



Annual Report 2020

*Empowering the most
vulnerable members of
our community*

**COMMUNITY
LAW PROGRAM**
Working for Equal Access to Justice for All

TOGETHER, WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE

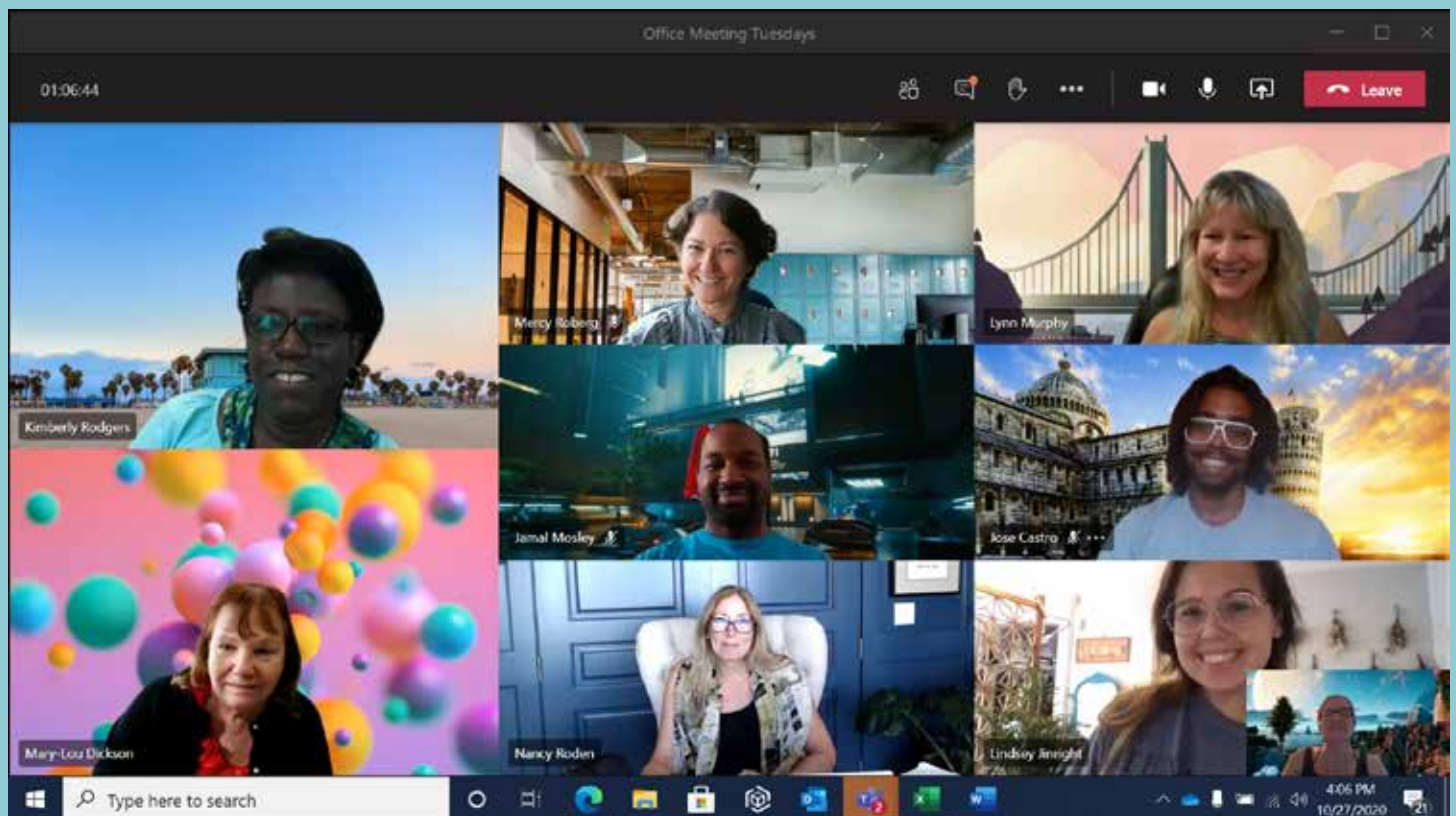


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History

Community Law Program, Inc. (CLP) was formed in 1989 by a small group of members of the St. Petersburg Bar Association concerned about the unmet civil legal needs of the poor in our community. Since then, CLP has blossomed into a 501©(3) non-profit corporation that offers an array of programs and services designed to ensure equal access to justice for all.

Over the years, we have helped thousands of poor and disadvantaged individuals, families, and social service organizations.

Our Charter

CLP is committed to the principle of providing access to justice for all.

As guardians of our legal system, we advocate for our clients on the basis that the law applies equally to all people regardless of income. We help people focus and provide them an opportunity for their voice to be heard. As navigators and translators of the legal system, we build confidence and hope. We listen and restore dignity where it has been beaten down. We empower families, young adults aging out of foster care, the elderly, veterans, the disabled, victims of domestic violence, and those who need our service.

Mission

CLP's mission is to empower the most vulnerable in our community through the provision of pro bono legal assistance and representation, education about legal rights and responsibilities, and community outreach.

Through advice clinics with our attorneys and direct representation, we pull away the curtain of confusion that many experiences in dealing with the legal system. We simplify the legal process, reducing the strain on the clerks and on our court system. Courts appreciate our ability to focus and educate our clients on what is to come. Through continued training and mentorship, our volunteer attorneys grow and enhance their skills. We assist other not-for-profit organizations by providing legal services.

Our sponsors, donors, and volunteers share our values in making a difference.

We positively impact lives and the quality of our community.

Leadership & Staff

Leadership

Kimberly Rodgers, Executive Director

Board of Trustees

V. James Dickson, Esq., President
Rachael Stanger, Esq., Vice President
Patty Robinson, Treasurer
Jovita Kravitz, Esq., Secretary
Ray Blackledge, JD, FIC
Worth T. Blackwell, Esq.
William G. Bostick, Jr., Esq.
Diane Emery
Nick Griffin, JD
John M. Hamilton III, Esq.
Linda Perrigoue
Scot Samis, Esq.
Ted Starr, Esq.
Arthurene Williams

Staff

Kimberly Rodgers, Esq., Executive Director
Mercy Roberg, Esq., Staff Attorney /
Director of Operations
Thomas McGowan, Esq., Staff Attorney
Nancy Roden, Esq., Staff Attorney
Dremma Curbeam, Esq., Staff Attorney
Mary-Lou Dickson, FRP, ACP, FCP,
Registered and Certified Paralegal
Chrystal Lunsford, FRP, ACP Registered
and Certified Paralegal/Advice
Clinic Coordinator
Brian Jones, Intake Specialist / Office Manager
Lindsey Jinright, Intake Specialist
Robin Burton, Legal Assistant
Aidan Browne, Intake Specialist



The background features a multi-story building with arched windows and balconies, partially obscured by several tall palm trees. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. The text is centered in the upper half of the image.

Board President's Message

To Our Shareholders

COMMUNITY LAW PROGRAM STOOD TALL IN 2020

Community Law Program (CLP) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization founded over 30 years ago by members of the St Petersburg Bar Association to provide free civil legal assistance to the most vulnerable members of our community. This includes families facing eviction, parents subject to domestic violence, teenagers transitioning out of foster care, veterans, and other underserved residents of Pinellas County who cannot afford an attorney. In order to serve these vulnerable members of our community, CLP relies on a small staff and local volunteer pro bono attorneys.

In 2020, the demands on CLP grew exponentially due to the impacts of Covid and the resulting overwhelming community need related to evictions, family law, and the many other legal problems that families were facing. By use of a boxing analogy, CLP successfully fought in a class far greater than its weight would suggest. With limited weight and resources, CLP fought in a series of heavyweight title matches.

An outstanding example of such service has been CLP's Pinellas Eviction Diversion Program, which launched in October of 2020. Despite the existence of eviction moratoria at first the state and then the federal level, eviction actions continued to be filed and proceed through the court system.



**PINELLAS EVICTION
DIVERSION PROGRAM**
A homeless prevention project of Community Law Program

To this end, CLP developed the Pinellas Eviction Diversion Program with CARES Act funding passed through the Pinellas Community Foundation. This program helped families financially impacted by the pandemic avoid eviction through early mediation combined with expedited access to funding for past due rental

payments to landlords, legal assistance and representation when cases were filed in court, and referrals to a community partner for housing navigation services when staying in one's current home was not a viable option. In just three short months, CLP's Pinellas Eviction Diversion Project helped nearly 200 families remain stably housed and/or avoid eviction, and the Program continues to impact hundreds more households into 2021.

Beyond rental disputes, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted virtually every facet of people's lives. Another sobering result of the economic strain faced by families throughout our community is the rise in domestic violence and related family law disputes. In 2020, CLP saw a dramatic increase in requests for help from residents seeking injunctions for protection and help obtaining or enforcing child support and custody of minor children, born principally out of a concern about the safety of their children as a result of the pandemic.

In Pinellas County, nearly 120,000 residents, live at or below the poverty line. Over 300,000 residents—almost a third of this County's population are within 200% of the poverty line that serves as CLP's guideline for assistance. With such populations, the need for legal assistance for the financially vulnerable far exceeds available resources.

As a member of the founding Board of Trustees in 1989, I have a clear memory of the limited focus of the original organization's services. After a period of absence from the Board, I returned about ten years ago and have been proud to serve as Board President for the past six years. In that time, I have been humbled to see all that that CLP staff and pro bono volunteers are now able to accomplish. In 2020, CLP certainly stood tall.



V. James Dickson, Esq.
CLP BOARD PRESIDENT

Executive Director's Message

One of the Worst Years in Recent History Turned Out to be One of the Best Years for Services to Our Community

As a result of the pandemic, countless households were hit with job loss or a reduction in pay, disruption of work due to school closings, not to mention the physical & emotional loss of loved ones. Some families experienced these hardships for the first time, due to no fault of their own. One silver lining of it all for us was that, out of such unprecedented suffering and challenge, Community Law Program rose to the occasion to once again help so many people in our community who otherwise might not have fared well navigating the judicial system alone.

Since our organization's inception over thirty years ago, our in-person free legal advice sessions called "clinics" have been the hallmark of our service delivery strategy. When the pandemic hit, and we were forced to close our doors to the public, with the help of funding from the Tampa Bay Resiliency Fund, we quickly and successfully transformed our entire operations, including our advice clinics, to virtual settings. As a result, we were able to continue offering a full range of advice clinics covering areas of the law that were of greatest need within our community. With the help of many volunteer attorneys who also stepped up during this time, we remained able to provide a level playing field in court proceedings when the stakes were high.

With funding from the Florida Bar Foundation's Engle Grant Program, we were able to represent nearly 70 vulnerable residents in high stakes family law proceedings.

We were also able to create and release several videos that also educated the general public about



Kimberly Rodgers
CLP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

COVID-19 related rights and responsibilities and about landlord-tenant law.

In addition, when the suspension of in-person court proceedings brought an end to a pilot eviction mediation program that Community Law Program was instrumental in helping our local judiciary launch, CLP took the bold step of leading a group of community stakeholders in the launch of a holistic program called the Pinellas Eviction Diversion Program ("PEDP"). This program focused on combating homelessness caused by eviction using innovative and collaborative strategies. The strategies included encouraging landlords and tenants to participate in mediation in a virtual setting as an alternate means of dispute resolution, facilitating expedited access to rental assistance dollars provided by a local community partner, and facilitating referrals to the Homeless Leadership Alliance of Pinellas, Inc. for housing navigation when remaining in the same rental was not an option. We launched this program in October of 2020 with financial support from the Pinellas Community Foundation's CARES Nonprofit Partnership Fund.

In just three short months, PEDP had prevented homelessness for nearly 200 households facing eviction, as well as helped both tenants and landlords access nearly \$500,000.00 in rental assistance dollars.

Responding to emerging legal needs was also a motivation behind our Amendment Four Project. After the Florida Legislature passed a law that frustrated the will of two-thirds of Floridians to restore voting rights to former felons, CLP responded by once again collaborating with others,

including Stetson University College of Law and Florida Rights Restoration Coalition to inform and help returning citizens in Pinellas County navigate court records to figure out if they were eligible to vote and to help those who were ineligible due to fines and fees get on a pathway to becoming eligible. With funding from the American Bar Endowment's Opportunity Grant, we employed four law students from Stetson as fellows who helped us implement this project, which included starting a new periodic virtual advice clinic to address this issue as well as to help with sealing and expungement of criminal records and driver's license suspension. By the end of October of 2020, we had helped over 500 Pinellas County residents through this project.

Although we did not host a fundraising event in 2020, this year ended up being one of the best years for our organization in terms of the expansion of our services and their impact within our community, the growth & diversity of our staff, and our increased utilization of technology to enhance our operations and improve efficiencies.



**PINELLAS EVICTION
DIVERSION PROGRAM**
A homeless prevention project of Community Law Program

Many Thanks to our 2020 Volunteers

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and staff, we would like to extend a special “thank you” to our dedicated panel of volunteer attorneys who collectively donated 2,164.3 hours for a total in-kind contribution of \$541,075 in pro bono legal services in 2020.

In addition to these volunteers, we would like to give special recognition to our 2020 Lapel Pin Recipients. Each of these attorneys fulfilled and/or surpassed The Florida Bar’s annual aspirational pro bono obligation of donating at least 20 hours to providing pro bono legal services based upon completed and reported cases during the calendar year of 2019.

2020 Lapel Pin Recipients

Aaron Binns	Callie Krueger
David Blum	Hieu Le
Russell Boring	Lawrence Markell
W. G. (Bill) Bostick, Jr.	Emmanuella Obiabo
Brian Calciano	Scott Orsini
Kenneth Case	David Peek
Russell Cheatham III	Rocky Rinker
Kathryn Christian	Allyson Smith
Gerald Davis	Rachael Stanger
James Devito	Jennifer Terrana
V. James Dickson	John Tucker
Davina Eads	John Tuthill
Kathleen “Katie” Engelman	Laurie Valentine
Kristina Feher	Danielle Vaughn
Christopher Fordham	
Sherri Freeman- Novoa	
Brooks Gentry	
Hans Haahr	
John Hamilton III	
Jovita Kravitz	
William Joseph Kopp, Jr.	



2020 Volunteer Attorneys

Elizabeth Barnes
 Erin Barnett
 Denise Bertilucci
 Colleen Carson Beinhauer
 Jamie Bigayer
 Linda Brathwaite
 Kevin Brennan
 Veronica Burianek
 Gentry Byrnes
 Daniela Carrion
 Sarah Chaves
 Sandra Diamond
 Rachel Drude-Tomori
 Brandon Fortuno
 Anne Freeman
 Christopher Furlong
 Oxalis Garcia
 Patrick Halpin
 Autumn Hancock
 Lynn Hanshaw
 Jessica Hatthaway

Susan Helms
 Lisa Hoppe
 Dawn Hunter
 Melissa Jagger
 Nat Kidder
 Jessica Krammer
 Stephanie Libbey
 Jeffrey Lowe
 Danielle Lucius
 William Lucius
 Andrew Maurin
 Andrew McDannold
 Sara McLane
 Krissia Mendez
 Steven Moore
 Rachel Oliver
 John Paul Ovidia
 Danielle Pass
 Lisa Pach
 Amber Patwell
 Michael Porter

Crystal Potts
 Patrick Quarles
 George Rahdert
 C. Hunter Rawls
 Bobby Reynolds
 Mercy Roberg
 Amber Robinson
 Zilya Ruga
 Scot Samis
 Sean Saval
 Todd Scholl
 Sanatosha Sewar
 Rebecca Shaffer
 Lauren Shandler
 Murray Silverstein
 Watson Sinden
 Ryan Singleton
 Jesse Skipper
 William Slicker
 Erica Smith
 Harrison Standley

Ted Starr
 Traci Stevenson
 Alicia Taylor
 Petia Tenney
 John Thacker
 James Thaler
 Skyler Tretis
 Frank "Skip"
 Tylman, Jr.
 Kit Van Pelt
 Janelle Weber
 Erin Woolumns
 James Zanecki

Many Thanks to our 2020 Donors

Philanthropic support plays a critical role in ensuring that our community's most vulnerable have equal access to justice. On behalf of the hundreds of residents served by our organization in 2020, we thank the many charitable law firms, organizations, and individuals whose financial gifts provide significant program support.

Platinum Legacy of Justice

American Bar Endowment
American College of Bankruptcy Foundation
Elaine Jerrold
Pinellas Community Foundation
Tampa Bay Resiliency Fund
The Florida Bar Foundation
Traub Lieberman Straus & Shrewsberry LLP

Circle of Justice

Adams and Reese LLP
Scott Bitterli
Directed Capital
Greene & Greene
Michael Kiernan
Kiwanis Club of St. Petersburg, Boys and Girls
Committee
Patricia Robinson
Scot & Keela Samis

Justice Champion

Commercial Electric Contracting, Inc.
Robert Kaleel
Kravitz Law Group, P.A.
Paralegal Association of Florida, Pinellas
Chapter

Justice Advocate

Kira Doyle
Ross Felsher
John Karvonen
Kimberly Limer
Dennis Palso
Marilyn Polson
John Schnackel
Abigail Stanton

Friend of Justice

Beth Coleman
V. James & Mary-Lou Dickson
Diamond Law Firm
Doyle Wealth Management
Florida Women's Half Century
Softball League
Nicholas Lang
William McQueen
Kristen Mory
James Moss
Jennifer Neubauer
Perenich Law, PL
David Seth Walker
John Wolfe

Supporter

Howard Acosta
Nina Berkheiser
Raymond Blackledge
David Blum
Gentry Byrnes
Michael Cahill
Sarah Chaves
Harvey Cohen
Kathryn Cown
Jack Day
Jack Davani
Terrence Deeb
Sherry Duffy
Bill England
Luanne Ferguson
James R. Freeman
Dana Greenbaum
Ronald Gregory
William J. Hornbeck, II
Mattaniah Jahn
Karen Keaton
Neil Kiefer
Jovita Kravitz
Joseph Lang
Kevin Maller
Leonard McCue
Troy McRichie
Leonard Melrose
Timothy Miller
John Mrosek
Stewart Olson
Alexander Peterson



Linda Perrigoue
Lindsey Porter
Peyton Pruitt
Linda Ramirez
Suzanne Reiber
Kimberly Rodgers
Frank Santiago
Robert Sharbaugh
Craig Taraski
James Thaler
Shirin Vesely
William Walker
Brandon Williams

Case for Support

In a democratic society, legal representation helps ensure access to justice. Today, the mechanisms necessary to resolve disputes in our legal system have become exceedingly costly. Many individuals cannot afford the legal representation they need.

Nearly 120,000 people in Pinellas County (12.5% of our population) live below the poverty level. Of this percentage, the vast majority are women and children (28.9% of households headed by single women are poor). Working 40 hours a week at minimum wage in 2020, you could earn \$1,484 a month. The average rent for a single parent and 2 children was approximately \$1220, based on HUD Market Statistics in Pinellas County. That leaves these families with \$260 a month to pay for food, childcare, transportation, and healthcare.

Imagine having to make these kinds of choices:

- Feeding your children or hiring an attorney to help collect child support from a parent who abandoned the family years ago.
- Keeping a roof over your children's heads or hiring an attorney to help you and your children escape an abusive relationship.
- Scraping up money to help you and your children relocate because your landlord won't make needed repairs or paying for an attorney to help advise you of your rights and responsibilities.

Any kind of legal dispute can be catastrophic for these families!

Community Law Program works to ensure that everyone in our community regardless of financial circumstances has Access to Justice Programs and services in 2020 included:

Program Summary

Legal Advice Clinics – CLP operated approximately 15 free legal advice clinics each month to advise residents about their legal rights and responsibilities and helped them complete forms so they could represent themselves. Once the pandemic hit in March, all clinic operations transitioned to virtual.

These free advice clinics covered the following substantive law areas:

- Family Law
- Probate
- Bankruptcy
- Housing
- General Civil

Legal Representation Program – CLP provided full representation to clients with additional challenges or particularly complex or unique legal issues in the areas of family law, bankruptcy, probate, and housing.

Family Law Litigation Project – CLP provided full representation to residents involved in high conflict family law proceedings wherein the other party was represented by counsel in an effort to provide a level playing field when stakes are high.

Justice for Families Project – CLP provided representation to survivors of domestic violence at injunctions for protection hearings and provide free counsel and advice to petitioners seeking injunctions for protection at domestic violence court.

Pinellas Eviction Diversion Program – In collaboration with other organizations, CLP provided virtual mediation services to tenants impacted by COVID-19 and their landlords, free legal services to tenants, expedited access to rental assistance dollars, and referrals for housing navigation services

Information and Referral – CLP gave residents and clients procedural information and referrals to other valuable community resources.

Community Counsel Program – CLP matched qualified nonprofit organizations needing transactional legal services with volunteer business attorneys.

Lawyers for Young Adults Project – CLP provided a full range of free legal services to young adults formerly in foster care relying primarily on volunteer attorneys.

Self Help Center – In collaboration with the Pinellas County Clerk of Court, the Sixth Judicial Circuit, and the Clearwater Bar Association, CLP provided procedural information to pro se litigants in the areas of family law, landlord-tenant, and small claims at a reduced cost of \$1 per minute in 15 minute increments.

Amendment Four Project – CLP provided free legal assistance to returning citizens seeking to find out if they were eligible to vote, as well as, to Pinellas County residents seeking to re-instate their driver's license and/or to seal or expunge a criminal record.

Community Education Program – CLP participated in community events aimed at educating the general public about legal rights and responsibilities and produced a number of videos and written materials on various legal topics, many of which related to COVID-19.



Legal Assistance Case Studies

In 2020, Community Law Program provided free legal assistance to 1,242 unduplicated low-income individuals, families, and nonprofit organizations through utilizing a combination of legal advice clinics and individual representation. Through this legal assistance, we helped our clients recover \$1,906,374 in financial benefits. We provided legal information and referrals to other community resources to approximately 930 additional individuals. Although we helped fewer people than in prior years, the level of assistance that we provided to each client in 2020 was much greater than in prior years. In nearly 33% of our closed cases (as opposed to 13.4% in 2019), we provided extended (i.e., full representation either in court or through negotiated settlements pre-suit) as opposed to merely advice and counsel and limited services. This per All of these services were provided on a modest cash budget of a little over \$667,000, a staff of 14 (7 of whom came on board as a direct result of the launch of our Pinellas Eviction Diversion Program), and a panel of 101 volunteer attorneys who actively participated and who collectively donated 2,164.3 hours for a total in-kind contribution of \$541,075.

Here are just a few examples of the clients helped by Community Law Program in 2020:

Case 1

Ed lived in a mobile home park with his elderly mother, whom he helped take care of, and his fiancée, Jane. Ed's mom, Linda, passed away from what they suspect was COVID-19. Ed's mother owned the mobile home, but paid lot rent. Ed and his fiancée reached out to us seeking help with transferring the mobile home into his name. We were able to find a volunteer attorney to assist them with the probate matter. Soon thereafter, Ed received notice from the mobile home park management that he and Jane were in violation of the park rules because they were living in a 55+ community. Our part-time landlord tenant staff attorney working in conjunction with the probate volunteer attorney was able to stave off an eviction action while the volunteer attorney got the mobile home transferred into Ed's name and helped them find a realtor. Ed & Jane were able to sell the mobile home and use the proceeds to find another place to live, thereby avoiding eviction.



Case 2

This is a story about 11 tenants and their apartment complex. We had one tenant, Ebony, initially come to CLP's PEDP for rental assistance and mediation. Ebony, but we initially had trouble reaching the property manager and then convincing them to agree to mediation. The property manager was ready to turn Ebony's case over to its legal department to start eviction proceedings. Finally, the manager agreed to give mediation a try. The apartment complex was so impressed with the process, that the apartment complex became our biggest cheerleader. Soon, tenants from this apartment complex began calling in, qualifying and attending mediations. We helped 11 tenants avoid eviction from one apartment complex and we are still helping tenants into 2021. This was exactly the result PEDP was looking for; eviction avoidance, preventing homelessness and matching tenants and landlords with available financial assistance during the COVID pandemic.



Case 3

Andrea came to us in literal financial and emotional ruin. She had been a long term "stay at home" wife and mother, and had suffered years of emotional abuse that left her with little to no self-esteem. She came to us after she had filed for divorce pro se and when her husband responded with a counter-petition and was represented by an attorney from one of the most aggressive family law firms in our area. Our first ever full-time family law staff attorney had to spend many hours disabusing her of the notion that her husband would not be required to give her anything in the divorce and would take her child. In addition, the marital home was under foreclosure at the time, so she was also facing homelessness. Through the efforts of our staff attorney, the parties were able to resolve this divorce through mediation, and as a result, she was awarded majority timesharing with her son, child support, a lump sum recovery of \$53,183.00 which came from the proceeds of the sale of the marital home prior to foreclosure, and the husband's IRA through the issuance of a QDRO. Additionally, she will receive permanent alimony until she dies or remarries, or the husband turns 66. This woman & her child are light years above where they started as a result of our Family Law Litigation Project, and we would not have been able to effectively navigate such an involved case had we not had such an experienced family law attorney on our staff, which was made possible by The Florida Bar Foundation's Engle Grant Program.



Financials

Statement of Activities for Year ended December 31, 2020
With Summarized Financial Information as of December 31, 2019

	2020	2019
Revenue and other support:		
Grant and contract revenue (Note 5)	\$ 577,069	379,335
In-kind donations	557,470	543,877
Donations	28,460	31,496
Special events, net of direct expenses of \$17,301	—	13,875
Dues	3,200	100
Interest	689	1,646
Fundraisers	250	2,941
Trainings	—	688
Forgiveness of debt	58,000	—
Other	162	2,704
Net assets released from restrictions:	—	—
Expiration of time/use restrictions	—	—
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total revenue and other support	1,225,300	976,662
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Expenses:		
Program expenses	1,169,196	895,776
Supporting services:		
Management and general	46,729	39,345
Fundraising	7,694	13,045
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total supporting services	54,423	52,390
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total expenses	1,223,619	948,166
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Change in net assets	1,681	28,496
Net assets at beginning of year	135,659	107,163
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Net assets at end of year	137,340	135,659
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