



# VOLUNTEER LAWYERS FOR THE POOR FOUNDATION

## 2016 ANNUAL REPORT



### VLP Introduces New Initiative

**2016** was a productive year for the Volunteer Lawyers Project. We were able to resolve issues for 2,665 low-income individuals and families in our community, helping them to regain economic and family stability. 369 VLP attorneys closed 1,408 cases, which represented \$1,188,540 and 8,804 hours of in-kind services. Many thanks to all of our colleagues who donated their expertise and time.

#### Family Law Focus Expands

The VLP expanded its Family Law programs by introducing a new clinic, by continuing its effective Family Law Mentoring Program for a fourth year, in partnership with Legal Aid and the Hamilton County Domestic Relations Court, and by continuing to conduct divorce clinics. Our innovative Family Law clinic was introduced midyear, in partnership with Hamilton County Domestic Relations Court, Legal Aid, and the Hamilton County Law Library. We are pleased to feature it in this report.

The fourth class of eight Family Law mentees completed their year-long Mentoring Program in May. The new mentees accepted 34 new divorce cases. To date, 27 private attorneys new to family law practice have benefited from the mentoring program and have accepted 106 VLP cases.

VLP attorneys, law students, and Legal Aid staff conducted 43 uncontested divorce clinics in six counties, assisting 344 clients. 43 volunteer attorneys participated in the divorce clinics, supervising the two law students, giving them guidance, and enabling clients to obtain divorces and move forward with their lives.

The VLP continued to offer Wills/Advance Directive clinics throughout the year. We also conducted a clinic off-site at the Community Action Agency. 25 private attorneys and 4 law students volunteered for 5 clinics, preparing wills and advance directives for 44 clients.

We thank the law firms, Bar Associations, corporations and individuals who supported the VLP financially. Without your generosity, we would not have the resources to assist our low-income clients. We also acknowledge the financial support from the Cincinnati Bar Association, our partner in producing and distributing this Report, and the Cincinnati Bar Foundation, which underwrites our volunteer recruitment efforts. And, of course, none of this work could be done without the significant in-kind support the VLP receives from Legal Aid.



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Join Us October 25 to  
Celebrate the VLP's 35th  
Anniversary!

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## VLP Partners Create Innovative Approach to Family Law

Over the past several years, the Hamilton County Domestic Relations Court found that a growing number of low-income people were filing pro se. In 2016, 461 people who filed their own cases for divorce qualified for indigency fee waivers. As a result, the volume of cases was straining the court's ability to provide fair and efficient outcomes as well as slowing the process for everyone else.



VLP attorney Alex Van Der Zee volunteering at the clinic.

The Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP), Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati, Hamilton County Domestic Relations Court and the Hamilton County Law Library partnered to create the Family Law clinic to provide limited legal advice, information, and guidance for those who cannot afford to hire an attorney, and want to pursue a divorce case on their own.

The clinic was introduced in June 2016 and is open, Tuesdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Room 2-68 at the Hamilton County Domestic Relations Court.

The clinic is staffed by UC law students who screen for income eligibility, and volunteer attorneys who provide brief consultations when legal advice is needed. All clinic volunteers are trained to identify and refer cases to Legal Aid for help with matters that Legal Aid can handle.

Anne Lucas, VLP Managing Attorney remarked, "We appreciate the responsiveness of current VLP attorneys and are very pleased that the clinic has also attracted attorneys new to the Volunteer Lawyers Project. We couldn't do this work without their enthusiastic willingness to help! The demand for the clinic's services is strong, so we can use more volunteer attorneys." 64 attorneys have volunteered at the clinic, assisting over 600 clients to date.

Thank you to all the attorneys who have volunteered at the clinic. If you'd like to volunteer, please sign up at <http://vlpcincinnati.org/become-a-volunteer/vlp-registration-forms/> or email Anne Lucas at: [alucas@lascinti.org](mailto:alucas@lascinti.org).

## P.J. Minnillo Named 2016 Volunteer Lawyer of the Year!

Congratulations to Paul J. (P.J.) Minnillo who received the 2016 Volunteer Lawyer of the Year Award from the Volunteer Lawyers for the Poor Foundation! The award was presented at the April Cincinnati Bar Association annual meeting.

P.J. specializes in bankruptcy law, representing individuals, families and small businesses in Chapter 7, Chapter 11, and Chapter 13 cases. He began accepting VLP cases when he joined the Ohio bar and has taken 55 cases since 1995.

One case is particularly representative of P.J.'s efforts. The client, a man with disabilities, was unable to work. However, he was still burdened with an onerous debt from a large student loan. He had made several unsuccessful attempts to get a waiver from the Department of Education. P.J. took the case. As a result of his legal assistance, the court ruled it would be an undue hardship for the client to repay the loan, and he was released from his student loan obligation.

P.J.'s dedication to helping clients is inspiring. The VLP is pleased to name Paul J. Minnillo our 2016 Volunteer Lawyer of the Year.



# STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS	2016	2015
Cash & Cash Equivalents	288,545	307,507
Accounts Receivable	8,000	2,250
Prepaid Expense & Other	1,958	1,417
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>298,533</b>	<b>311,174</b>

Liabilities & Net Assets		
Liabilities		
Accounts Payable	36,341	44,826
Unrestricted Net Assets	262,192	266,348
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b>298,522</b>	<b>311,174</b>

Revenue and Support		
In-Kind Services	1,502,845	1,683,859
Contributions		
Individuals	41,007	46,115
Firms	68,121	61,900
Other Organizations	13,661	6,500
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>1,625,634</b>	<b>1,798,374</b>

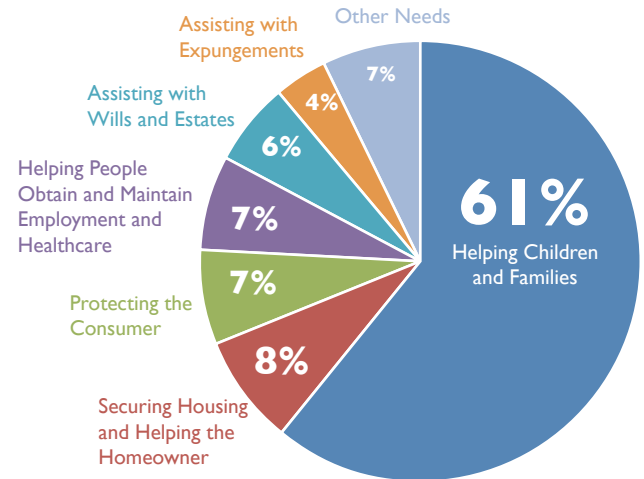
Expenses		
Legal Services	1,565,655	1,741,457
Management & General	56,750	34,109
Fundraising	7,385	9,609
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>1,629,790</b>	<b>1,785,175</b>

<b>Change in net assets</b>	<b>(4,156)</b>	<b>13,199</b>
<b>Net assets, beginning of year</b>	<b>266,348</b>	<b>253,149</b>
<b>Net assets, end of year</b>	<b>262,192</b>	<b>266,348</b>

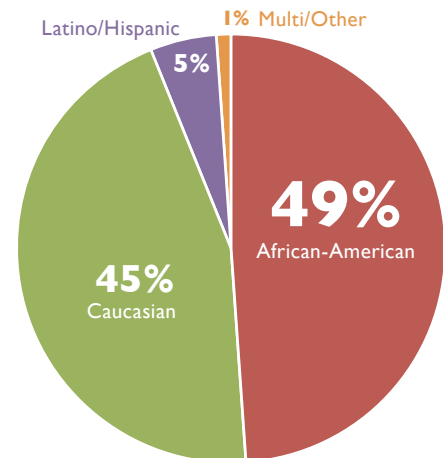
The Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati provides the Foundation with personnel to perform administrative functions and certain other non-reimbursed expenses. These services and expenses are valued at the cost to the Legal Aid Society and are included in the financial statements. Total services and expenses provided by the Society were approximately \$336,000 in 2016. The value of the legal services donated by lawyers on a volunteer or reduced fee basis is included as contributed services at rates estimated to be what the Foundation would have been required to pay for additional outside services. Donated hours by lawyers in 2016 approximated 8,804 hours valued at approximately \$135 per hour for a total of \$1,188,540. A full financial statement is available by calling (513) 362-2804.

# VLP Clients

## Type of Legal Service Provided



## Ethnicity



## Volunteer Lawyers Project Partners

- Brown County Bar Association
- Butler County Bar Association
- Cincinnati Bar Association
- Clermont County Bar Association
- Clinton County Bar Association
- Highland County Bar Association
- Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati
- Warren County Bar Association

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## Volunteer Lawyers for the Poor Foundation

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The Volunteer Lawyers for the Poor Foundation was founded in 1982 by the Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati and the Cincinnati Bar Association. This VLP Annual Report has been produced in cooperation with the Cincinnati Bar Association.