



Legal Aid
**Saved
My Life**

ANNUAL REPORT 2012

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Legal Aid of Nebraska gratefully acknowledges the following major sources of operating funds:

- Legal Services Corporation
- Nebraska Lawyers Trust Account Foundation
- Nebraska law firms & attorneys
- Nebraska Commission on Public Advocacy*

* Special thanks to Jim Mowbray and Rita Wesely at the Nebraska Commission on Public Advocacy.

Board of Directors

Legal Aid of Nebraska is governed by a diverse Board of Directors – from attorneys to client representatives from various organizations – who oversee in the provision of legal services. The Board members' backgrounds range from an attorney for Boys Town to an enrolled member of the Ogallala Sioux Indian Tribe to a victim of domestic violence, which provides a wide range of experience to offer assistance to a likewise range of diverse clients. Through financial review and strategic planning with a focus on the legal needs of current and potential clients, the Board implements a clear vision for carrying out Legal Aid's mission "to promote **justice, dignity, hope, and self-sufficiency**, through quality civil legal aid for those who have nowhere else to turn."

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Lorene Thomas, *Bloomfield*

William Tringe, *Holdrege*

Nicole Vereen, *Omaha*

Michael Willet, *Beatrice*

Lashawn Young, *Omaha*



Seated, from left: Janice Brown, Carol Gendler, Michael Schleich, Katherine Voorhees, Nicole Vereen. Standing, from left: Hon. David Piester, Hon. Patricia Lamberty, Kathryn Olson, Ron Oleson, Michael Willet. Inset: Michelle Oldham, William Tringe, Courtney Klein. Not Pictured: Matthew Dunning, Julianna Jenkins, Larry R. Baumann, Susie K. Chief Bear, Lashawn Young, Barbara Pinkelman, William T. Foley, Lorene Thomas.



Equality After Gideon:

Low Income Civil Litigants Losing Ground

ANNUAL REPORT MESSAGE BY DAVE PANTOS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The theme of the American Bar Association's annual Law Day is "Realizing the Dream: Equality for All." It is amazing to be writing this just a few days after two major U.S. Supreme Court arguments affecting the rights of gays and lesbians. What seems hopeful and almost likely now – recognition of the constitutional right to marry and the overturning of the Defense of Marriage Act – would have been considered a pipe dream by most just 10 years ago.

What a major and significant stride towards equality and justice in our nation!

But while we celebrate the civil rights victories that the queer community has made in the past decade, it is hard to make the same euphoric assessment about access to civil justice for the poor.

This was made clear in a recent article by Ethan Bronner in *The New York Times*. In his piece titled "Right to a Lawyer Often Eludes the Poor," Bronner contrasts the access to justice afforded to criminal defendants enshrined in the Gideon v. Wainwright decision and the lack of such access afforded to civil litigants.

"Civil matters – including legal issues like home foreclosure, job loss, spousal abuse and parental custody – were not covered by [Gideon]. Today, many states and counties do not offer lawyers to the poor in major civil disputes, and in some criminal ones as well. Those states that do are finding that more people than ever are qualifying for such help, making it impossible to keep up with the need. The result is that even at a time when many law school graduates are without work, many Americans are without lawyers."

The situation has worsened as federal funding cuts due to sequestration and fiscal cliff negotiations combined with increased demand for services increase the percentage of people going without help.

Bronner quotes Jim Sandman, president of the federal Legal Services Corporation, as saying, "Most Americans don't realize that you can have your home taken away, your children taken away and you can be a victim of domestic

violence but you have no constitutional right to a lawyer to protect you."

If the foundation of equality in America is the rule of law, and if the rule of law requires the assistance of a lawyer to be enforced, then it stands to reason that equality for the poor means access to counsel in these basic and fundamental civil matters.

To achieve this means, for starters, increased pro bono legal services, more funding for established legal aid organizations and innovative approaches to expanding the tools available for those who must go pro se, such as Legal Aid's Access to Justice Centers in Lincoln and Omaha.

It also suggests that we need to apprehend the scope of the problem. How many people in Nebraska go unrepresented in an eviction? In trying to attain a permanent restraining order? In fighting a bank garnishment? No one really knows, and the impact on our communities and, yes, equality, is felt every day.

If the LBQT community can move from the shadows of Stonewall to success in the Supreme Court in less than 50 years, certainly we can reverse the trend of denied access to justice for poor civil litigants in the 50 years since Gideon.

The principle of equality under the law, and our adherence to that principle, demands nothing less.

2012 Facts and Accomplishments

- 21,502 new clients helped, including 9,889 children in the home
- The Access to Justice Self Help Center in Omaha now serves an average of 15 people per day
- 40 percent increase in private funding
- 40 percent of new clients now apply online, cutting hold times by 90 percent

Legal Aid Saved My Life

Medical-Legal Partnership Grows to Three Sites

A medical-legal partnership begun three years ago at the University of Nebraska Medical Center has grown to three locations in 2012 and Legal Aid of Nebraska now is serving 80 patients in hospital settings.

What began in 2009 at UNMC as a program to help cancer patients deal with legal problems now is also helping patients at the Douglas County General Assistance Center (The former County Hospital) in east-central Omaha and also at the Alegent-Creighton Health Initiatives Program at Immanuel Medical Center in northwest Omaha. The three institutions now are providing nearly \$150,000 in total annual funding for Legal Aid's assistance.

Special thanks to our Medical-Legal partners:

- Nebraska Medical Center – Dr. Kerry Rodabaugh, Theresa Franco and Susan Stensland
- Douglas County Center – Mary Ann Borgeson and Deb Redding



Physicians and medical staff have discovered that resolution of legal issues is an important adjunct to hospital care. Patients facing long-term or terminal illnesses often have no legal arrangements made for placement of children, don't have wills or estate matters and similar issues dealt with.

Legal Aid attorneys Ann Mangiamelli, Kate Owen, Lindsay Surdell plus paralegal Christi Bradley shoulder most of the medical-legal caseload by visiting the three locations on set schedules each week. They often meet with patients right at the bedside and they're available by phone at other times.

They help patients resolve custody issues, powers of attorney, foreclosures and benefit advocacy. Medical professionals believe the program shows that their institutions are paying attention to the entire patient – addressing everything else that goes into the treatment of the individual.

At the Douglas County Center, Legal Aid is assisting many people who receive general assistance or Social Security SSI (Supplementary Security Income). In such cases, legal resolutions result in a positive outcome for taxpayers as \$10 is returned to Medicaid offers for every \$1 spent on Legal Aid work, said Executive Director Dave Pantos.

The three partnerships are showing great success in meeting a critical community need, Pantos added. "Resolving legal problems for sick people leads to optimal medical outcomes."

Ann Mangiamelli, attorney; Lindsay Surdell, attorney; Christi Bradley, paralegal; and Kate Owen, attorney. Legal Aid's medical-legal partnership is now serving patients at Immanuel Medical Center, below.



Legal Aid Offers Help, Finds New Board Member

A good client is hard to find. So is a good board member. Grand Island Attorney Lori Wilson found both.

When Barbara Pinkelman had questions regarding divorce, she sought help from Legal Aid of Nebraska. Her husband, recently diagnosed with bipolar disorder, had become aggressive and verbally abusive. His erratic mood swings often caused him to attack Barbara, her father and the couple's son. Profanity laced tirades one minute would turn to apologies the next.

After he shook his fist in her face and threatened to hit and kill her, Barbara grew concerned for the safety of their adopted 14-year-old son and her elderly father who lived with the family. Her husband's mounting debts further complicated the relationship. He owed child support from a previous marriage, medical bills and a balloon payment with a fast-approaching due date. With their home in foreclosure and both family vehicles used as security on a loan in default, Barb desperately wanted her husband out of her life.

With the help of Legal Aid's Lori Wilson, a protective order and later a dissolution act against Barb's husband were authorized. After consecutive missed child visitations, Barb's husband was granted only supervised visitation rights. Along with the divorce finalization, Barb received legal and physical custody of their son. In lieu of child support, Barb's son began receiving half of his father's Social Security Disability payments.

Shortly before the case was settled, Wilson called her client with an inquiry: would she be interested in becoming a client representative on Legal Aid's board?

The answer, was "yes."

"Barb Pinkelman was one of the very best clients I have ever experienced in my 33 years of practice," Lori praised. "From the beginning, she was extremely organized, very thorough and provided me everything I needed in a timely fashion." Lori was also impressed by Barb's compassion for her husband and her concern for her son's well-being.

Since breaking away from her ex-husband, Lori has observed an increased self-confidence in Barb. She knows she won't be afraid to voice her opinions in board meetings.

During her first meeting, Barb said, "If it wasn't for Legal Aid, I'd still be in a closet right now."

A surviving single mother and a victim of domestic violence, struggling to make ends meet, Barbara Pinkelman has gone from a Legal Aid client to a Legal Aid board member – and both parties, it seems, are better for it.

A Sudanese Success Story

A decade ago, Sudanese refugee Nyadeng W. came to America with her husband. When Nyadeng discovered that he had a girlfriend on the side, she ended their relationship. Her husband did not abide well with this.

"I want to kill you. I want to shoot you," he threatened Nyadeng. He also wanted custody of their one-year-old child.

Circumstances forced Nyadeng to live in Seattle, and her husband lived in Omaha with their son. Because Nyadeng was living out-of-state, the court granted custody to the father. Ten years later, with only occasional correspondence and no visits, Nyadeng returned to Nebraska and sought to end the separation from her child. At her cousin's suggestion – a former client of Legal Aid – Nyadeng contacted Legal Aid of Nebraska for assistance.

Finding it difficult to adapt to life in the United States, Nyadeng's husband moved back to his native country in Africa. He left the child in the care of the paternal grandparents but retained custody himself. With the father unavailable to care for the child and not expected to return from Africa, and the grandparents lacking the rights to guardianship and unwilling to return the boy to his mother, Nyadeng pursued a change of custody.

Attorney Elaine D'Amato assisted Nyadeng in retrieving her parental rights. Despite a slight difficulty in communication – Nyadeng's native language is Nuer, but she also speaks English – Elaine was impressed with Nyadeng's presence. "She was very nice, very cooperative, very grateful, appreciative, kind," Elaine says of her experience working with Nyadeng. "We enjoy working with people from other cultures," she adds. Legal Aid of Nebraska offers its services at homeless shelters and ethnic centers for the legal needs of refugees. Over the past six years, it has represented many refugees through the International Center of the Heartland.

The day before the final hearing, the grandparents returned the boy to his mother. Sole physical and legal cus-

Legal Aid Saved My Life continued

tody was granted to Nyadeng. Speaking of Legal Aid's service, Nyadeng acclaims, "It saved my life. We had no money, but it took care of both my own and my son's lives. It really saved my life."

Lincoln Attorney Helps Mother, Autistic Son

When her autistic teenage son Rylee refused to go to school, Lisa Siefker knew something was amiss.

Her maternal instincts surmised that some sort of incident happened on the school bus or in the classroom that caused Rylee to become upset – normally a docile, cooperative child, he began inflicting physical harm upon himself, his mother and the family car.

Lisa, a widow, eventually learned her son's behavior stemmed from a seemingly innocuous fall off a trike at school. The incident seemed innocent enough, but his erratic behavior demonstrated a much more catastrophic reaction.

As Rylee's daily absences piled up, his high school contacted the Department of Health and Human Services, and a case was filed placing blame on Lisa. Determined to set her son back on track, Lisa worked with Lincoln Attorney Lea Wroblewski – a familiar face who nine years earlier had helped her

sort through a series of consumer and family issues.

Wroblewski filed a no-fault petition on Lisa's behalf and argued that her client lacked the ability to get her son to school on her own. Caseworkers from the Department of Health and Human Services advised a pretreatment assessment for Lisa, who suffers from anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. Lisa sees both a psychiatrist and a psychologist for treatment of these issues, so Wroblewski objected to the recommendation. The judge then ordered Lisa to release her medical records. Determining the unrestricted release of her client's medical records unnecessary to the case and in violation of her client's rights to a confidential relationship with her mental health providers, Wroblewski appealed the order.

The Supreme Court took interest in the case and pulled it from the Court of Appeals. Ultimately, the court ruled that ordering a pretreatment assessment and releasing mental health records was unreasonable and reversed the juvenile court's decision.

While awaiting an outcome, attorney and client solved the real problem, Rylee's truancy. He transferred to a new school where he is a member of a Friendship Club that meets once a month for activities outside of school such as trips to the movies.

Rylee's newfound happiness has lightened the emotional burden on his mother.

Her attorney agrees. "She's always struck me as someone who got the raw end of the deal," said Attorney Wroblewski. "She does all she can."

Lisa Siefker credits Wroblewski for making her a stronger woman and giving her "the ability to handle life."

Today Lisa's only requests are for transportation assistance, but her attorney still thinks adequate service has not been provided. Despite his initial diagnosis of autism as a baby, an autism expert has never evaluated Rylee; he has received consultation but no evaluation. Lisa and Lea hope that one day he'll have the opportunity to visit the Autism Center of Nebraska in Omaha where he can receive an evaluation from someone who specializes in his disability.

Client Board Member Fights Unjust Job Dismissal

When Nebraska Indian Community College lost accreditation and was struggling with administrative problems, Susan

Lisa Siefker and her attorney Lea Wroblewski.



Barta was hired to turn things around for the school. As a recruiter, she played a vital role in saving the college by advertising, seeking community input and integrating culture onto the campus to increase attendance. Her forty years of experience working with the Native American community helped her bring forth great ideas for solutions to NICC's problems.

"I helped them because I believe in education. I believe knowledge is power," Susan says, explaining how her passion for work within the Native community carried over into her position with NICC.

Despite Susan's hard work to regain accreditation for the school and recruit students, the management of the college began giving her a difficult time. When she suggested that the college needed more – arguing that she did not have the supplies she needed to carry out her job, such as business cards, adequate transportation, gas or a phone – her supervisor claimed dissatisfaction with her work performance. Upon arriving to work one day, Susan was surprised to find someone else sitting at her desk; she then found that she had been moved from her office into the lobby. Later on, her supervisor denied her permission to visit a certain location to recruit students because he wasn't seeing immediate results. When he failed to understand that it typically took two to three visits to a site before a student signed up, Susan filed a grievance against him. A meeting was held, and Susan was told to rectify her behavior. Frustrated with the hostile working environment, Susan filed another grievance. This led to her termination based on the college administration's accusation that Susan wasn't a productive member of the staff.

Upset by NICC's unfair treatment of her during her time working for the college, Susan turned to Legal Aid of Nebraska for assistance with her unemployment case. Attorney Amanda McMahon helped Susan win her case, providing the support that Susan claims she "wouldn't have had the oomph to fight without." In a period of "dire straits," Susan was able to rely on Legal Aid's services to win a case in which she hadn't done anything wrong.

"Without Legal Aid of Nebraska's services to help people in poverty to seek justice for whatever situation they're in, people wouldn't get the justice they deserved," Susan acknowledges. She points out that people living in poverty

tend to be a low self-esteem population and are therefore targeted as prey. Through Legal Aid's Native American Program and its membership with the National Association of Indian Legal Services (NAILS), Legal Aid provides advice and legal service to client-eligible Indians – both individual and smaller tribes – who cannot otherwise afford legal representation.

As a resident of Iowa, Susan now sits on the Legal Aid of Iowa board as a client-representative for northwest Iowa. She has participated on the board for seven years and is currently in the process of moving into the position of secretary officer.

Charles Drew Center Honors Legal Aid

In 2012 Legal Aid of Nebraska received the Charles Drew Health Center's community service award for our collaboration with Drew's Fathers for a Lifetime (FFL) program.

The program assists non-custodial fathers who wish to re-enter their children's lives and is managed through the Legal Aid-Omaha Access to Justice (A2J) Center and the FFL Office.

Low-income fathers often find themselves helpless after courts have ordered them to make child support payments which are dependent entirely on the father's continuous employment and income stream. But when poor fathers can't keep steady jobs, the court's mandate to pay support never goes away, causing large sums to accumulate – plus interest.

Since the program's inception, 90 fathers have gotten legal help, appeared in court to get their payments modified and establish back payment plans and have successfully returned to fatherly roles with their children.

The fathers come to the A2J Center and FFL in need of support modifications, 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.

The A2J Center conducts 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 Muirne Heaney, managing attorney. Second, the dads are asked to commit to completing FFL's 12-week educational course that focuses on parenting and

Legal Aid Saved My Life continued

responsibilities. "The FFL program focuses on responsibilities associated with parenting, not just parents' rights."

The A2J clinics teach dads how to navigate the courts, how to present their own cases for modification and guides them through the parenting plan process. They learn about filling out legal forms and are given scripts to use in oral arguments, explanations on how to approach judges or court referees, and collateral support.

Under a grant from the Omaha Community Foundation, the A2J-FFL collaboration was expanded to include a part-time case advocate. The advocate, Amy Williams, is a graduate of Creighton Law School and has worked for the state as a child protection social worker. Ms. Williams also is collecting data, a first for the program, to help determine whether the program is accomplishing its goal. So far the data looks good. "In just two years, we have proven that when these men are given a reasonable support amount, they pay it," said Heaney. "And when they get back in touch with their children, they stay in touch." Final data will be available in May of 2013.

The case advocate also works intensively with some

clients to help resolve problems associated with a lack of employment. This includes assistance in finding employment. Heaney said the FFL/A2J collaboration is, to her knowledge, unique across the country and could be a model for other cities.

A2J Center Meets Needs; Finds Success

On September 10, 2012, Legal Aid's Access to Justice-Self Help Center (A2J) in Omaha began its third year of operation. A2J deals with a previously unserved population who either do not need extended representation or are ineligible for it because of established priorities.

Seven of the 10 attorneys in the Omaha Office regularly work at A2J, and to date the center has helped Legal Aid more than double its service to clients in Metropolitan Omaha.

"The Management Team's vision for A2J has been realized," said Managing Attorney Muirne Heaney. "The hope was to assist people in our client population who have to resort to representing themselves in court. The model of face-to-face advice and brief service definitely has filled a gap in our services." The goal at A2J is to help *pro se* litigants overcome the technical barriers that prevent them from presenting their own cases in court and to facilitate a client's "access" to the legal system. "We aren't here to judge the case, but to help a litigant cross the procedural barriers that prevent them from getting to make a case."

In all of 2012, 1,000 cases were opened and closed at A2J. These are "first application" cases, and the number does not include clients who returned to the center for additional help in earlier cases.

A2J is open three hours a day, five days per week, but was closed for a month during the summer of 2012 due to staffing issues. Given the sheer volume of work and time limitations, a quality control system has been instigated including hiring an additional attorney, daily review of each case opened and closed starting in 2013 and adoption of protocols for providing advice – plus other key steps, Heaney said.

Data gathered as part of the quality control measure determined that 90 percent of clients given advice at the center followed through with the service or advice they received.

"A2J has found and fulfilled a genuine need and has already become a key adjunct service organization to the local court system," Heaney said.



Lincoln Getting A2J Center

The success of the Access to Justice (A2J) Center in Omaha launched an effort in 2012 to establish a similar facility in Lincoln. Funds have been raised and the Lincoln A2J Center is scheduled to open for business in the spring of 2013, said Executive Director Dave Pantos. Pictured above is the staff of the Lincoln office of Legal Aid of Nebraska.

Legal Aid Helps Many People

Legal Aid of Nebraska serves the needs of many of our Nebraska neighbors from underserved populations such as **Farmers** struggling with financial distress; the **Homeless** who are facing housing issues; the **Elderly** who need help with wills and durable power of attorney; **Victims** of domestic violence; **Disabled children** whose special education rights are wrongfully denied in school; **Veterans** with legal barriers to civilian life; **Migrant farmworkers** who are denied proper pay; and even **Breast cancer patients** who are facing legal challenges while fighting for their lives.

- The **Nebraska Housing Assistance Project** provides legal assistance to individuals with housing issues and strives to remove any legal problems that keep them from obtaining stable housing. Our attorneys do onsite intake and work with more than 25 homeless shelters and transitional living facilities.
- **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 available. There is no income eligibility restriction.
- The **Native American AccessLine®** is available to Native Americans living in Nebraska who are seeking brief legal service or extended representation with various legal issues.
- Legal Aid's **Rural Response Hotline** helps rural residents get financial, legal and risk management information or referrals to other community groups. This is in partnership with Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska.
- The **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program** is meant to increase and sustain the number of farms and ranches by providing education and training to beginning farmers and ranchers and estate and transition planning to retiring landowners.
- The **Migrant Project** is a collaborative effort of partners, including Legal Aid, Proteus, Inc., the Nebraska Department of Education Migrant Head Start, the local UNL Extension Offices and the Community Action Partnership of Western Nebraska, where migrant workers with legal issues are identified and referred. These entities have devoted energy to improving the level of education and outreach in migrant communities, particularly to migrant farm workers.
- 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.

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

2012 Grants

Federal, State & County

Nebraska Commission on Public Advocacy

Legal Aid & Services Fund \$1,362,174

Civil Legal Aid & Services

Fund \$235,200

U.S. Legal Services Corp \$1,463,821

Lancaster County

Juvenile Court & JBC \$405,207

U.S. Department of Agriculture \$247,591

U.S. Department of Justice

Violence Against Women Act.... \$137,881

Native American Legal

Services \$33,508

Interest on Lawyers

Trust Accounts (IOLTA) \$100,000

ElderAccessLine® Grant \$93,542

U.S. Department of Housing

& Urban Development \$53,948

Northeast Nebraska Area

Agency on Aging \$31,833

IRS/Low-Income Tax Clinic \$27,910

2012

United Way

United Way Midlands \$43,378

United Way Lancaster County \$16,283

United Way of Western

Nebraska \$4,000

United Way of Western

Nebraska – Serving Box Butte \$1,000

2012 Employees by Office

BANCROFT

MARR, Lori – Administrative Assistant

SOLL, Michelle – Paralegal/Office Manager

GRAND ISLAND

FARRITOR, Shawn – Attorney

FENTON, Barbara – Receptionist

SCHOTT, Crystal – Paralegal

WILSON, Lori – Managing Attorney

LINCOLN

BERNT, Heather – Paralegal

BESTUL, Mark – Attorney

CARRAHER, Patrick – Managing Attorney

CEBALLOS, Kristin – Paralegal

HATFIELD, Cheree – Law Clerk

JOHNSON, Laurel – Law Clerk

KIRKENDALL, April – Attorney

KULWICKI, Jennifer – Attorney

KYKER, Sarah – Project Clerk

LEWIT, Brittani – Attorney

MILLIGAN, John – Attorney

NELSON, Kate – Project Clerk

PENG, Shirley – Attorney

RODRIGUEZ, Hazell – Attorney

SERCL, Tania – Paralegal

SIDWELL, Scott – Attorney

WIKOFF, Brenda – Legal Secretary

WROBLEWSKI, Lea – Attorney

NORFOLK

LEE, Lori – Managing Attorney

McMAHON, Amanda – Attorney

MYERS, Kelsie – Attorney

WESCHE, Kathy – Paralegal

NORTH PLATTE

CARPENTER, Victoria – Paralegal

EASTMAN, Jeffrey – Managing Attorney

HOYME, Kathryn – Attorney

STOCK, Andrew – Attorney

OMAHA

ALBIN, Rachel – AL Paralegal

BEISCH, Christina – AL Paralegal

BEZRUTCYK, Ana – Paralegal

BRADLEY, Christina – Paralegal

BROOKS, Edward – Accounting Manager

D'AMATO, Elaine – Attorney

DAVIS, Jaclyn – Law Clerk

DENDY, Shereece – Attorney

DUNOVAN, Kimberly – Attorney

EMANUEL-MOORE, Elise – NAP Coordinator

FARNAN, Annette – Deputy Director

FEELHAVER, Rodney – CFO

FRITZ, Paula – AL Attorney

GAUGHAN, Jennifer – Director of Litigation
& Advocacy

GROGGER, Anne – AL Paralegal

HAAS, Emily – Law Clerk

HANSEN-JENSEN, Lynda – AL Paralegal

HANSON, Melinda – Attorney

HASTERLO, Barbara – AL Paralegal

HEANEY, Muirne – Managing Attorney

HEER-DALE, Laurel – AL Managing Attorney

KAMMERER, Michael – Tech Coordinator

MANGIAMELLI, Ann – Attorney

MASON, Venita – Receptionist

McGILL, Jennifer – AL Paralegal

McSHANE, Anne – Attorney

MERRILL, Matt – Law Clerk

MERTZ, Scott – Attorney

MOCK, Katie – Development Coordinator

NADING, Laurie – Paralegal

OWEN, Katherine – Attorney

PANTOS, David – Executive Director

PERRY, Selina – Grants Manager

RAMIREZ, Daniel – Law Clerk

RUSH-CHIPMAN, Mindy – AL Attorney

SCHAEFER, Margaret – ElderAL Attorney

SCHEURING, Benjamin – Attorney

SCHNECKLOTH, Rebecca – Paralegal

SEAGRASS, Jonathan – Attorney

SHANNON, Liliana – Attorney

STOFER, Bambi – AL Paralegal

STOLARSKYJ, Christine – Attorney/PAI Coordinator

STOLARSKYJ, Kathleen – AL Paralegal

TAYLOR, Taurean – AL Paralegal

WATTON, Stephanie – Paralegal

WILLIAMS, Emma – Administrative Assistant

WILLIS, Susan – AL Paralegal

SCOTTSBLUFF

DeSIMONE, Dana – Receptionist

GALLAGHER, Liam – Attorney

MARKER, Kelanie – Receptionist

MILLER, Casey – Attorney

PALOMO, Amanda – Paralegal

SKELCHER, Shelldon – Managing Attorney

Volunteers and Interns

A special thank you to our volunteers and unpaid interns for dedicating their time and energy to Legal Aid of Nebraska's mission.

BARTO, Emalee – Volunteer, Lincoln

CALDWELL, Kaylor – Receptionist (work study),
Lincoln

DZYBAN, Holly Newman – Intern, Omaha

FULLERTON, Claudia – Intern, Lincoln

FRIEND, Lizann – Volunteer, Omaha

GRUIDEL, Eric – Volunteer, Omaha

LARSON, Danielle – Volunteer

McWILLIAMS, John – Intern, Omaha

MILLER, Katherine – Volunteer, Omaha

MULLEN, Jessica – Intern, Lincoln

SEAMUS, Kelly – Law Clerk, Lincoln

THELIN, Joan – Volunteer, Omaha

VAZQUEZ, Suriel – Intern, Omaha

2012 Bar Campaign Donors

\$20,000+

Baird Holm LLP
Kutak Rock/Kutak Foundation

\$15,000-19,999

McGrath North

\$10,000-14,999

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Lamson Dugan & Murray, LLP

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2012 Foundation Donors

Nebraska Lawyer's Trust Account Foundation	\$100,000
Donated Proceeds from Private Litigation (Cy Pres Award)	\$90,000
Sherwood Foundation	\$75,000
Lozier Foundation	\$60,800
Weitz Family Foundation	\$50,000
William & Ruth Scott Family Foundation	\$37,000
Woods Charitable Fund	\$30,000
Robert B. Daugherty Charitable Foundation	\$25,000
Anonymous	\$20,000
Donald E. Nielsen Foundation, Inc.	\$20,000
The Hawks Foundation	\$20,000
H. Lee & Carol Gendler Foundation	\$15,000
Cooper Foundation	\$10,000
Women's Fund of Omaha	\$10,000
Fund for Omaha	\$10,000
Lincoln Community Foundation	\$8,174.91
Lincoln Financial Foundation	\$7,500
Margaret & Martha Thomas Foundation	\$5,000
Nebraska Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure	\$5,000
The Todd & Betiana Simon Foundation	\$5,000
Grand Island Community Foundation	\$2,910.04

2012 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."

General Donors

\$2,000-5,000

The Atlantic Philanthropies
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Remembering Pat Ford

In late March, the passing of former Legal Aid attorney Pat Ford affected many in the community. Pat's life is celebrated by the lives he touched through his passion for work with the homeless.

"Pat was a character who lived hard and played hard," said Managing Attorney Muirne Heaney. "He loved his work and felt very strongly about people less privileged than others. He understood the continuum of what human behavior could be, and he wasn't afraid of people – he wasn't afraid of any of it, from the best to the worst."

Ford believed in bettering the community by reaching out to those in need and helping them to achieve their own goals of self-sufficiency. After gaining 30 years of law experience in California, Pat returned to his hometown of Omaha to care for his recently widowed mother. He discovered that Legal Aid was in need of somebody to run its Homeless Project, and he was the perfect fit.

Pat's dedication and ability to relate to his diverse clients led to many success stories. He made friends from all social demographics, from judges and lawyers to homeless people. His fellow attorney Heaney admired how he "understood the social ramifications of what people on the margins suffer, primarily shame, which affects self-esteem and relationships. It's all about relationships. It doesn't matter what you're doing for a living; unless you have relationships, you will not find freedom. It's what we do to become fully human."

Building these relationships came naturally to Pat Ford. "Not all homeless people are mentally ill or substance abusers. Many of them are just like me and you that have fallen on hard times," he once said in an interview with Omaha Living.

By extending his services beyond those of Legal Aid – offering rides to clients to ensure they made it to their appointments and collecting cans for them – Pat went out of his way to assist others less fortunate. When former Legal Aid client Brenda Andrews had nowhere to go to escape an abusive husband, she and her children sought refuge in a homeless shelter. Pat rescued her from the shelter and urged her to take her kids to stay with family in Minnesota. He even offered to pay for gas for the trip.

In addition to the difference he made in his clients' lives, Pat also left a lasting impression on his co-workers at Legal Aid. Attorney Liliana Shannon referred to Pat as one of her favorite people. From her next-door office, she enjoyed his "outrageous sense of humor" every day. "There was a big hole in the office once he left. I miss him a lot," she said.

He shared his love of science fiction with Liliana and fellow staffer Kate Owen through an informal book club. "Pat was passionate in every sense of the word," Owen said. "He would get worked up over injustices to clients, but he was good at leaving stuff at work. He didn't believe in wasting time; he took great time in pleasure. He really loved living."

With clients still calling Legal Aid for Pat's assistance, his unique spark carries on even in his passing. AccessLine® Attorney Laurel Heer-Dale praised Pat's mind of steel and heart of gold: "Pat was a blessing to everyone he encountered, especially to those who were 'down on their luck' and had nowhere else to turn. His loss is deeply felt by the Legal Aid community and those we serve."



2012

PAI Attorneys

Under the Private Attorney Involvement program (PAI), Legal Aid recruits attorneys from firms at reduced rates to handle cases in counties more than one hour's driving distance from a Legal Aid office.

Avis Andrews, *Fremont*
Ben Beethe, *Tecumseh*
Michael Borders, *Broken Bow*
Steve Brewster, *O'Neill*
Matt Catlett, *Lincoln*
Patricia Dodson, *Beaver City*
Jeffrey Enszt, *Minden*
Marsha Fangmeyer, *Kearney*
Steve Fillman, *York*
Todd Flynn, *Ainsworth*
Leta Fornoff, *Fremont*
Scott Hahn, *Omaha*
Angela Heimes, *Omaha*
Tawna Holmstedt, *Grant*
Shaun Ilahi, *Omaha*
Nathan Jagers, *Alliance*
Jaquelin "J" Leef, *Sidney*
Lucy Lewno, *Yankton, SD*
Shon Lieske, *Minden*
Thomas Lieske, *Minden*
Lisa Meyer, *York*
Andrea Miller, *Scottsbluff*
John Moeller, *Sioux City, IA*
Laird Moore, *Omaha*
Cheryl Munson, *Broken Bow*
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Heather Sikyta, *Ord*
Adam Tripp, *Fremont*
David Wilson, *Sidney*
Lori Zeilinger, *Grant*

Fleeing Family Chaos

"I didn't know where to go." These were the words of Brenda Andrews, a mother of three stuck in a physically, emotionally, and verbally abusive relationship. When her husband's abuse peaked with inappropriate behavior involving their daughter in an attempt to further upset Brenda, she knew it was time to escape his controlling grasp on her life.

Initially, Brenda fled to the safety of friends, but when word got around that he knew where she was hiding and planned to come for her with a gun, she was forced to find shelter elsewhere.

"If I didn't leave, I would be dead. He threatened to kill me, and he meant it. It was real, it was evident, and he could do it. And I knew he would," Brenda said matter-of-factly.

Concerned with the possibility of kidnapping charges if she were to leave Nebraska to seek refuge at her parents' house in Minnesota, Brenda resorted to the only place left she could go: a homeless shelter. Men and women at the shelter openly voiced their opinions that she and her kids didn't belong there. When the shelter director gave her the business card

for Pat Ford, head of Legal Aid of Nebraska's Homeless Project, Brenda immediately dialed him up for help. Pat showed genuine concern for her safety and assured her that taking her children to Minnesota was her best option, even going so far as to offer her gas money for the drive.

Once safely away with her parents, Brenda began working with Legal Aid attorney Elaine D'Amato, who Pat seemed to know was a good fit for her. Elaine helped Brenda out of her situation, from divorce to bankruptcy to obtaining sole custody of the kids. Brenda's respect and gratitude for Elaine led her to begin thinking of Elaine as more than her attorney, but also as her mentor. She longed to repay Legal Aid, once telling Elaine, "I don't want to use up Legal Aid's resources." Elaine responded by assuring Brenda, "That's what we're here for."

"If it wasn't for Legal Aid, where would me and my kids be? We'd be homeless and out on the street," Brenda states with deep appreciation.

Instead, Brenda is now moving on with her life. After three years of counseling, Brenda and her kids are back in Ne-

braska and all in school, including herself. Brenda is a triple major at the University of Nebraska in Omaha, where she's studying human resources, marketing, and management, with a minor in speech communication. She worked very hard to receive funding for school through various scholarships, including the five-year Susan Thompson Buffet Scholarship. In addition to being a full-time college student, Brenda also works for Mosaic. Her ex-husband holds visitation rights with their children, which he tends to abuse through informational incest – a parent's oversharing of inappropriate information with the kids in the hopes that it will get back to Brenda. He continues to try to get under her skin, but that skin has toughened with time and the assistance provided by Pat, Elaine and Legal Aid.

"If I didn't leave, I would be dead. He threatened to kill me, and he meant it. It was real, it was evident, and he could do it. And I knew he would."



Brenda Andrews, left, and her attorney Elaine D'Amato.

2012 Audited Operating Statement

Revenue

Legal Services Corporation	
Basic Field.....	\$1,365,264
Native American.....	31,132
Migrant Worker.....	39,825
Technology Grant.....	27,600
Lancaster County Juvenile	
Court & JBC.....	405,207
Northeast Nebraska Area	
Agency on Aging.....	31,833
Nebraska Commission on	
Public Advocacy.....	1,362,174
Department of Housing &	
Urban Development.....	38,994
Violence Against Women Act.....	137,881
U.S. Department of Agriculture.....	225,343
Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska.....	50,000
Interest on Lawyers Trust Fund*.....	100,000
United Way of the Midlands.....	43,378
United Way Lancaster County.....	16,283
ElderAccessLine® Grant.....	93,542
HUD Homeless Grants.....	21,069
Civil Legal Serv. Fund.....	235,200
University of NE Med Center.....	36,473
Internal Revenue Service/LITC.....	27,910
Investment Income.....	161,013
Department of Justice –	
Native American Legal Service.....	33,508
Other Income.....	23,920
Contributions.....	732,131
Contributed Services.....	82,154
Total Revenue.....	5,321,834
Net Assets at 12-31-12.....	2,295,236

Expenditures

Salaries.....	\$2,9748,027
Employee Benefits.....	786,201
Payroll Taxes.....	213,963
Contracted Services.....	142,330
Private Atty. Contracts.....	82,154
Discounted or Donated Private	
Attorney Involvement.....	82,154
Supplies.....	45,561
Telephone.....	115,858
Postage and Shipping.....	21,172
Occupancy.....	252,563
Printing.....	6,585
Recruiting.....	801
Transportation.....	89,811
Training.....	30,721
Maintenance and Repairs.....	9,490
Equipment Rental.....	28,774
Litigation Costs.....	14,735
Insurance.....	59,085
Dues.....	26,166
Technical Support.....	61,183
Miscellaneous.....	18,795
Library.....	36,630
Development.....	44,828
Depreciation.....	63,901

Total Expenditures..... \$ 5,207,488

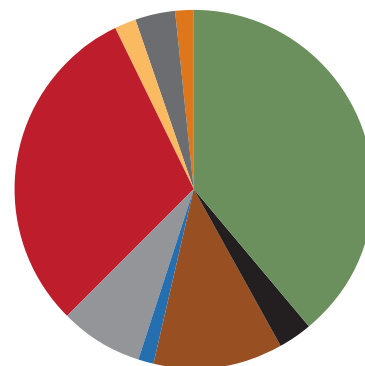
Functional Expense Breakdown

Program Services – 86.6%.....	\$4,509,685
Admin. & Fundraising – 13.4%.....	697,803

Total Expenditures..... \$ 5,207,488

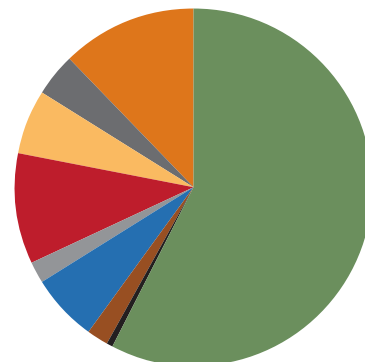
2012 Revenue

Federal (39%)	County (8%)
Bar Campaign (3%)	State (30%)
Foundations & Private Donors (12%)	IOLTA (2%)
United Way (1%)	Interest & Misc. (3%)
	Contributed Services (2%)



2012 Cases Closed

Family (58%)	Housing (10%)
Education (<1%)	Income Maintenance (6%)
Employment (2%)	Individual Rights (4%)
Juvenile (6%)	Misc. (12%)
Health (2%)	



* For a full list Nebraska IOLTA participating financial institutions, please visit <http://www.legalaidofnebraska.com/page/IOLTA>.

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 12-31-12, Legal Aid of Nebraska had operating reserves of approximately 3.4 months, based on the 2013 budget.

Legal Aid of Nebraska Office Locations

Omaha – 1904 Farnam Street, Ste. 500, Omaha, NE 68102

Lincoln – 941 “O” Street, Ste. 825, Lincoln, NE 68508

North Platte – 102 E. Third Street, Ste. 102, North Platte, NE 69103

Scottsbluff – 1423 First Avenue, Scottsbluff, NE 69363

Norfolk – 214 N. Seventh Street, Ste. 10, Norfolk, NE 68701

Bancroft – 415 Main Street, Bancroft, NE 68004

Grand Island – 207 W. Third Street, Grand Island, NE 68802

Lexington – 1001 N. Washington Street, Lexington, NE 68850

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ElderAccessLine® (Age 60 and over)

1-800-527-7249

(Mon-Thu, 9 am-12 pm & 1 pm-3 pm CST) (Fri, 9 am-12 pm CST)

Apply online at:
legalaidofnebraska.com

Legal Aid of Nebraska thanks Callie Rietfors, University of Nebraska-Omaha Writing Internship fellow for her contribution to this Annual Report. We also thank Dr. Kristin Girtten 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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