, and it is my honor to be their director.

It is also my honor to work with our high-quality board of directors. Their support for our mission and the sustainability of our organization is what makes our relationship a partnership for a stronger future.

In 2012, we will continue our high-quality legal services for those who have nowhere else to turn. We will complete a new legal needs assessment and a new strategic plan, both of which will reflect the new realities of legal services for the poor.

And, as we do so, we will keep our eye on the next milestone: in 2013 we will reach our 50th Anniversary. We will plan several events to commemorate this major landmark. We hope to expand our network of supporters while reaffirming and renewing our ties to those who are already our friends.

We will keep it up through the many challenges and opportunities so that every year the doors of justice can stay open for those who need it the most. Please continue to stand with us as we stand with the poor.

Technology & Innovation Stretch Legal Aid's Reach



A2J Center: "The Word Is Out"

Legal Aid of Nebraska's pioneering Access to Justice "A2J" Center is proving to "fill a tremendous need" in its first year of operation.

More than 1,000 people have visited the downtown A2J Center located on the first floor – street level – of the building that also houses Legal Aid's Omaha office.

"The word is out," says Attorney Muirne Heaney. "People are finding themselves caught up in the law – with issues that no one has ever translated into understandable language for them – and here at the A2J self-help center, they're getting their problems addressed."

And that service often involves use of technology, as public-service computers are available to all clients, Heaney said. The mostly walk-in customers get help that ranges from basic advice and counsel to brief service to extensive service.

Their issues run the gamut, from guardianships to employment-unemployment, landlord – tenant disputes, problems getting or keeping public benefits and on to consumer problems and housing.

"Sometimes it's enough to provide advice, but it is advice that clients simply cannot obtain from any other source," said Heaney. "We can also give these people a basic understanding of the legal process

Above, Dave Pantos, standing, discusses the A2J Center's service innovations with representatives of the county and district courts of Douglas County.

and that often provides clients with enough information to appear in court and represent themselves successfully."

As part of the A2J Center's brief services, clients often receive trial "scripts" to use as their litigation continues. They get assistance in compiling, copying and marking exhibits so they can present their own cases. They also learn about courtroom protocol and demeanor.

Extensive services most often are delivered through self-help clinics held at A2J: how to modify a child support order, obtain visitation or establish custody. These self-help clinics consist of 2 to 3 three-hour educational and drafting sessions.

"Our clinics are designed to assist persons who simply are not being helped by any other office or agency," said Heaney. "The legal system can be mysterious and frightening to non-lawyers, but when a client learns how it works and how to function within it, they find the courts are not something to be afraid of."

A huge part of the success of the A2J Center comes from a bank of easy-to-complete self-help divorce forms converted to a user-friendly format by Legal Aid and available through the Legal Aid Website. Said Heaney: "The effectiveness of these forms far exceeds anything available to the public and these forms enable us to provide pleadings for people to preserve their rights or to challenge an opposing party's action until they can find an attorney."

The A2J Center and its self-help clinics in a short time have become the go-to place for low-income people who are referred by the Douglas County District Court, the Referee's Office, the County Self-Help Desk, County Library and the Public Defender's Office. "The growth in referrals dramatically demonstrates how great the need is," says Executive Director Dave Pantos.

When Fathers Want To Be Fathers

One of the "huge needs" that Legal Aid's Access to Justice Center is fulfilling involves non-custodial fathers and the desire some of them have to re-enter their children's lives.

Low-income fathers, with or without criminal histories, often find themselves in a tight pinch when courts have ordered them to make child support payments which, in any case, are dependent on the father's continuous employment and income stream.

That's where the problem often begins – when the poor are unable to keep steady jobs, yet the court's mandate to continue support payments never goes away; unpaid sums accumulate and interest is charged.

Enter Legal Aid of Nebraska in

IN THE DISTRICT COURT FOR DOUGLAS COUNTY NEBRASKA

STATE OF NEBRASKA, O.B.O.

MINOR CHILD(REN)
PLAINTIFF,
VS.

DEFENDANT.

Defendant _____ asks this Court to enter an order allowing the Defendant to add a third party to this Court case. The reasons for the Motion are as follows.

CASE No.: CI _____
Doc. _____ No. _____

MOTION TO ADD A THIRD PARTY & NOTICE OF HEARING

COURT OF DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA

CASE No. CI: _____
Doc. _____ No. _____

COMPLAINT FOR MODIFICATION

partnership with the Fathers for a Lifetime (FFL) initiative of Omaha's Charles Drew Health Center.

"We have men referred to us all the time caught in this mess," said Legal Aid Attorney Muirne Heaney. "They tried to stay employed, tried to keep up with child support, or maybe they didn't – but later changed their ways and want to make amends."

At that critical point, what they desperately need is legal help, the kind they can now get from Legal Aid's A2J Center, the center's staff and public computer systems.

The Charles Drew FFL program recognized years ago that non-custodial fathers often face insurmountable legal barriers. "They want to support their kids financially and be a part of their lives but tough laws enacted to protect the children sometimes work against that protection," said Heaney.

For instance, Nebraska law allows garnishment of up to 65 percent of a man's paycheck to pay off any child support debt. When you work for minimum wage, that means you can't make a living. Thus, the incentive is to avoid working for a paycheck.

These men do not have positive experiences with the legal system. Before the FFL program, no one was listening to their pleas for help to see their kids. FFL listened and now offers a comprehensive program with an educational and case management component for dads who want to be involved in their kids' lives. It wasn't long before FFL learned there had to be a legal component to their service in order for the service to be complete.

A Legal Aid needs assessment revealed that non-custodial, poor parents were a population not being served at all. As a result, Legal Aid's executive director sought a physical presence in North Omaha and FFL provided the space and business.

"Non-custodial dads are a pariah population. Society is content to saddle the entire population with a stereotype that fits a few people – deadbeat dads – and write off the whole population," said Heaney.

These fathers need legal help to get modifications of their support orders, visitation rights, often set-asides or pardons from criminal convictions and a court-approved parenting plan that will get them back to some state of normalcy.

Legal Aid's A2J Center now offers clinics that provide a route for those fathers to succeed. First the men are screened by FFL to eliminate applicants with a history of physical violence or child abuse. "We don't want to expose moms or kids to potential harm," said Heaney. Second, the dads must commit to completing FFL's 12-week educational course that focuses on parenting and responsibilities as well as parents' rights.

In the clinics, dads learn how to argue for getting their orders modified and how to get court-ordered parenting plans. "Perhaps they're years behind on paying \$375 a month because they never earned enough to pay that amount," said Heaney. "If they can get the order modified to an amount based on their actual monthly income, they can handle it."

"It's do-able and that's a lot more than the zero dollars the child was receiving before, and we help dads set up payment plans for those past due amounts, too," she added. "That way, they are paying on the child support debt in an amount that allows them to earn a living and meet the child support obligation."

All of this information is taught during the intensive education clinic (3 three-hour sessions). Fathers receive legal forms to fill out and file, scripts to use in oral arguments, explanations on how to approach judges or court referees and collateral support. Fathers also learn about establishing legal foundation, entering exhibits and how to present revised child support calculations.

Already, hundreds of men have been able to return to regular contact with their children after arguing their own cases. They have won support modifications and been awarded visitation rights – some after years away from their children.

"When a man presents his own case in court and re-enters a child's life, he walks out of here with his head held high," said Heaney.

One Click Offers Website In Spanish

Visitors to Legal Aid's Website at www.legalaidofnebraska.com now can view their selections in Spanish simply by clicking on "Español."

Spanish speaking staff, including Limited English Proficient (LEP) Coordinator Liliana Shannon and Spanish Speaking Paralegal Jennifer McGill logged countless hours translating the English Website into Spanish.

"It is so exciting for people to be able to get legal help in the



Limited English Proficient Coordinator Liliana Shannon, left, and Spanish Speaking Paralegal Jennifer McGill logged countless hours translating the English Website into Spanish.

language they are most fluent in. This means Spanish speakers will have more success in understanding their legal responsibilities and rights," said Shannon. This new resource was also made possible through the work of volunteers, notably Leydi Barrientos, an attorney licensed in Colombia who made the translation possible.

"Because of the increasing number of people in Nebraska who speak Spanish, it was vital for us to provide legal information in a forum they would understand," said Deputy Director Annette Farnan.

Young Lawyers and Interns Win for Clients

One way that Legal Aid stretches its effectiveness to serve more clients is through employment of summer interns and finding top-notch young lawyers to add to the staff.

"There are very few places where young people can get such an amazing range of experience in a short time as Legal Aid offers," said Executive Director Dave Pantos. "In return, our clients get excellent service from knowledgeable young professionals."

In 2011, a case handled by a young staff attorney stood out, Pantos added. Attorney Scott Mertz, just a short time out of law school, successfully argued a disability case in which the Nebraska Supreme Court found unanimously in favor of a Legal Aid client in a ruling which established a new statewide legal precedent.

The case involved Darline Liddell-Toney, an Omaha woman who suffers from a degenerative disk disease in her back. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) mandated that she participate in work activities in order to obtain welfare benefits under the Aid to Dependent Children program.

The client said she could not work due to her painful condition and had unsuccessfully represented herself in an appeal of the work requirement before HHS.



Legal Aid attorney Scott Mertz, inset, won a precedent-setting decision before the Nebraska Supreme Court. Legal Aid interns, below, visited the Supreme Court last summer.



When the matter came to Legal Aid, Attorney Mertz discovered that the state required Liddell-Toney to perform some work even though her physician had declared her physically incapable of entering the work force. "It simply made no sense," Mertz said. "If you can't enter the work force, you can't be required to take job training."

The state cited the Employment First program which is designed to move welfare recipients to work by requiring them to participate in "job readiness activities." In this client's case, that involved working with resumes in HHS's offices for 30 hours a week in order to receive a few hundred dollars of ADC benefits.

Mertz appealed the HHS ruling and the Lancaster County District Court agreed with the state's work requirement. The case ended up before the Supreme Court and with help from other Legal Aid attorneys in Omaha and Lincoln, Mertz prepared his written brief and his oral arguments.

"The department was making this woman perform the equivalent of an entire week of busy work to obtain the benefits to which she was entitled," said Attorney Muirne Heaney. "The bureaucracy was malicious in this case."

Executive Director Dave Pantos said that the huge number of federal and state regulations in this area of law are highly technical and difficult for anyone to navigate, but Mertz went for the simple approach. "He argued that the state had not read its own regulations."

In its 7-0 decision, the Supreme Court agreed. "Liddell-Toney argues that the plain language of the regulation, consistent with the statutory requirement of an adult 'with a capacity to work,' allows an exception to Employment First participation if a recipient's impairment either prevents the recipient from entering employment or prevents them from participating in an Employment First component activity. **We agree with this common sense reading of the regulation.**"

"The uncontroverted evidence in the record indicates that Liddell-Toney is presently unable to enter the work force for a substantial period of time, if at all, and as such, she is entitled to an Employment First exemption ..." the Supreme Court noted.

Social Work Interns Connect with Clients

Legal Aid attorneys and staff are receiving specialized help in dealing with clients from interns trained in social work.

Attorney Pat Carraher of Lincoln recalls the case of a teenage girl whose parents were accused of abuse and neglect. At a hearing, the girl was so withdrawn that she had combed her hair in front of her face.

Carraher called for help from an intern who had spent three years being trained on communicating with young people and families. The intern quickly connected with the girl, enabling the attorney to effectively represent her.

Margaret Schaefer, managing attorney of Legal Aid's ElderAccess

Line® in Omaha, worked with a master's degree-level social work intern to assist with callers over the age of 60, many of them isolated and living alone.

The intern effectively helped callers determine eligibility and apply for benefits. He also helped callers locate agencies that provide non-legal assistance that they needed.

Legal Aid Intake: 24 Hours A Day

Low-income Nebraska citizens now have a 24/7 path of access to services from Legal Aid of Nebraska.

The process of initiating Legal Aid services is called "intake," and that has traditionally been accomplished via the statewide AccessLine® phone system.

The phones – always answered by a live, human voice – remain in place, but they necessarily are available only during published week-day hours. But the Website at www.legalaidofnebraska.com is available all day, all night and on weekends and now is accepting intake applications anytime, says Deputy Director Annette Farnan.

"Because of the increasing demand, many callers can't get through our phone lines," said Executive Director Dave Pantos. "Online service anytime gives greater access to Legal Aid by providing individuals with that option."

The online application service recognizes that many people who qualify for free legal services are among the full-time working poor. "Many of our clients work full time, are struggling and can't get the time to call us during the day," said Pantos.

"The application is easy to use," said Laurie Heer-Dale, the AccessLine® managing attorney. "There are four forms available, one for Native American applicants, one for folks over 60 years of age, a form written in Spanish and, of course, an application for our general applicants."

While most people can use online intake, it is not for everyone. "If a client has an emergency, such as a pending eviction or a court hearing scheduled soon, we want them to use the phone hotline," said Pantos. "This way we can make sure a deadline isn't missed."

Legal Aid Offers Thanks To SOLACE Attorneys

Volunteer attorneys with the Nebraska State Bar Association's SOLACE program came to Legal Aid's rescue last summer when lawyer Pat Ford suffered a debilitating stroke.

Without charge, the SOLACE group went to work on Ford's cases, some involving courtroom representation, immediately following Ford's sudden illness June 27, and got those cases successfully resolved.

"We – and our Legal Aid clients – are thankful to everyone who came to the rescue," said Executive Director Dave Pantos. The volunteer attorney group included Laird Moore, Matt Jenkins, Mary Kay Hansen, George Lyford, Sam Turco, Jeff Wagner, Amy Longo, Katherine Owen and Kristina Murphree.



Attorneys from the Nebraska State Bar Association's Solace Program took over cases when Legal Aid's Pat Ford, right above, suffered a stroke.

The NSBA established the SOLACE program to identify volunteers willing to assist anytime lawyers, law office personnel, judges, courthouse employees or law students suffer a "sudden, catastrophic loss due to an unexpected event, illness or injury."

Lori Wilson of Grand Island Wins Miller Award

Lori Wilson, managing attorney of the Grand Island office of Legal Aid of Nebraska, has been named the 2012 winner of the Ruth Miller Award for Outstanding Advocacy.

Wilson was nominated by her fellow attorneys. The honor recognizes the Legal Aid employee who demonstrates the best example of advocacy to clients as well as commitment and dedication to providing quality representation.

"This is Legal Aid's highest honor for service to low-income Nebraskans," said Executive Director Dave Pantos. "Lori Wilson has worked for decades as a fearless advocate. She truly exemplifies the best in a Legal Aid attorney."

Wilson has built a reputation in the areas of the law where low-income people are most affected, such as employment law and Social Security disability. In Grand Island Wilson is involved with local homeless shelters and also assists the Continuum of Care (COC) program.

Wilson served from the Lincoln office of Legal Aid before moving to Grand Island two years ago.

The award nomination noted that Wilson has "a sociologist's understanding of the issues" with which low-income Nebraskans are confronted and "a humanitarian's desire to help them improve their lives."



Lori Wilson

Cornerstone to Self-Sufficiency: A Birth Certificate

For people surviving on the fringes of the community, the loss of personal documents – such as a birth certificate – can be devastating.

So the journey back to productive, independent lives and self sufficiency often begins with restoration of such documents, a matter that requires the help of a lawyer.

Having no birth certificate begins a vicious cycle because it is required to obtain state-issued identification – and state-issued ID is required to obtain a lost birth certificate. Without either document, it's nearly impossible for the homeless to get jobs, qualify for housing or obtain many other necessities.

Legal Aid Attorney Anne McShane helps remove those barriers working on Thursday afternoons at the Sienna Francis House, Omaha's largest homeless shelter. Shelter case workers help clients prepare applications for replacement birth certificates which McShane brings to the Legal Aid office, where Paralegal Laurie Nading prepares additional documentation required by the various states.

Once submitted by Legal Aid, the birth certificates arrive in two to six weeks and McShane delivers them to clients on her return visits to Sienna Francis House. In just six months, she has helped 32 people obtain their birth certificates. Many of them went on to obtain state-issued ID cards and now are transitioning out of the shelters.

Employee Singled Out for “Misconduct”

“Misconduct” can be a cause for loss of employment, but what if the employer is applying its ruling of misconduct inconsistently among two employees?

That's the question Legal Aid Attorney Amanda McMahon faced in the case of “Bethany,” who worked seven years as a special education para-educator for an area school district.

In December, 2011, Bethany was accused by school officials of misconduct. Her request for a second chance was denied, so Bethany lost her job but also became ineligible for 14 weeks of unemployment benefits.

Legal Aid Attorney McMahon discovered the school based its firing decision on a video of Bethany's interaction with a behaviorally-challenged student. During the intense interaction, Bethany made comments to the student who had lashed out at her. It also showed that Bethany's supervising teacher acted in an identical manner towards the student.

Bethany had been immediately dismissed for the incident while the supervising teacher received no discipline.

McMahon showed at a hearing that the video had been edited to emphasize Bethany's behavior while the actions of the supervising teacher were downplayed. On cross-examination, the school's witnesses could not clearly articulate how Bethany had violated any school policies.

The judge found fault with the school's actions because of Bethany's long service, the school's inability to articulate a clear misconduct policy and the arbitrary decision to dismiss her without disciplining the supervising teacher.

Bethany is again eligible to receive unemployment benefits, and McMahon and Legal Aid are pleased with the outcome of this rewarding case.

Out-of-State Collections Agency Demanded Too Much

Moving 800 miles across three states can be a stressful experience, without the added stress of being bullied by an out-of-state collections attorney. That's what “Jessica,” a single mother who works in the health care industry, had to confront after moving to Nebraska from her longtime home of New Mexico.

Jessica had just moved to Nebraska when a collections firm and attorney in New Mexico contacted her employer, demanding that 25 percent of her wages be garnished for a debt. Collectors finessed the language so carefully that Jessica's employers didn't realize that they could question the amount being garnished, or that her wages should be garnished at all.

Legal Aid Attorney Lea Wroblewski found that Nebraska protects working heads of household like Jessica who have minor children and only 15 percent of her wages are eligible for garnishment. She also discovered that the out-of-state collections and attorney had no proper authority as they had never even obtained an order or judgement to garnish in Nebraska.

Wroblewski obtained a release of Jessica's garnishment without litigation.

Mother And Child Reunited After Three Years

Imagine a mother's pain of being separated from her new baby, and strength she would muster to become reunited. Such was the case of mother “Dana” whose complicated life took her away from her baby daughter “Olivia” for three years.

The story involves an abusive father, hostile foster parents, medical issues, a suspicious legal system and one determined woman. At birth, daughter Olivia was unable to eat, necessitating tube feeding directly into her stomach. Because the medical staff did not trust Dana nor the baby's father, the child was removed from Dana's care.

Dana began her battle to be reunited with her daughter at Legal Aid where attorneys worked to overcome Juvenile Court orders at the same time that Dana was breaking free from domestic violence.

The attorneys won a protection order against Olivia's father and assisted Dana in dealing with Olivia's foster parents. With legal help, Dana demonstrated to the court that she understood Olivia's medical condition and could provide quality care.

In January 2011, a judge ended the court's involvement in the case, bringing three years of separation for Dana and Olivia to a close.

Initiatives Address Unique Needs

Low-income residents of the State of Nebraska often face their own, unique set of needs when it comes to civil law. Some live in rural areas; some in cities. By targeting our services to these groups via special initiatives, Legal Aid can reach and serve more of our Nebraska neighbors.

- Legal Aid's **Farm/Ranch and Rural Response Hotline** helps rural residents get financial, legal and risk management information or referrals to other community groups. This is managed by the Bancroft office in partnership with Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska.
- The **International Center of the Heartland Project (ICH)** is a joint effort among Lutheran Family Services, Catholic Charities, One-World Community Health Center and Legal Aid. An attorney provides on-site intake, education and extended representation to ICH participants, many of which are non-English speaking immigrants and refugees.
- **Elder Law Program®** attorneys travel throughout Northeast Nebraska to provide legal education, give advice, brief services and direct representation, helping with wills, durable powers of attorney and health care directives.
- Information on tax rights and responsibilities is delivered throughout the state to English as a Second Language and low-income populations via our **Low-Income Tax Clinics**. Participants also get advice and representation in controversies involving the IRS.
- Most of our legal services begin with the statewide toll-free **AccessLine®** where attorneys and paralegals offer advice, brief service and referrals. The AccessLine® is Legal Aid's front door.
- For legal issues affecting people age 60 and over, the **ElderAccessLine®** is staffed by an experienced paralegal who confers with an attorney. There is no income eligibility restriction.
- **Nebraska Migrant Action Coalition (NEMAC)** is a collaborative effort of partners, including Legal Aid, Creighton University, NAF Multicultural Human Development Corporation and Nebraska Department of Labor. Together, these groups have devoted energy to improve the level of legal education and outreach in migrant communities, particularly to migrant farm workers. NEMAC participants provide these services through immersions, wherein the participants conduct educational presentations in churches, community centers and housing units.
- The **Self-Sufficiency Project** helps both clients and communities by enabling people to achieve independence. Such clients give back to communities via productive employment, purchase of goods and many other ways.
- The **Nebraska Medical Legal Partnership for Oncology** is a partnership between The Nebraska Medical Center/University of Nebraska Medical Center and Legal Aid's Omaha office. The program is designed to address legal problems that affect the health of patients with cancer and organ transplants.
- Our **Bilingual Program** helps Nebraskans who are not proficient in English by providing educational materials in their native languages, plus translation and interpretation services.
- The **Nebraska Homeless Assistance Project** provides legal assistance to individuals with housing issues, and strives to remove any legal barriers that keep them from obtaining stable housing. Our attorneys do onsite intake and work with more than 25 homeless shelters and transitional living facilities.
- **Access to Justice Project**, including the A2J Center in downtown Omaha, the heart of the state's largest population base, serving walk-ins with a range of face-to-face services. Other A2J work includes automated court forms and public access computers.

Our Mission

To promote justice, dignity, hope, and self-sufficiency through quality civil legal aid for those who have nowhere else to turn.

Our Vision

To provide quality legal aid and access to the justice system for all persons living in Nebraska who have limited resources.

Our Values

- Equal Access to Justice
- Client Empowerment
- High Standard of Professionalism
- Efficient Use of Resources
- Collaboration
- Diversity

2011 Grants

Federal, State And County

U.S. Legal Services Corp.....	\$1,746,619
Nebraska Commission on Public Advocacy Legal Aid & Services Fund.....	\$1,397,287
Civil Legal Aid & Service Fund.....	\$336,000
U.S. Department of Justice Violence Against Women Act Native American Grant	\$166,641
Tribal Civil & Criminal Legal Asst. NARF/NAALS	\$46,890
Lancaster County Juvenile Contracts.....	\$295,269
Nebraska Department of Agriculture.....	\$212,609
U.S. Administration on Aging – Model Approaches.....	\$110,025
Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA)	\$42,000
Northeast Nebraska Area Agency on Aging.....	\$30,133
Nebraska Health & Human Services.....	\$29,750
Nebraska Association Area Agencies on Aging.....	\$24,500
U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development.....	\$16,039
IRS – Taxpayer Advocate	\$14,808
Idaho Legal Aid Society	\$3,500
Combined Federal Campaign.....	\$803

2011

United Way

United Way Midlands.....	\$40,400
United Way Lancaster County	\$14,478
United Way of Columbus NE.....	\$5,000
United Way of Western NE.....	\$1,500
United Way of Western NE – Serving Box Butte	\$500

Firm Members

BANCROFT (Farm Ranch Project)

MARR, Lori – Administrative Assistant
SOLL, Michelle – Paralegal (Office Manager)
THIN ELK, Theresa – DV Attorney

GRAND ISLAND

SCHOTT, Crystal – Paralegal
STRONG PRATHER, Kay – Managing Attorney
WILSON, Lori – Attorney

LINCOLN

BERNT, Heather – Paralegal
BESTUL, Mark – Attorney
BRYANT, Zachary – Law Clerk
CARRAHER, Patrick – Managing Attorney
CEBALLOS, Kristin – Paralegal
HAAS, Emily – Law Clerk
KULWICKI, Jennifer – Attorney
KYKER, Sarah – Law Clerk
LEWIT, Brittani – Attorney
MILLIGAN, John – Attorney
PENG, Shirley – Attorney
RODRIGUEZ, Hazell – Attorney
SIDWELL, Scott – Attorney
WROBLEWSKI, Lea – Attorney

NORFOLK

LEE, Lori – Managing Attorney
McMAHON, Amanda – Attorney
WESCHE, Kathy – Paralegal

NORTH PLATTE

CARPENTER, Victoria – Paralegal
EASTMAN, Jeffrey – Managing Attorney
FARRITOR, Shawn – Attorney
HOYME, Kathryn – Attorney

OMAHA

ALDRICH, Hoken – Law Clerk
ALLEBONE, Katie – Intake Paralegal
BEZRUTCYK, Ana – Intake Paralegal
BOSWELL, Kelly – Attorney
BRADLEY, Christina – Paralegal
BROOKS, Ed – Accounting Manager
D'AMATO, Elaine – Attorney
DENDY, Shereece – Attorney
DUNOVAN, Kimberly – AL Attorney
EMANUEL-MOORE, Elise – NAP Coordinator
FARNAN, Annette – Deputy Director
FEELHAVER, Rod – CFO
FORD, Pat – Attorney
GAUGHAN, Jennifer – Dir. of Litigation & Adv.
GROGGER, Anne – Intake Paralegal
GUTZMAN, Guillermo – Law Clerk
HANSON, Melinda – Attorney
HASTERLO, Barbara – Intake Paralegal
HANEY, Muirne – Managing Attorney
HEER-DALE, Laurel – AL Managing Attorney
KAMMERER, Mike – Tech. Coordinator

OMAHA (continued)

MANGIAMELLI, Ann – Attorney
MASON, Venita – Receptionist
MATHESON, Jessica – Intake Paralegal
McGILL, Jennifer – Intake Paralegal
McSHANE, Anne – Attorney
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REED, Kalisha – Paralegal
RIVERIA, Tim – Attorney
SAAVEDRA, Valentina – Paralegal
SCHAEFER, Margaret – Elder AL Attorney
SEAGRASS, Jonathan – DV AL Attorney
SHAFFER, Teresa – Paralegal
SHANNON, Liliana – Attorney
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WYATT, Jaclyn – Law Clerk

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DeSIMONE, Dana – Receptionist
MILLER, Casey – Attorney
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SKELCHER, Sheldon – Managing Attorney

VOLUNTEERS/INTERNS/EXTERNS

ARITHI, Paul – Paralegal Volunteer, Omaha
BABCOCK, George – Attorney, Omaha
BAKER, Lance – Volunteer, Omaha
BARRIENTOS, Leydi – Attorney, Omaha
BISCHOFF, Megan – Volunteer, Lincoln
BOURNE, Aaron – Law Clerk Extern, Omaha
DAVIS, Elizabeth – Volunteer, Omaha
FARRELL, Mark – Law Clerk Extern, Omaha
GODINEZ, Roseangela – Volunteer, Omaha
JACKSON, Danny – Law Clerk Extern, Omaha
JOHNSON, Sue – Paralegal Intern, Omaha
KRATZ, Gregory – Attorney, Omaha
LEBOW, Nancy – Paralegal Volunteer, Lincoln
LUNN, Lia – Law Clerk Extern, Omaha
MARTIN, Philip – Law Clerk Extern, Omaha
NEWLAND, Steve – Attorney, Omaha
PEETZ, Ann – Volunteer, Lincoln
PLATZ, Rebecca – Volunteer, Omaha
SAVORY, Kevin – Law Clerk Extern, Omaha
SPOMER, Samuel – Law Clerk Extern, Omaha
SWANSON, Justin – Law Clerk Extern, Omaha
THELIN, Joan – Paralegal Volunteer, Omaha
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FAST FACTS

Demand for Services

About 275,777 people living in Nebraska qualify for Legal Aid services and that population generates more than 110,300 legal issues each year. Because of limited resources, Legal Aid is able to address only 11% of the low income people wanting assistance. In 2011 LAN was able to assist more than 20% of low income Nebraskans. The percentage of eligible clients served has fallen due to an increase in the low-income population and limited resources. LAN actively and aggressively seeks new technology and staff efficiencies to provide legal help to more individuals.

Except for some assistance provided through the Nebraska State Bar Association's Volunteer Lawyers Project and the state's law school clinics, the rest go without, resulting in hopelessness, violence and costs to the individuals, families and taxpayers.

New Development Associate

Katie Timperley Mock has joined Legal Aid in the newly-created position of development associate. In addition to providing sustainable fundraising support, she will maintain systems for recording and acknowledging gifts, help plan and staff special events and write grant proposals and stewardship reports.

Recent reductions in federal funding and lawyer trust account grants means Legal Aid must devote more re-



sources to fundraising with private and corporate sources, necessitating the development position.

In 2011, Legal Aid received funds from the Nonprofit Capacity Building Initiative, a competitive grant sponsored by the Omaha Community Foundation.

That initiative provided the firm with an experienced consultant who helped identify resource development as an area of need. The consultant helped draft a development plan, which included the hiring of a full-time development associate.

Resource development includes researching, strategizing, communicating with donors and building relationships in the community, all skills which Mock brings to the job. Her previous work involved improving the lives of the economically challenged by creating fundraising strategies for elders on Medicaid and for survivors of domestic violence and abuse living in a shelter.

Her degree in journalism and a certification in grant writing provide Mock with a practical background for developing successful fundraising practices. Her appointment raises the level of Legal Aid’s commitment to increasing private-source fundraising.

“Katie will be the first staff member to have 100 percent of her job directed toward these efforts,” said Executive Director Dave Pantos. “We will be able to set realistic and achievable goals for raising revenue and have the time to carry out these goals.”

2011 Foundation Donors

We greatly appreciate our donors who make sure that we live up to our mission of “promoting justice, hope, dignity and self-sufficiency through quality civil legal aid for those who have nowhere else to turn.”

Anonymous Contribution.....	\$75,000	Fremont Area Community Foundation.....	\$5,000
Lozier Foundation.....	\$55,000	Fund of Omaha.....	\$5,000
William & Ruth Scott Foundation.....	\$27,000	Todd & Betiana Simon Foundation.....	\$5,000
Woods Charitable Foundation.....	\$25,000	Midlands Community Foundation.....	\$3,000
Legal Aid Endowment of the Omaha Community Foundation.....	\$21,258	Mid-Nebraska Community Foundation.....	\$2,625
Olson Center for Women's Health.....	\$20,012	Grand Island Community Foundation.....	\$2,500
Rhonda & Howard Hawks.....	\$20,000	Junior League of Omaha.....	\$2,500
H. Lee & Carol Gendler Fund....	\$15,000	Kearney Area Community Foundation.....	\$1,500
Women's Fund of Omaha.....	\$10,000	American National Bank.....	\$1,000
Lincoln Financial Group.....	\$7,500	John A. Scott Fund.....	\$1,000
Phelps County Community Foundation.....	\$5,667		

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	Robert Denicola	Mary Wittry	Vicki Miller
	Ronald Cerny	Maxine Skarka	
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		Michael Wylie	

Provide Statewide Coverage

Attorneys in private practice who agree to devote part of their hours to serving low-income citizens enable Legal Aid to reach clients throughout Nebraska who otherwise might not be served.

More than 50 lawyers from the Missouri River Valley to the Sandhills and from border to border participated in the Private Attorney Involvement (PAI) program in 2011, handling hundreds of cases.

Attorneys such as Laird Moore who works in the eastern part of the state offer their expertise at significantly reduced hourly rates as part of PAI. Moore, a former Legal Aid attorney now in private practice, also assisted Legal Aid this year as part of the State Bar Association's SOLACE Program (See page 7).



Laird Moore

Moore handled one case involving a woman who had applied for unemployment payments only to find that her former employer objected to her receiving them, arguing that she was not entitled to those benefits.

Through Moore's efforts, the employer agreed to withdraw that objection and the client won an additional \$10,000 to which she was rightfully entitled.

"Legal Aid has limited resources – only so many people available to meet its huge demand," said Moore. "PAI attorneys can make a big difference."

Moore has successfully handled seven Legal Aid cases including issues with the Department of Labor, landlord – tenant disputes, protection orders, child custody and divorce cases.

Moore finds the work is both personally and professionally rewarding and he recommends that other lawyers – both young and old – give it a try. "The need is there and if a case is outside of your usual area of expertise, that's one way to get experience in a new area of the law," Moore said.

Moore credits Legal Aid's PAI Program Coordinator Christine Stolarskyj for being helpful to private attorneys who have questions. "She is incredibly available and always willing to advise you on how to proceed."

FAST FACTS

Language Services

Due to immigration and a changing population, Legal Aid contracts with Language Lines to provide multiple language capacities and has hired Spanish speaking attorneys and paralegals. Language Lines puts non-English speaking clients in direct contact with interpreters and offers attorneys a communication bridge with non-English speaking clients in more than 150 languages.

Effect on the Economy

A scientific study conducted by the University of Nebraska at Omaha shows that for every Nebraska dollar invested in Legal Aid services, \$4.60 is returned to the state's economy.

PAI Attorneys

Mark Albin, Norfolk
 Avis Andrews, Fremont
 Frank Barron III, Fremont
 Ben Beethe, Tecumseh
 John Begley, Omaha
 Lisa Boespflug, York
 Michael Borders, Broken Bow
 Matt Catlett, Lincoln
 Joe Chilen, Fairbury
 Bruce Dalluge, Tecumseh
 Bassel El-Kasaby, Omaha
 Jeffrey Enszy, Minden
 Marsha Fangmeyer, Kearney
 Steve Fillman, York
 Todd Flynn, Ainsworth
 Leta Fornoff, Fremont
 Scott Grafton, York
 Maurice Green, McCook
 Scott Hahn, Omaha
 Burke Harr, Omaha
 Angela Heimes, Omaha
 Amy Hoffman, York
 Nathan Jagers, Alliance
 Matt Jenkins, Lincoln
 Jaquelin "J" Leef, Sidney
 Lucy Lewno, Yankton SD
 Shon Lieske, Minden
 Thomas Lieske, Minden
 Michael Mead, Hastings
 John Moeller, Sioux City IA
 Laird Moore, Omaha
 Cheryl Munson, Broken Bow
 Rebecca Nelson, Sioux City IA
 Timothy Noerrlinger, Nebraska City
 Michelle Oldham, Hastings
 Shane Placek, Fremont
 Patrick Runge, Omaha
 Melissa Schutt, Fremont
 Curtis Sikyta, Ord
 Jennifer Stehlik-Ladman, Pawnee City
 Julie Hogancamp Smith, Tecumseh
 Richard Smith, Tecumseh
 Gail Steen, Lincoln
 Sandy Stern, Omaha
 DeAnn Stover, Lincoln
 Jesus Tena, Lexington
 Don Theobald, Red Cloud
 Adam Tripp, Fremont
 Brian Vakulskas, Sioux City, IA
 Jon Worthman, Alliance
 Lori Zeilinger, Grant
 Michael Ziskey, Nebraska City

Nebraska IOLTA Participating Financial Institutions

The Nebraska Lawyers Trust Account Foundation thanks the following financial institutions for participating in the Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA) Program. Over 260 financial institutions and more than 2,800 lawyers join together in this worthwhile cause. Financial institutions waiving service charges are designated with an asterisk ().*

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ALLIANCE – *Bank of the West, First National Bank of North Platte, *Great Western Bank, *Wells Fargo	ELKHORN – *American Interstate Bank	McCOOK – AmFirst Bank, *Great Western Bank, *Horizon Bank, *McCook National Bank, *Wells Fargo	PLATTSMOUTH – American National Bank, *Cass County Bank, Plattsburgh State Bank
ARAPAHOE – *First Central Bank	ELWOOD – *Security First Bank	MADISON – *Frontier Bank, *Madison County Bank	RANDOLPH – *First State Bank
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ASHLAND – *Centennial Bank, Omaha, *Farmers & Merchants National Bank	FALLS CITY – First National Bank & Trust Co., *Great Western Bank, Richardson County Bank & Trust Co.	MILLIGAN – *Farmers & Merchants Bank	ST. PAUL – *Citizens Bank & Trust Co., *Great Western Bank
AUBURN – Auburn State Bank, *Great Western Bank, *Union Bank & Trust	FORT CALHOUN – *Great Southern Bank	MINDEN – *Minden Exchange Bank & Trust Co.	SCHUYLER – Homestead Bank, *Pinnacle Bank
AURORA – Heritage Bank	FRANKLIN – Franklin State Bank	MITCHELL – Pinnacle Bank-Wyoming	SCOTTSBLUFF – First National Bank of North Platte, First State Bank, *Great Western Bank, *Platte Valley Bank, *US Bank, *Valley Bank and Trust
BASSETT – *Sandhills State Bank	FREMONT – American National Bank of Fremont, *First State Bank & Trust, *Fremont National Bank & Trust Co., *Great Western Bank, *Pinnacle Bank	MONROE – Cornerstone Bank	SEWARD – The Cattle National Bank and Trust, *Union Bank & Trust
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BEEMER – First Community Bank	GERING – *Great Western Bank, *Valley Bank & Trust Co.	NELSON – Commercial Bank	SIDNEY – American National Bank of Sidney, Points West Community Bank, *Great Western Bank, *Security First Bank
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BELLWOOD – *Bank of the Valley	GORDON – *The First National Bank of Gordon	NORTH BEND – Platte Valley Bank	SPRINGFIELD – *Springfield State Bank
BENKELMAN – AmFirst Bank	GOTHENBURG – First State Bank, *Great Western Bank	NORTH LOUP – North Loup Valley Bank	STAMFORD – Community Bank
BERTRAND – Bank of Bertrand	GRAND ISLAND – *Equitable Bank, *Five Points Bank, *Great Western Bank, *Heritage Bank, *Home Federal Savings & Loan, *US Bank, *Union Bank & Trust, *Wells Fargo	NORTH PLATTE – Adams Bank & Trust, *Bank of the West, *Equitable Bank, First National Bank of North Platte, *Great Western Bank, *NebraskaLand National Bank, *US Bank, *Wells Fargo	STANTON – *First National Bank, Stanton State Bank
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BROKEN BOW – *Bruning State Bank, *Custer Federal Savings & Loan, *Great Western Bank, Nebraska State Bank & Trust Co.	HASTINGS – *Bank of Doniphan, *Five Points Bank, *Great Western Bank, *Hastings State Bank, *Heritage Bank	O'NEILL – *Great Western Bank, *Pinnacle Bank	TAYLOR – *Union Bank & Trust
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BURWELL – *Great Western Bank	HICKMAN – *First State Bank	OSCEOLA – *Pinnacle Bank	TEKAMAH – *Washington County Bank
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CRAWFORD – *Security First Bank			WILCOX – *Iowa-Nebraska State Bank
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CURTIS – Curtis State Bank			
DAVID CITY – *Bank of the Valley, *Union Bank & Trust, *US Bank			

2011

Audited Operating Statement

Revenue

Legal Services Corporation	
Basic Field.....	\$1,599,789
Native American	36,563
Migrant Worker	46,667
Technology Grant.....	63,600
Lancaster County Juvenile	
Court & JBC.....	295,269
Northeast Nebraska Area	
Agency on Aging.....	30,133
Nebraska Commission on	
Public Advocacy.....	1,397,287
Department of Housing &	
Urban Development.....	34,939
Violence Against Women Act.....	166,641
U.S. Department of Agriculture.....	212,609
Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska.....	50,000
Interest on Lawyers Trust Fund	42,000
United Way of the Midlands.....	40,808
United Way Lancaster County.....	14,478
ElderAccessLine® Grant.....	110,025
HUD Homeless Grants.....	29,750
Civil Legal Serv. Fund.....	336,000
University of NE Med Center.....	24,964
Internal Revenue Service/LITC	14,808
Investment Income.....	7,176
Department of Justice –	
Native American Legal Service.....	46,890
Other Income.....	14,334
Contributions.....	530,824
Contributed Services.....	114,420
Total Revenue	5,259,974

Net Assets at 12-31-112,180,890

NOTE: Best practices for non-profit organizations indicate that the organization should have operating reserves equal to between 3 and 6 months operating expenses. At 12-31-11, Legal Aid of Nebraska had operating reserves of approximately 3.7 months, based on the 2012 budget.

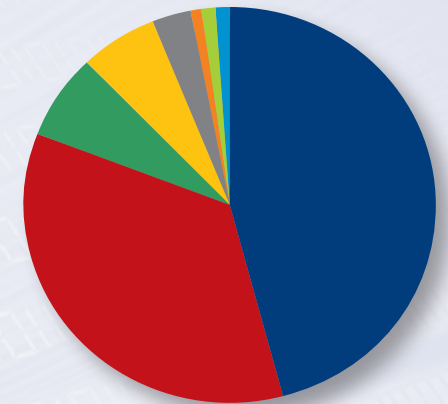
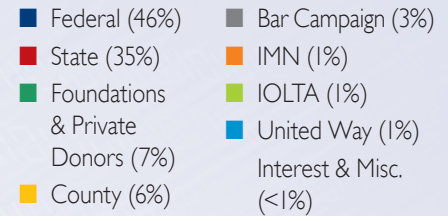
Expenditures

Salaries.....	\$2,978,219
Employee Benefits	812,256
Payroll Taxes.....	213,188
Contracted Services	137,363
Private Atty. Contracts	114,420
Discounted or Donated Private	
Attorney Involvement.....	114,420
Supplies.....	41,339
Telephone.....	119,730
Postage and Shipping.....	23,717
Occupancy.....	255,569
Printing.....	4,262
Recruiting.....	453
Transportation.....	73,094
Training.....	43,650
Maintenance and Repairs.....	12,120
Equipment Rental.....	35,785
Litigation Costs.....	11,410
Insurance.....	57,639
Dues.....	28,257
Technical Support.....	49,215
Miscellaneous.....	15,372
Library.....	33,545
Development	44,893
Depreciation.....	71,786
Total Expenditures.....	\$ 5,291,702

Functional Expense Breakdown

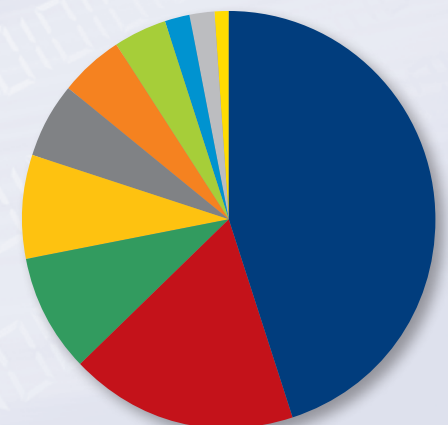
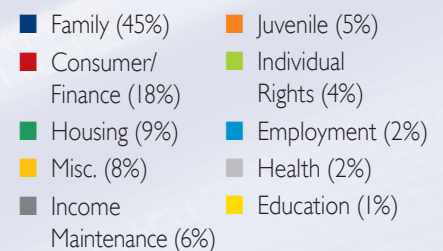
Program Services – 86.8%.....	\$4,591,335
Admin. & Fundraising – 13.2%.....	700,367
Total Expenditures.....	\$ 5,291,702

2011 Revenue



2011

Cases Closed



Legal Aid of Nebraska Office Locations

Omaha – 1904 Farnam St., Suite 500, Omaha, NE 68102

402-348-1069, 402-348-1068 fax

Lincoln – 941 “O” St., Suite 825, Lincoln, NE 68508

North Platte – 102 E. 3rd St., Suite 102, North Platte, NE 69103

Scottsbluff – 1423 1st Ave., Scottsbluff, NE 69363

Norfolk – 214 N. 7th St., Suite 10, Norfolk, NE 68701

Bancroft – 415 Main St., Bancroft, NE 68004

Grand Island – 207 W. 3rd St., Grand Island, NE 68802

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Legal Aid of Nebraska thanks the following University of Nebraska-Omaha Writing Internship fellows for their contributions to this Annual Report: Hoken Aldrich, Vasili Chaika, John McWilliams and Taylor Workman. We also thank Dr. Tracy Bridgeford of the UNO English Department for coordinating the internship program.

Legal Aid of Nebraska wants to recognize the considerable efforts of Joseph Dreesen and Christopher E. Hoyme of Jackson Lewis for their pro bono contributions to our organization.

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Legal Aid of Nebraska is a nonprofit 501(c) 3 organization funded in part by the Legal Services Corporation.