



# VOLUNTEER LAWYERS FOR THE POOR FOUNDATION

## 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

### VLP Introduces New Managing Attorney and New Partnership

The VLP had an exciting and productive 2015. We welcomed a new Managing Attorney, added new *pro bono* attorneys, honored Nancy Brewer as the VLP Lawyer of the Year, and introduced a new *Pro Bono* Bankruptcy Program.



Eric K. Combs  
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Catherine L. Evans  
President

### New Managing Attorney Named



We are delighted to introduce our new Managing Attorney of the Volunteer Lawyers Project, Anne E. Lucas. For those of you who don't know Anne, she joined Legal Aid in August 2007, practicing in the areas of family, immigration, and education law, and representing children in abuse and neglect cases. She is a 2002 graduate of the University of Cincinnati College of Law,

where she completed the joint law and Women's Studies Master degree program. After completing her studies, Anne moved to Connecticut and worked as a Staff Attorney for Connecticut Legal Services. She also worked as a court mediator for the Connecticut Judicial Department before her return to Cincinnati. Welcome, Anne!

### VLP Lawyer of the Year



Nancy Brewer was honored with the VLP Lawyer of the Year Award at the April CBA Annual Meeting. Nancy began her law career after raising four children and is now a solo practitioner who specializes in employment discrimination. Since her 2010 relocation to Cincinnati, Nancy has accepted 34 case referrals in the areas of divorce, custody, consumer and unemployment compensation.

Nancy's successes are extraordinary, reflecting her hard work and commitment both to *pro bono* work and to her clients. We congratulate you, Nancy.

### Key Updates

Thank you to the 50 new attorneys who signed up to take case referrals from the VLP. In total, 376 attorneys represented clients in almost 1,300 cases. *Pro bono* attorneys donated 10,478 hours valued at \$1.4 million. Most importantly, VLP attorneys made a positive impact for our clients.

The VLP also continued to support the Low Income Taxpayer Clinic (LITC), introduced in the last year in partnership with Legal Aid. Thirty-one lawyers volunteered to take tax cases, and accepted 13 case referrals to assist low-income individuals resolve disputes with the IRS.

### New Bankruptcy Initiative Introduced

The VLP partnered with the U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Southern District of Ohio, the Bankruptcy Committee of the Cincinnati Bar Association and Legal Aid to introduce our new Bankruptcy Initiative. Overwhelming debt burdens weigh heavily on low-income consumers, especially those attempting to re-enter the workforce, looking for affordable housing, or facing medical debts. Our program focuses resources on those low-income consumers who are trying to get back on their feet, but are hindered by crushing debt, need bankruptcy advice, but can't afford an attorney. As a result of the VLP's expanded bankruptcy program, volunteer attorneys accepted 34 cases in the first six months of 2016.

We are grateful to everyone who contributed or volunteered in 2015. Your support is the fuel that enables us to continue to assist those in need in our community. In particular, we thank the Cincinnati Bar Association with whom we produce and distribute this report, and the Cincinnati Bar Foundation which sponsors volunteer recruitment.

As our terms come to a close, we thank you for the privilege of serving as the Chairman and President of the VLPF. In closing, we encourage you, our fellow attorneys, to register for the VLP. It is easy to sign up. Just go to [www.vlpcincinnati.org](http://www.vlpcincinnati.org) and click on Volunteer. We believe you will find it to be an incredibly rewarding experience.

# Bankruptcy Initiative *Reception*

The VLP kicked off our *pro bono* Bankruptcy Initiative with a reception for the Bankruptcy Bar during Celebrate *Pro Bono* week. At this October event, sponsored by Taft Stettinius & Hollister, Judge Jeffery P. Hopkins, Judge Beth Buchanan, and Brian Flick, Esq. spoke to the assembled practitioners. Judge Hopkins noted, “attorneys should consider taking bankruptcy cases through the VLP...it is an excellent training

ground, a chance to practice in federal court, satisfies a *pro bono* service requirement, and is extremely helpful to the community and court.”



Anne Lucas, P.J. Minnillo, Molly Russell, and Elizabeth Tull Laureano



Tim Miller and VLPF chairman, Eric Combs



Former VLP managing attorney, Virginia Conlan Whitman and Judge Jeffery Hopkins

## *Debt's Human Impact*

One client story illustrates the problems that can arise from the burden of onerous debt. Ms. Smith\* is a single mother trying to raise two teenage daughters. She is also a veteran having served in the military from 1979-1982. Ms. Smith has since become disabled. She and her girls were trying to get by on disability income alone. Ms. Smith was unable to keep up with her bills. Consequently, she was not able to obtain utility services. Ms. Smith was seeking a fresh start to provide a home for her family when she came to Legal Aid and the VLP for assistance. The VLP secured a private attorney to take Ms. Smith's case and file a Chapter 7 Bankruptcy. The VLP attorney was able to secure a discharge of all Ms. Smith's debt. After the bankruptcy, Ms. Smith reports she is able to take care of her girls. “I am very grateful to my attorney,” she said. “She was extremely helpful, kind and professional.”

\* The name has been changed to protect our client's privacy

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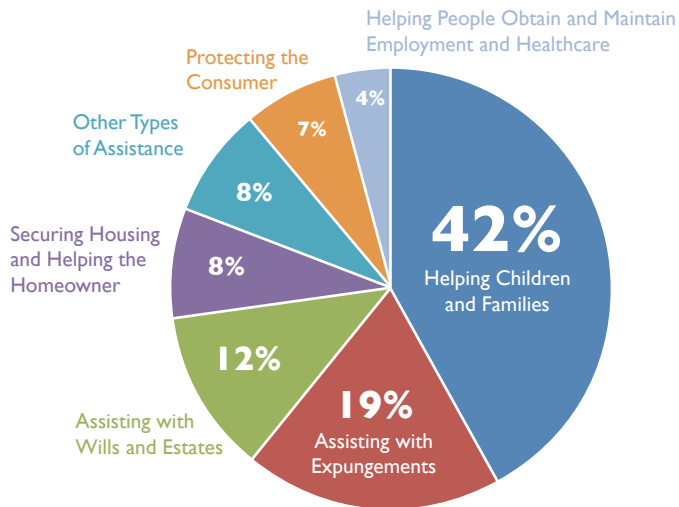
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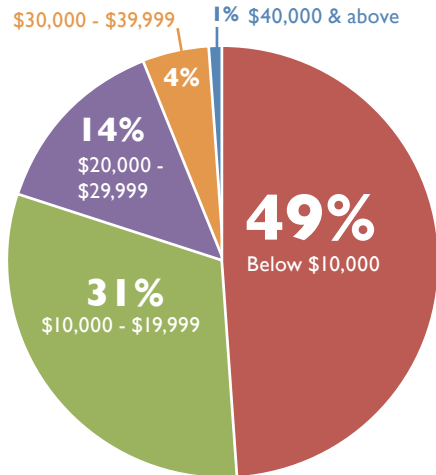
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# VLP Clients



## Type of Legal Service Provided



## Annual Income

## Volunteer Lawyers Project Partners

Brown County Bar Association  
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 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

## STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS	2015	2014
Cash & Cash Equivalents	307,507	280,722
Accounts Receivable	2,250	11,875
Prepaid Expense & Other	1,417	1,670
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>311,174</b>	<b>294,267</b>

Liabilities & Net Assets		
Liabilities		
Accounts Payable	44,826	41,118
Unrestricted Net Assets	266,348	253,149
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b>311,174</b>	<b>294,267</b>

Revenue and Support		
In-Kind Services	1,683,859	2,431,072
Contributions		
Individuals	46,115	36,135
Firms	61,900	67,550
Other Organizations	6,500	16,662
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>1,798,374</b>	<b>2,551,419</b>

Expenses		
Legal Services	1,741,457	2,473,333
Management & General	34,109	49,426
Fundraising	9,609	8,940
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>1,785,175</b>	<b>2,531,699</b>

<b>Change in net assets</b>	<b>13,199</b>	<b>19,720</b>
<b>Net assets, beginning of year</b>	<b>253,149</b>	<b>233,429</b>
<b>Net assets, end of year</b>	<b>266,348</b>	<b>253,149</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 \$279,477 in 2015. 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 2015 approximated 10,478 hours valued at approximately \$135 per hour for a total of \$1,414,530. A full financial statement is available by calling (513) 362-2804.

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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.*