

2011  
ANNUAL  
REPORT



Since 1958  
**LEGAL AID CENTER**  
of Southern Nevada

RIGHTING WRONGS, CHANGING LIVES

## MISSION

The preservation of access to justice and the provision of quality legal counsel, advice and representation for individuals who are unable to protect their rights because they cannot afford an attorney.

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# RIGHTING WRONGS. CHANGING LIVES.

## GREETINGS FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS



In my 23 years with Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada, I would be hard-pressed to think of another year with so much challenge and yet, accomplishment. We started 2011 hopeful that in spite of the worst recession to hit our economy in a generation, our Capital Campaign would survive. We fully expected the fundraising effort to be a test of our resolve and we were in for the long haul.

To our great amazement and unending gratitude, the Southern Nevada community opened its arms to us and brought this project home. Through the combined efforts of local philanthropists, government leaders and concerned citizens who believe in the principle of equal access to justice for all, we were able to raise 97 percent of the funds needed and we have broken ground. We expect our new headquarters to be completed by September 2013.

However, raising money and designing a building that will serve this organization's needs for years to come has been easy compared to the human challenges that our staff faces every day. Because of our limited resources, we must make tough choices about whom we can represent and very often, these tough choices involve abused children who are languishing in foster care. Their wishes to be placed with a beloved relative in another state or to have regular visitation with their siblings go unheeded without an attorney to represent their voices in court. It is hard for them to understand why their abuser is assigned an attorney; the system has an attorney, but they have no one.

One of our major goals – through increased funding for our Children's Attorneys Project and by recruiting more area lawyers to join our Pro Bono Project – is that we will be able to provide a lawyer for every one of the 3,000 children in Clark County foster care. We were thrilled to have made great strides toward achieving this in 2011.

We were likewise impressed by the stellar work of our Domestic Violence and Consumer Rights projects, as well as with the Civil Law Self-Help Center at the Regional Justice Center, which marked its second full year of operations. All of our programs have achieved major milestones in the past year thanks to the tireless work of our dedicated staff. We look forward to sharing these with you in the following pages.

And as always, on behalf of the thousands of vulnerable residents who come through our doors, we extend our most sincere thanks. This work would not be possible without your ongoing support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Barbara Buckley".

Barbara Buckley  
Executive Director



# A CRITICAL COMMUNITY RESOURCE



# RIGHTING WRONGS, CHANGING LIVES

## LEGAL AID CENTER SERVICES

### AN OVERVIEW OF WHAT WE DO

#### Children's Attorneys Project

- Gives children in foster care a voice in court.
- Enforces a child's right and desire to have visitation with siblings.
- Assists low-income parents who are struggling with the school district to protect their children's special education rights.
- Recruits and trains volunteers who are willing to become educational surrogate parents for children with disabilities, ensuring schools are meeting disability-related needs.

#### Domestic Violence Project

- Represents victims and helps them obtain protective orders, divorce decrees and custody of their children.
- Helps victims who are living in domestic violence shelters by teaching them about their legal rights to live a life free of violence.
- Assists battered immigrants who are victims of crimes under the Violence Against Women Act and the criminal witness U-visa program.

#### Consumer Rights Project

- Works against fraudulent sales practices.
- Fights against abusive debt collection activities.
- Enforces car warranties so people don't pay for a service that they don't receive.
- Represents those who have lost jobs in bankruptcy court.
- Represents homeowners going through foreclosure.
- Represents people with disabilities who have been denied social security benefits.

#### Civil Law Self-Help Center

- Provides self-help information to those representing themselves in civil matters, including forms, instructions and in-person assistance.
- Functions as a legal emergency room for people struggling to navigate through the court system and trying to obtain accurate legal information.

#### Pro Bono Project

- Recruits private attorneys to represent clients in the areas of consumer fraud, domestic violence, child abuse, bankruptcy, family law and foreclosure.
- Trains volunteer attorneys in specialties of law outside their practice areas.
- Mentors volunteer attorneys who need assistance in areas of law outside of their usual practices.
- Manages Ask-A-Lawyer programs in family law, landlord/tenant and foreclosure, where unrepresented litigants can get expert legal advice from a practicing attorney.

#### Community Legal Education Project

Offers free weekly classes to members of the community in partnership with the UNLV William S. Boyd School of Law in the following areas:

- Divorce
- Custody
- Guardianship
- Small Claims
- Bankruptcy
- Foreclosure
- Spanish Classes Available in Family Law, Small Claims and Bankruptcy



## 2011 MILESTONES

### Civil Law Self-Help Center Celebrates Second Anniversary

The center opened its doors in December 2010 to serve as a legal emergency room for people in our community who are facing a legal issue and need professional advice to help them fill out the correct forms and file them with the court. In 2011, we served 45,000 individuals, a 45 percent increase over last year. We've been overwhelmed at the heartfelt thanks we've received in survey responses for providing knowledgeable, compassionate assistance. The courts have also seen a tremendous increase in the number of litigants who are prepared to go to court on their own.

### Free Community Legal Education Classes Reach Milestone

More than 4,200 people attended our free classes in divorce, custody, guardianship, small claims, bankruptcy and foreclosure during 2011, which brought us to over 45,000 served since the inception of this program.

### Long-term Funding Secured for Abused Children in Foster Care

It's been 12 years since the creation of the Children's Attorneys Project. Its goal has always been to ensure that every child has his or her own voice in court, but funding has only allowed us to represent half of the 3,000 children who need us. To make our case, we brought to bear some compelling testimony before the Nevada Legislature during the 2011 session. Several of our young clients volunteered to travel with us to Carson City and they asked the most basic question of legislators. If everyone else in the system has an attorney (the county and the abuser), why don't I deserve my own attorney? We also received support from volunteer lobbyists with R&R Partners, as well as prominent members of the legal community. The governor and the Nevada Legislature received our message, and in 2012, Clark County implemented a small recording fee so we will be closer than ever to our goal of having an attorney for every abused child in Clark County.

### Class Action Lawsuits Pushed Two Payday Lending Companies Out of Business

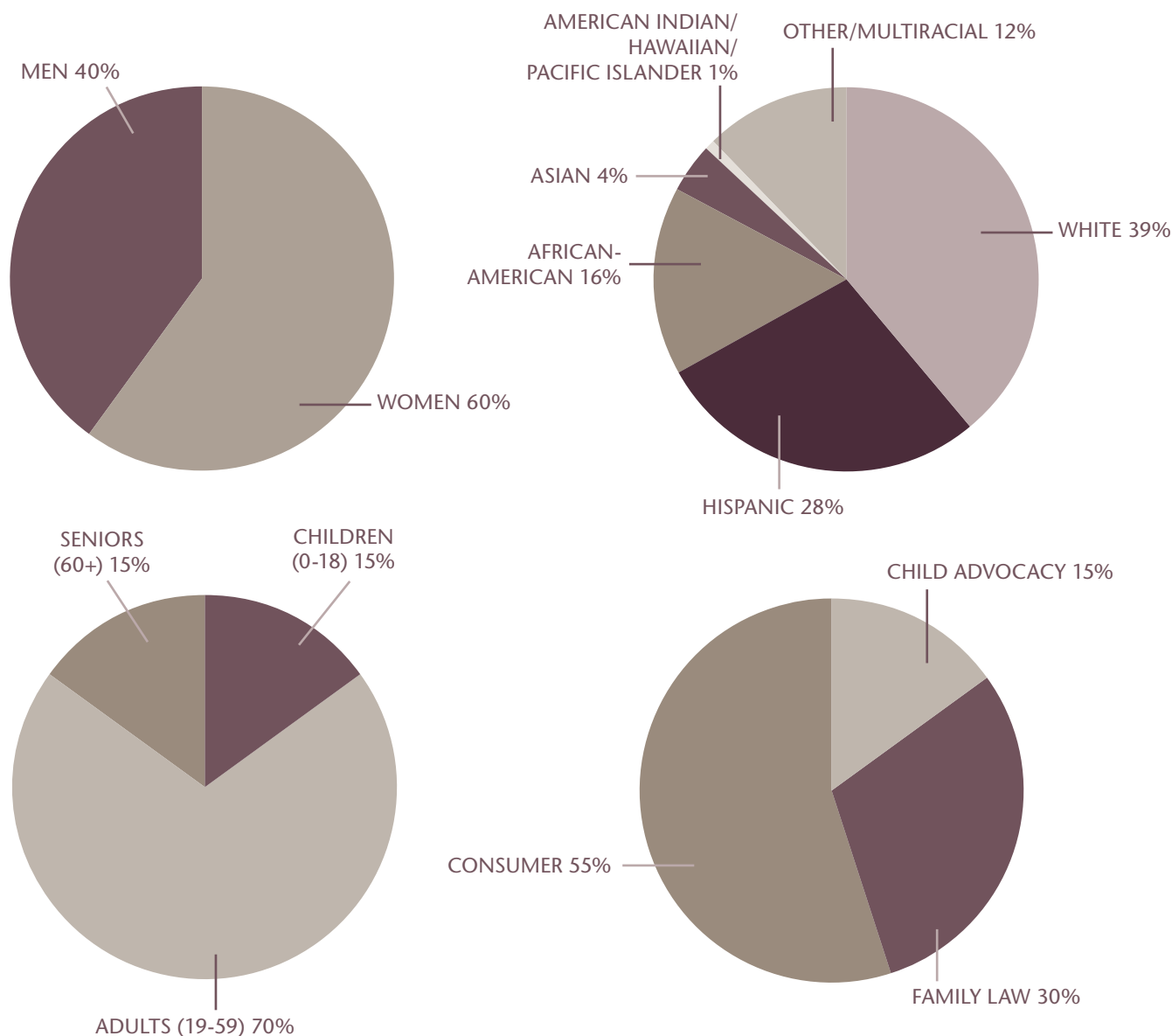
We have spent the last 10 years trying to clean up the payday lending industry by representing one client at a time, advocating for legislative changes to outlaw the worst practices by the biggest offenders, and calling on the Legislature to increase consumer protection. In spite of this work, we continued to see desperate clients being victimized by two major, local payday loan offenders. In response, we partnered with Kemp, Jones and Coulthard (as pro bono counsel) to file two class action lawsuits, which resulted in one company closing its doors and another filing for bankruptcy. By staying the course against abusive practices, we have helped prevent future predatory practices against the entire community.

### Special Education Program Expands Community Outreach

Our special education program advocates for special needs children in the Clark County School District. This program significantly increased its visibility in the past year through training workshops for education professionals and community partners. Instruction included Using the Law to Advocate for a Child with Disabilities and How to Incorporate the Common Core Standards in Your Child's IEP. Program staff also began distributing a monthly newsletter giving updated, practical advice for advocacy. By focusing on the fundamentals of special education law, as called for under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, these efforts have led to a significant increase in requests for Legal Aid Center services on behalf of special needs children.

## CLIENT STATISTICS

### CASE TYPES, ETHNICITY, GENDER



#### Stats at a Glance

- 5,137 people called in to the Legal Aid Center's hotlines (consumer, domestic violence, social security).
- 2,353 people were helped through Legal Aid Center's clinic programs, including the very popular Ask-A-Lawyer programs.
- 5,910 people were seen by Legal Aid Center staff and more than 2,698 people were represented with litigation services, including:
  - 1,485 children were represented through the Children's Attorneys Project.
  - 792 people were represented through the Domestic Violence Project.

## CLIENT SUCCESS STORIES



### Child Abuse and Neglect

Lucia was brought into the child welfare system as a result of her mother's drug use and lack of resources. When Lucia was 11, her mother had moved to another state and failed to appear at Lucia's termination of parental rights trial, causing her to lose her legal rights to play a role in the child's life. Lucia did not do well in foster care, however, and spent a year at a residential treatment center. Four years after losing her parental rights, the mother completed rehab in an out-of-state program, got married, obtained steady employment and secured stable housing. The possibility of returning to her mother's care made Lucia extremely happy, so at the age of 15, she made this request. We filed a petition to restore her mother's parental rights, which was granted by the court, and mother and child are reunited and doing well.



### Special Education

Phillip was attending fifth grade with a special education plan in the school district when he was accused of threatening a student with a penknife and expelled. As a result, he was not allowed to participate in any activities in this small community since most are related to the school district. We were asked to review his case by his grandmother. After reviewing the videotape of the incident, we discovered that the accusation was false. The Legal Aid Center filed a request for a due process hearing with the school district and with the assistance of the district attorney, Phillip was reinstated at school and has returned to the friendships and activities that he loves.



### Domestic Violence

Jennifer had endured years of abuse at the hands of her husband until, as is often the case, the situation became life-threatening. She applied for services at Legal Aid Center and we represented her in divorce proceedings while she lived in an undisclosed location. Just before her husband was arrested for attempted murder, he had tried to hide money in several bank accounts, claiming that they were penniless. Jennifer knew this was a lie and her Legal Aid Center attorney was able to get a judgment from the court to search for and release these accounts. The funds provided the financial security that she needed to rent an apartment and move on with her life. The imprisonment of her ex-husband ensures her safety in the community.



### Consumer

Elaine came to Legal Aid Center for assistance after being severely harassed by a collection agency for non-payment on a \$280 payday loan. She works for a national retailer but was struggling financially, so she took out this loan in 2009 to help make ends meet. The annual interest rate for the loan was 995 percent (a lawful interest rate in the State of Nevada) so this only added to her existing debt burden. The payday lender hired a debt collector who harassed Elaine, leaving fraudulent threats on her voice mail threatening to come to her job, have her arrested and have her driver's license suspended.



# RIGHTING WRONGS, CHANGING LIVES



## Immigration

Francesca, an immigrant from Brazil, suffered from 16 years of horrific domestic violence and finally got up the courage to leave her abusive husband. She approached Legal Aid Center for help and we filed a protection order, a divorce petition and custody action to ensure that she had primary physical custody of her four children. Her now ex-husband was granted only limited visitation once the protection order expired. Due to the serious nature of the abuse, she was asked to assist and testify in his prosecution. Under these circumstances, Legal Aid Center filed a U-visa application on behalf of her and her children, which was granted since they were all victims of crimes. Francesca and her children are now safe and living a life free of violence.



## Foreclosure

Anthony and Marta bought their home in 1999 and then refinanced it in 2007. Anthony worked in the culinary field for more than 40 years, but became disabled and had to stop working after a botched knee surgery. Marta is diabetic and almost completely blind. After unsuccessfully trying to get a loan modification under incredibly difficult personal and financial circumstances, Anthony and Marta came to Legal Aid Center for assistance. Even after a successful mediation was negotiated by Legal Aid Center in 2009, the bank still refused to honor the terms of the agreement. We then filed a Petition for Judicial Review and in 2011, this was found in their favor. Anthony and Marta were thrilled to be able to modify their loan and remain in their home.



## Social Security

Kayla is a 43-year-old woman who was born with severe cognitive mental disabilities. She lived with her father her entire life and never went to school past the fourth grade. She was, however, able to work at fast-food restaurants, but her employment never lasted. Kayla's father passed away many years ago and she relied on her father's friend to help her with housing and food. He also assisted her with her SSI (Supplemental Social Security Income) application once he could no longer support her. Kayla cannot read or write and attended her first social security hearing alone. The judge realized that she needed representation and referred her to Legal Aid Center. After requesting a cognitive examination, the court awarded Kayla SSI based on her cognitive disability as well as some physical impairments, including chronic knee pain, asthma and depression. Since receiving her benefits, Kayla is able to live independently and is extremely grateful for the assistance she received from Legal Aid Center.

Photos and names of clients have been changed to protect privacy.



# CELEBRATING OUR GROWTH HONORING OUR DONORS



ALL PHOTOS: BEAU STERLING, ESQ.

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--Martin Luther King Jr.

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THE DONOR WALL: HONORING MAJOR DONORS TO THE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN.

OPPOSITE PAGE: BUILDING RENDERING: THE FUTURE HOME OF LEGAL AID CENTER OF SOUTHERN NEVADA.

DONORS AND FRIENDS OF LEGAL AID CENTER

STANDING ROOM ONLY AT LEGAL AID CENTER GROUNDBREAKING



## EXPANDING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The Legal Aid Center's board of directors faced a crossroads in 2007. The demand for our services had reached critical mass, stretching our existing staff to the breaking point. Offices meant for one were holding two, requiring us to rent additional space in a nearby office building.

But the choice to grow held great promise. It meant expanded capacity to serve victims of domestic violence, consumer fraud, and abused and neglected children. It meant room to offer more free classes for the public in bankruptcy and foreclosure. It would also bring all infrastructure, services and staff under one roof.

The board of directors cast a unanimous vote to grow and we have never looked back.

We knew that it was critical to remain downtown, close to the courts and accessible to the bus lines. Meanwhile, the land adjacent to our existing building became available and the path was clear. Our old building will become the site of the center's future parking garage and the entire complex is expected to be completed by summer 2013.



(L TO R) BILL BOYD, EXECUTIVE CHRMN.,  
BOYD GAMING AND LEGAL AID CENTER CAPITAL  
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VISTA GROUP; JOHN WHITE, EXECUTIVE VICE  
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DEAN HARDY, ESQ., LEGAL AID CENTER  
BOARD PRESIDENT

# RIGHTING WRONGS, CHANGING LIVES

It bears repeating that its \$14 million Capital Campaign seemed like an insurmountable goal in 2008. With the economy in a nosedive, we could not have dreamed of raising enough to qualify for a loan, let alone 97 percent of the total cost. Moving in without a mortgage allows us to apply all funding sources directly to the vulnerable children, families, seniors and veterans in Southern Nevada who have nowhere else to turn.

We could not have accomplished this monumental achievement without the leadership of our Capital Campaign co-chairs Bill Boyd, CEO of Boyd Gaming and Dick Morgan, former dean of the William S. Boyd School of Law at UNLV and Legal Aid Center board member. We're also grateful for the work of its board members, staff, and benevolent public and private donors.

On October 10, 2011, we gathered to celebrate the groundbreaking and were joined by many of these individuals, as well as community and business leaders, and former Legal Aid Center clients. We filled 120 chairs and it was standing room only – a true testimony to the generosity and cohesiveness of Southern Nevada.



KRIS ENGELSTAD MCGARRY, TRUSTEE,  
ENGELSTAD FAMILY FOUNDATION



MAYOR CAROLYN GOODMAN, CITY OF LAS VEGAS;  
RAY NEWMILLER, MARTIN-HARRIS CONSTRUCTION



(L TO R) JOHN OCEGUERA, SPEAKER OF THE NEVADA  
LEGISLATURE; NEVADA SUPREME COURT JUSTICE  
MICHAEL DOUGLAS; DEAN HARDY, ESQ., LEGAL AID  
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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROJECT



# 11TH ANNUAL PRO BONO AWARDS LUNCHEON



(L TO R) NEVADA SUPREME COURT JUSTICES  
MICHAEL L. DOUGLAS; MICHAEL CHERRY; NANCY M.  
SAITTA; MARC GIBBONS; AND RON D. PARRAGUIRRE.



(L TO R) LEGAL AID CENTER STAFF: LYNN ETKINS,  
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR; BARBARA BUCKLEY,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR; AND MELANIE KUSHNIR,  
PRO BONO PROJECT DIRECTOR.

ALL PHOTOS: BEAU STERLING, ESQ.



# RIGHTING WRONGS, CHANGING LIVES

## 11TH ANNUAL PRO BONO AWARDS LUNCHEON

The continued increase in need for our services over the past several years reminds us yet again how fortunate we are to have the support of so many fine attorneys in the Southern Nevada legal community. Without their hard work and commitment to this cause, we would have to turn away thousands of our most vulnerable residents. Each year, our Annual Pro Bono Luncheon honors these local attorneys who, collectively, provided 16,000+ hours of free legal services to low-income residents of Clark County in 2011.

Pro Bono Attorney of the Year:

Lied Award for Most Hours for Law Firm:

Lied Award for Most Cases for Law Firm:

Lied Award for Most Hours for Attorney:

Lied Award for Most Cases for Attorney:

Justice Nancy Becker Pro Bono Award of Judicial Excellence:

Vince A. Consul Memorial Pro Bono Award:

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Ask-A-Lawyer Community Commitment Award:

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NEVADA SUPREME COURT JUSTICES JAMES HARDESTY AND MICHAEL DOUGLAS ACCEPT THE JUSTICE NANCY BECKER AWARD FROM BARBARA BUCKLEY AND NANCY BECKER.



MARJORIE GUYMON OF GOLDSMITH & GUYMON ACCEPTS THE PRO BONO ATTORNEY OF THE YEAR AWARD (ON BEHALF OF HERSELF AND DARA GOLDSMITH) FROM NEVADA SUPREME COURT JUSTICE NANCY SAITTA.

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NEVADA SUPREME COURT JUSTICE NANCY  
SAITTA ACCEPTS THE CHAMPION OF CHILDREN  
AWARD FROM BARBARA BUCKLEY.



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ACCEPTS THE ASK-A-LAWYER AWARD FROM  
NEVADA SUPREME COURT JUSTICE MICHAEL CHERRY.



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RICHARD GORDON OF SNELL & WILMER ACCEPTS THE MYRNA WILLIAMS AWARD FROM JUDGE FRANK SULLIVAN.



JENNIFER DORSEY, RANDALL JONES AND WILL KEMP OF KEMP, JONES & COULTHARD ACCEPT THE VINCE A. CONSUL AWARD FROM NEVADA SUPREME COURT JUSTICE MARK GIBBONS.



JESSICA PERLICK ACCEPTS THE LAW STUDENT AWARD FROM NEVADA SUPREME COURT JUSTICE KRISTINA PICKERING.

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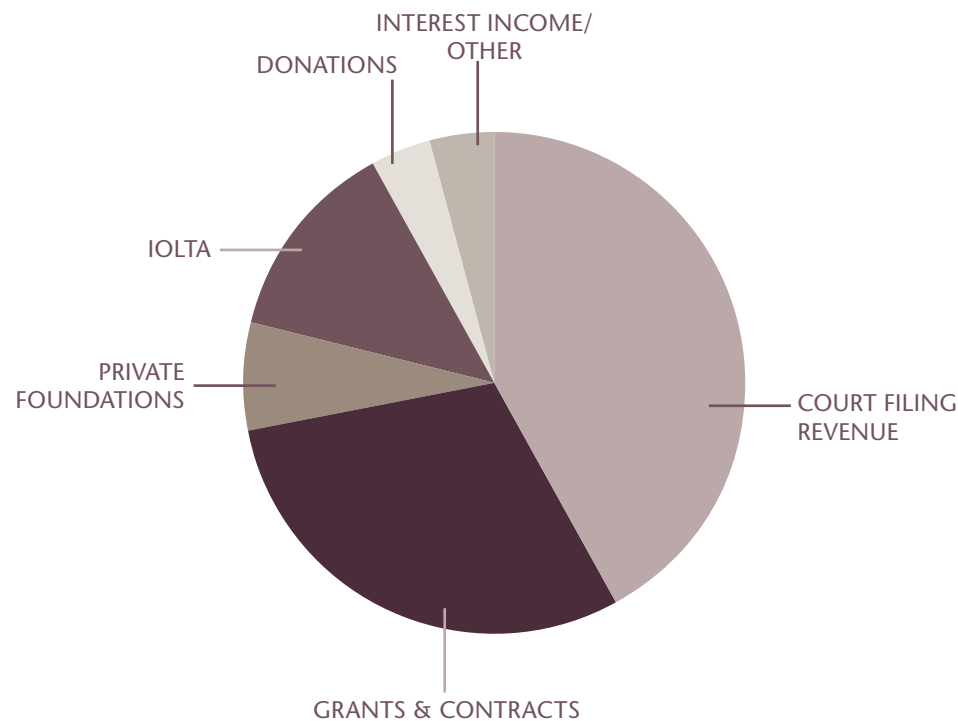
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## 2011 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

<b>Income</b>	<b>2011</b>
Court Filing Revenue	\$2,364,774
Grants & Contracts	\$2,018,377
Private Foundations	\$500,000
IOLTA	\$877,500
Donations	\$301,585
Interest Income/Other	\$307,868
Income Before Donated Services	\$6,370,104
(16,500 hrs at \$250/hr)      Donated Services	\$4,125,000
<b>Total Income &amp; Donated Services</b>	<b>\$10,495,104</b>

<b>Expenses</b>	
Personnel	
Salaries	\$3,659,049
Benefits	\$675,005
<b>Personnel Subtotal</b>	<b>\$4,334,053</b>
Non-Personnel	
Space & Utilities	\$403,511
Equipment Rental, Maintenance, IT	\$74,880
Supplies, Printing, Postage, General Office Related	\$140,462
Travel & Training	\$111,429
Dues & Fees	\$35,555
Litigation, Legal Research & Case Related Services	\$90,691
Grant Pass Through Funds	\$125,450
Contract Services	\$48,000
Community Outreach & Events	\$35,465
<b>Non-Personnel Subtotal</b>	<b>\$1,065,443</b>
<b>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$5,399,496</b>
<b>Expenses Before Donated Services</b>	
Donated Services	\$4,125,000
<b>Total Expenses &amp; Donated Services</b>	<b>\$9,524,496</b>
<b>NET OPERATIONS</b>	<b>\$970,608</b>



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