

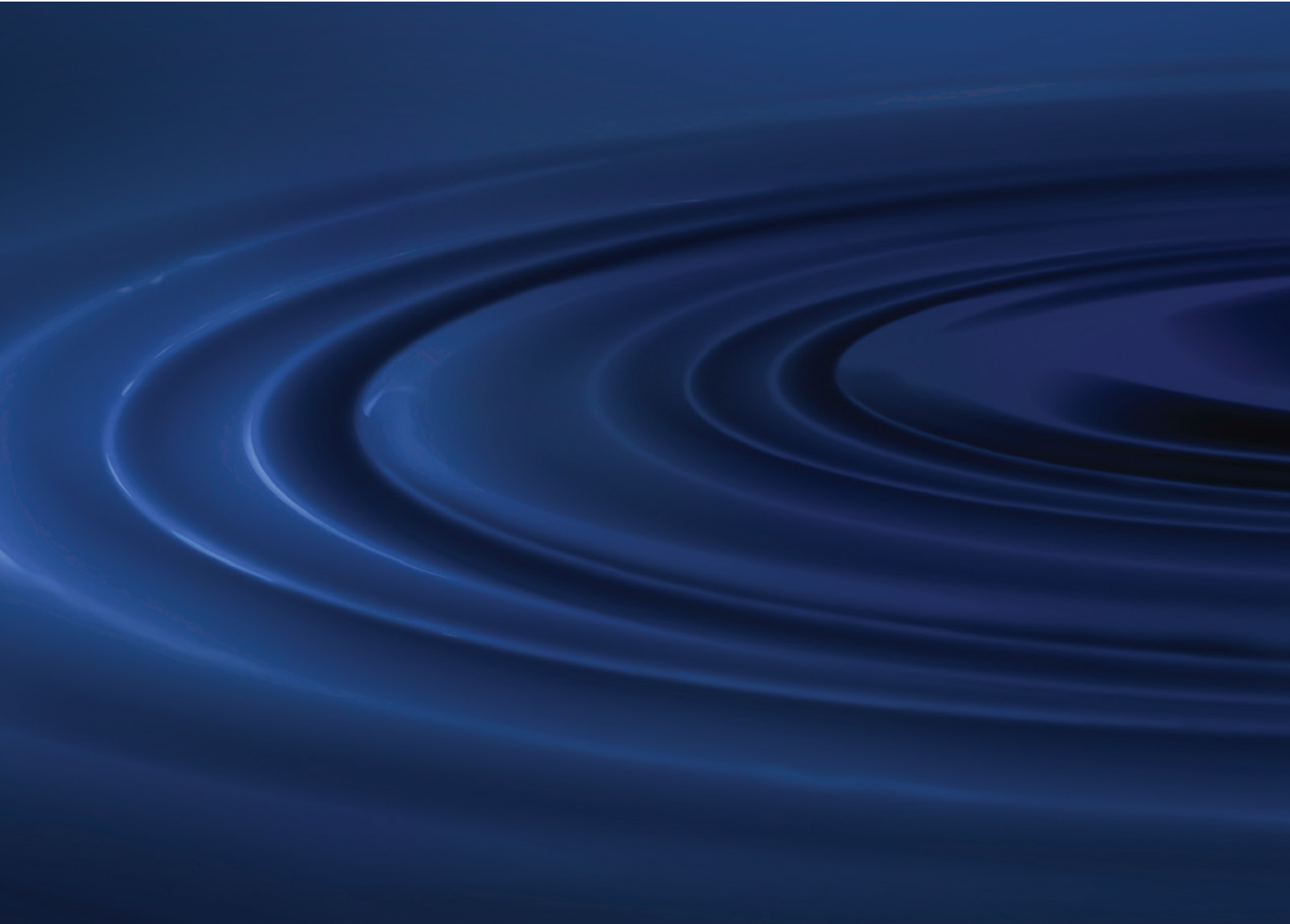


MARYLAND  
LEGAL AID

Advancing  
Human Rights and  
Justice for All



## 2015 ANNUAL REPORT



THE RIPPLE EFFECT



## VISION

To lead in providing high-quality legal services; to build on mutual respect for clients, staff, and others; to advocate for justice; and to add maximum positive value to all who request legal assistance.

## MISSION

To provide high-quality legal services to Maryland's poor through a mix of services and to bring about the changes poor people want in the systems that affect them.

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Maryland Legal Aid provides legal advice and representation in the following areas:

### Employment

- Obtains illegally denied unemployment benefits
- Recovers wages and back pay rightfully due
- Remedies employment discrimination
- Ensures that workers have a safe workplace and can express grievances about workplace conditions
- Assists with criminal record expungements to remove barriers to housing and employment

### Housing

- Preserves affordable housing
- Stops illegal evictions from public and subsidized housing and termination or denial of housing subsidies
- Prevents foreclosures or mitigates their effects
- Helps persons with disabilities obtain and preserve housing
- Advocates on behalf of tenant organizations, individuals, and families for improvement of substandard housing
- Prevents homelessness
- Remedies discrimination in obtaining and preserving housing
- Obtains return of security deposits and damages for illegal landlord practices

### Income Maintenance

- Represents persons with disabilities to avoid institutionalization
- Helps to obtain, preserve, restore or increase subsistence income to meet basic human needs

- Challenges denials of emergency assistance, food stamps, Social Security and veterans benefits

### Consumer

- Helps homeowners bilked by foreclosure rescue scams
- Assists with correcting erroneous credit reports
- Combats overly aggressive or illegal debt-collection activity
- Opposes bank account and wage garnishments of income and assets needed to meet basic subsistence needs
- Enforces sales contracts and warranties
- Remedies fraudulent sales practices and predatory contracts
- Avoids or delays utility terminations

### Health

- Helps sick children, the disabled and the elderly get medical assistance
- Helps seniors get Medicaid assistance so they can live in their communities
- Assists people in preserving the long-term care placement of their choice
- Stops or obtains redress for harmful medical treatment
- Enforces terms of health or disability insurance contracts

### Family and Children

- Assists custodial parents in maintaining custody and in obtaining, preserving or increasing child support
- Obtains protection from domestic violence and secures orders for custody, divorce and support for abuse survivors

- Helps parents obtain visitation rights, guardianships, or adoptions for dependent children

- Helps stop unwarranted termination of parental rights

- Obtains or preserves terms of foster care placement

- Represents abused and neglected children in the foster care system

### Farmworkers

- Educates farmworkers regarding their employment rights, including wage collection, suitable housing, and workplace safety, and represents them in cases in those areas

- Educates service providers, government officials, and the public about farmworkers' rights and needs, such as language translation, access to social services, and job training

- Provides assistance to address wage non-payment, occupational safety violations, and substandard migrant camp conditions

### Education

- Helps children get special education services to which they are entitled and avoid illegal or unfair school suspensions and expulsions

# “I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.”

—Mother Teresa

It is critical to confront inequalities in civil and human rights and the social and economic impacts that these disparities can have on people and systems. These inequities often create barriers and gaps in access to justice. Research has shown that low-income clients who are represented by counsel in civil legal matters are more likely to experience favorable outcomes while navigating the court system than those who do not have representation. For 105 years, Maryland Legal Aid has worked to help close those gaps by advancing equal access to justice through the provision of free civil legal services to low-income individuals in Maryland.

Equal access to justice improves people's chances of overcoming obstacles that may prevent them from securing the basic human needs of food, housing, affordable health care, and livable wages. For many low-income Marylanders, including the 99,834 that Maryland Legal Aid served in 2015, civil legal assistance prevents issues from escalating into insurmountable barriers for clients, their families, and for the community at large.

Our 2015 Annual Report reflects on just a few of the individuals and families who Maryland Legal Aid has assisted and who have benefited from the **ripple effect** that our advocacy has created. That ripple effect empowers our clients and strengthens families and their communities.

This report also highlights several innovative projects that reach poor and marginalized individuals and families in our communities. Introduced in 2015, these efforts created positive ripples throughout the state. Amid the unrest in Baltimore City last year, Maryland Legal Aid partnered with the Enoch Pratt Free Library to create the *Lawyer in the Library* project—a community lawyering initiative aimed at bringing civil legal services directly to the people who need them most in their neighborhoods. This project also includes Expungement Clinics run by Maryland Legal Aid advocates and staff as well as volunteer attorneys and law students. These clinics have attracted hundreds of participants from all over the state. We were also proud to launch the *Joining Forces Project*—a statewide hotline exclusively for veterans and staffed by pro bono attorneys. In addition to creating and implementing these exciting initiatives, Maryland Legal Aid expanded existing services provided by the Maryland District Court Self-Help Resource Centers to include extended hotline hours for evening support and assistance with additional types of civil legal matters, including help with criminal record expungements and family law. While Maryland Legal Aid continues its statewide advocacy, through special funding, Maryland Legal Aid is able to help older adults in Baltimore City remain in their homes.

Maryland Legal Aid is particularly proud of its involvement in the Dustin R. case\*, which set a new standard for medically fragile juvenile clients. We thank Venable partner and Maryland Legal Aid alumnus Mitchell Y. Mirviss and Maryland Legal Aid staff attorney Margaret Holmes for achieving a momentous, precedent-setting victory for juvenile clients in Maryland, and hopefully soon, throughout the country.

Maryland Legal Aid's success in 2015 would not have been possible without the phenomenal and unwavering support and contributions of staff, Board and Equal Justice Council members, pro bono attorneys, volunteers, donors, and foundation and governmental funders, most notably the Maryland Legal Services Corporation and the federal Legal Services Corporation. We are deeply grateful for their support and their continuing efforts to help us shape a society based on true, accessible justice and fairness for all.

Warren S. Oliveri, Jr., Esq.  
President



Wilhelm H. Joseph, Jr., Esq.  
Executive Director





## Fighting for those who fought for us: MR. THORNTON

**“I’ll never forget the day** we signed the client agreement with Maryland Legal Aid. It just felt like such a relief. I thought ‘if they’re not listening to us, maybe they will listen to an attorney.’”

The story of the late Mr. Thornton, an 86-year-old Korean War veteran who died just before this Annual Report was published, is one of perseverance, family, and service to our country. From late 2012 to 2015, Mr. Thornton’s daughter, Mrs. Gresham, had been battling the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for benefits that her father was qualified to receive. Mr. Thornton worked as an Army supply sergeant and spoke fondly of the time he spent serving his country. He chuckled as he recounted having to move up the date of his wedding because he was called to active duty. Suffering from dementia, Mr. Thornton, a widower, lived in an assisted living facility (ALF) and depended upon caretakers and his daughter, who was also his legal guardian, for assistance.

In 2012, Mrs. Gresham received an award letter from the VA that stated that Mr. Thornton had been awarded a monthly stipend of \$1,703. In addition to receiving the stipend, Mr. Thornton was also eligible to receive a year’s worth of benefits that dated back to his initial application and totaled more than \$20,000. The owner of the ALF where Mr. Thornton resided accepted his residency based on the premise that Mr. Thornton would pay for his stay in the facility when he received his VA award. However, frustrations grew for Mr. Thornton and his daughter when almost two years had passed and no money had been received.

With the ALF no longer being able to support Mr. Thornton’s residency without payment, Mr. Thornton was facing eviction.

After hundreds of hours spent writing and calling the VA about her father’s benefits without a response, Mrs. Gresham realized that she needed an attorney to preserve her father’s housing, and possibly even save his life. She and Mr. Thornton traveled from Howard County to Maryland Legal Aid’s Baltimore City office where they were welcomed by **Senior Staff Attorney Mary Aquino, Staff Attorney Angus Derbyshire,** and former **Director of Advocacy for Income Security, Frank Natale.** Attorney Derbyshire vividly remembers the day when he first met Mrs. Gresham and Mr. Thornton. “She came in carrying this huge file and she looked exhausted,” he said.

Mrs. Gresham, relieved to finally be in front of someone who would listen, explained the seemingly never-ending battle that she and her father had been fighting. Although happy to assist Mrs. Gresham and Mr. Thornton, the attorneys knew it would not be an easy case, since Mr. Thornton had never received a denial letter from the VA and the attorneys had no basis on which to appeal a decision. Between phone calls to the VA and resending forms and documents that confirmed Mr. Thornton’s



Maryland is home to approximately 465,000 veterans of the United States Armed Forces. Many face significant challenges upon returning home from service and end up homeless or living in poverty, struggling to meet their basic human needs. In response, Maryland Legal Aid developed and launched its *Joining Forces Project*—a free, statewide legal telephone hotline specifically for low-income veterans who have served in any branch of the military, regardless of their discharge status. Funding for this project was provided by the Legal Services Corporation Pro Bono Innovation Grant. Maryland Legal Aid partnered with the Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland to recruit and train pro bono attorneys to effectively and efficiently meet the legal needs of Maryland's low-income veteran population.

Since launching in July 2015, the hotline has received over 270 calls from veterans who received help with a variety of legal issues including unemployment, child custody, housing, and criminal record expungements. Managed by a staff attorney, the hotline has attracted 140 pro bono attorneys who have signed up to help clients by answering calls and providing brief legal advice from the attorneys' offices. Pro bono attorneys also have the opportunity to provide extended representation to eligible veterans with more complex civil legal issues. *The Joining Forces Project* features electronic access to scripts on various areas of law to guide pro bono attorneys through the basics when answering veterans' calls. Maryland Legal Aid provides access to malpractice insurance and mentors for cases handled through the Project.



Mr. Thornton, 2015

eligibility for benefits, it seemed to Mr. Thornton, his daughter, and the attorneys as if Mr. Thornton's VA file had just disappeared.

"We all agreed we needed to take a multi-pronged approach on this case," said Senior Attorney Aquino. "Angus and I worked on getting in touch with the VA and Mr. Thornton's case manager, while Frank and Maryland Legal Aid's communications director, Ashley Fails, worked on getting the media involved," she added. The multi-pronged approach was exactly what was needed to prompt the VA to disburse the benefits to Mr. Thornton. Just ten days after a local news station aired an investigative report featuring Mr. Thornton's story, the VA deposited \$20,000 into his bank account. Mrs. Gresham recalls, "I was up at 3:00 that morning because I couldn't sleep. And then the money was just there!" It was Memorial Day. "I finally had peace of mind knowing my father would be ok."

Mrs. Gresham summarized her father's life as one of a public servant's: not only did Mr. Thornton serve in the military, but he was also a foster parent to 39 children in addition to raising his own five children. Mr. Thornton spent his final days living comfortably in his assisted living facility. He enjoyed eating delicious food and challenging his peers at a local senior center in Howard County to brain games for people living with dementia. The history crossword puzzles were his favorite.

Maryland Legal Aid thanks Mr. Thornton and his family for sharing their story and for allowing us to help them secure the benefits that Mr. Thornton so rightfully deserved. Mr. Thornton is survived by his five children, eight grandchildren, and nine great-children. He will be greatly missed.



BRIGHT  
CONFIDENT  
DRIVEN  
RESPONSIBLE

Tyreco, 2015

## Empowering youth for a positive future:

# TYRECO

Bright. Confident. Driven. Responsible. According to **Maryland Legal Aid Paralegal Tammy Watts**, these are just a few of the words that can be used to describe Anne Arundel County client, Tyreco. "He does everything asked of him and then some," she stated. At only 20 years of age, Tyreco knows exactly what he wants for his future and has a well-thought-out plan of getting himself there. He's the true definition of a hard worker: he is employed full time; enrolled in classes at Anne Arundel Community College; exercises regularly at the gym; and every once in a while, finds time to hang out with his friends.

Tyreco was raised in foster care and has been one of Maryland Legal Aid's Child in Need of Assistance (CINA) clients since he was a young teenager. In many ways, children living in foster care can face extreme disadvantages, including not being able to

access resources they need or to advocate for themselves. But Tyreco never let these obstacles hold him back. Paralegal Watts said, "I'm so glad that he spoke up for himself and called me. For many kids, it can be so overwhelming to advocate for yourself. He is truly a success story."

Tyreco came to Maryland Legal Aid's Anne Arundel County office in late 2014 after being referred by his case worker at Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services. He had just been denied unemployment benefits and knew that he had to advocate for himself. That's when he called Paralegal Watts and asked for help. "I'll never forget what she told me: 'I will make sure to do my best.' It was great to know that I had someone in my corner."

Tyreco had been working at a fast food restaurant for two years when he was offered a job with better pay. After explaining that his school work took priority, Tyreco and his foster mom negotiated his work hours to fit his class schedule, and he accepted the job. It wasn't long before the employer began scheduling him for twelve- rather than eight-hour shifts. Tyreco became increasingly late or missed classes due to exhaustion and knew something had to give.



## What is THE RIPPLE EFFECT?

Worried about his worsening grades with finals approaching, Tyreco requested a decrease from five days a week to four days in order to set aside more time to study. However, instead of receiving fewer hours, Tyreco's new work schedule required him to work an extra day. "If my boss hadn't agreed from the beginning to let me work around school, I wouldn't have taken the job," Tyreco shared. Knowing that he couldn't work the extra day due to his class schedule, Tyreco immediately asked for a day off, but his employer responded by giving him an ultimatum: either show up to work every day that week, including the extra day, or be fired as a "no call, no show." Tyreco's commitment to his education trumped his onerous work schedule, and so he made the tough decision not to work the extra day he was scheduled. As a result, he was fired.

A few weeks later, Tyreco applied for unemployment benefits and was denied. Paralegal Watts stepped in and appealed the decision. In March 2015, one month after the hearing, an administrative law judge ruled in Tyreco's favor, and he was awarded the back benefits that his previous employer owed him. "Tyreco now knows that it is good to speak up and speak out. He has seen setbacks, but knows he can persevere," affirmed Watts.

Now more than ever, Tyreco is focused. He's focused on supporting himself after he ages out of foster care this August on his 21st birthday; and he's focused on obtaining his associate degree in Criminal Justice and possibly joining the Air Force. One thing is certain: Tyreco has a bright future ahead of him. His words of wisdom: "Stay patient. Everything is a process."



### Shalita O'Neale

Maryland Legal Aid Board Member and Founder of Hope Forward

Shalita's experience with Maryland Legal Aid began as a client in the Child Advocacy Unit as she prepared to transition out of foster care. To say that the odds were against her would be an understatement. Before she turned three, her mother was murdered. As a child, she endured physical and sexual abuse, guardians who were addicted to alcohol and drugs, and the instability of moving around between family members and friends of the family. Throughout numerous placements and foster care group homes, she maintained good grades, graduated in the top 10% of her class, and was working to support herself.

Soon after she enrolled at the University of Maryland, College Park, she met **Francine Krumholz, the former Maryland Legal Aid attorney** who represented her as she prepared to age out of the foster care system. Shalita credits Francine with being a caring, trustworthy advocate who helped her at a critical time in her life. Shalita says Francine "told me what I didn't want to hear, but needed to hear. She helped

When you consider the impact that an advocate can have on a person at a critical time in his or her life, you can see the ripple effect reverberating, not just in the short term through the client and the client's immediate surroundings, but also in the long term throughout the client's life. Such is the case for Shalita O'Neale.

me to navigate the legal side of foster care, but also went above and beyond in helping me with other issues." Well after Shalita ceased to be a client, the two kept in contact. When Shalita was considering what to do after obtaining a Master's Degree in Social Work, Francine helped her think through the possibility of starting her own non-profit organization to help foster youth as they prepare to transition to independent living.

In 2008, Shalita established what has become Hope Forward, a non-profit organization that works to ensure that all youth transitioning from the foster care system have the support and resources needed to become stable and contributing members of society. Now Shalita is creating many more positive ripples in the community through her own advocacy for foster youth. Find out more about Hope Forward by visiting [www.hope-forward.org](http://www.hope-forward.org).

## Preserving independence and dignity:

### Ms. L.

Living independently at any age can have its challenges. For the elderly, however, and particularly for those plagued by illness or debilitating conditions, living independently may be impossible without the assistance of skilled caretakers who can help with grocery shopping, house cleaning, personal hygiene, cooking, and exercising. Fortunately, such Personal Care Providers are available to those who are medically and financially eligible through Maryland's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's (DHMH) Medical Assistance Personal Care Program (MAPC).

Unfortunately, for Ms. L., an 82-year-old Maryland Legal Aid client with a multitude of medical issues, her MAPC Personal Care Provider suddenly stopped coming to her home. Confused and afraid, Ms. L. came to Maryland Legal Aid's Montgomery County office in April 2015, holding a denial letter from DHMH. She had no idea why her Personal Care Provider stopped coming to her home and was concerned that she would not be able to manage on her own.

Ms. L. immigrated from Russia to the United States with her family in 1992. While the transition to the American way of life was not without its obstacles, for the most part, things went smoothly, except for the language barrier. Learning to speak, read, and write in English was extremely difficult for Ms. L., particularly as she grew older.

When Ms. L. received the DHMH letter in the mail, she blamed herself for not being able to understand what it said. Written in English, the letter informed her that she was no longer medically eligible for the MAPC program according to DHMH's interpretation of her yearly physician evaluation. Ms. L. was forced to wait until her son returned from a business trip to translate the letter. By the time her son returned, the ten-day window to appeal DHMH's decision had passed and Ms. L. was left without a Personal Care Provider. "My poor daughter-in-law had to come over after work to help me with groceries, bathing, and cleaning," Ms. L. shared through **Maryland Legal Aid Staff Attorney Inna Loring**, who is a Russian speaker. "And it wasn't like she was only 10 minutes away. She lives about 35 minutes away and works even further."

Determined to lift the burden off her family and receive the services that she needed, Ms. L. asked her case manager at the Jewish Social Services Agency, Nina Sznurman, for help. "She was scared," said Ms. Sznurman. "Anytime someone from another country gets a letter from the court, it's extremely upsetting."







“Anytime someone from another country gets a letter from the court, it’s extremely upsetting. It is wonderful to know that I can refer individuals who are low-income to an attorney at Maryland Legal Aid.”

— Nina Sznurman,  
Jewish Social Services Agency

It is wonderful to know that I can refer individuals who are low-income to an attorney at Maryland Legal Aid and be confident that they will receive the services that they need.”

After hearing Ms. L.’s story, **Maryland Legal Aid Staff Attorney Kelly Perkins** immediately appealed DHMH’s decision and discovered that Ms. L. wasn’t receiving services pending her appeal. In addition to filing an appeal, Perkins also advocated for all future correspondence from DHMH to be translated into Russian in order to prevent any difficulties. The appeal process lasted several months, during which time Ms. L. had to perform her daily activities without the help of a Personal Care Provider, including having to lie completely on the floor to wash her bathtub and clean her bathroom. “I’m a clean freak,” Ms. L. said. “I cannot exist in a dirty home and I can’t clean without help.”

Finally, a week before the hearing, almost a year after Ms. L.’s MAPC services were discontinued, Attorney Perkins was able to get a Personal Care Provider back into Ms. L.’s home for the remainder of the appeal process. “Within one week, we were able to provide evidence to show that she met the requirements of the program.” After hearing the case, the judge ruled that Ms. L. required assistance with at least one activity of daily living and, therefore, met the requirements to participate in the MAPC program.

Ms. L. again receives assistance from a dedicated Personal Care Provider on a daily basis; a service that she says greatly impacts all aspects of her life.



## Self-Help Manual for MTA Mobility Cases

In 2015, Maryland Legal Aid’s Baltimore City Administrative Law Unit (ALU) experienced an enormous increase in Maryland Transportation Administration (MTA) Mobility cases, from two in 2014 to 100 in 2015. These cases can be complex and require testimony and extensive documentation from clients’ physicians and caregivers. While most everyone who contacts Maryland Legal Aid receives, at the very least, brief advice, Maryland Legal Aid does not have the resources to provide extended representation to everyone

who needs it. To help those for whom Maryland Legal Aid cannot provide extended representation, the ALU developed a Pro Se Self-Help manual for the self-represented. The Manual supplements the brief advice and provides concrete and straightforward legal information. The ALU is now working with Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service to develop a broader manual for all legal aid, public interest, and pro bono attorneys who represent clients in MTA Mobility cases.

# THE RIPPLE EFFECT

**"I really think that nobody wanted to be the one whose pen stroke caused this child's death."**

—Maryland Legal Aid Staff  
Attorney Margaret Holmes

Photographs of Dustin at age 2

## Helping many begins by helping one: DUSTIN

For Jackie and Darrell Pratt, the memories of each of the 30 children they have shared their home with will never be forgotten.

"It's not the children's fault that they were abandoned. I just want to make sure that they each feel loved," shared Mrs. Pratt.

The Pratts have been foster parents for almost 35 years in Montana and Maryland. Most of the children that the Pratts fostered were living with special needs and some were among the most medically fragile children in the state. Dustin, now 23 years old, was one of those children. Dustin entered foster care at the age of 2, when his biological parents' rights were terminated. The Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services (DSS) then reached out to Mrs. Pratt requesting that she take Dustin into her care. Dustin had been living in the hospital for several months due to his significant health needs.

Despite the hardships that caring for Dustin would bring, Mrs. Pratt could not imagine an innocent child spending the rest of his life in a hospital. **Maryland Legal Aid Staff Attorney Margaret Holmes**, who has represented Dustin since 2000, shared, "The state begged her [Mrs. Pratt] to take him. The State chose this placement for him and wanted this child to be taken care of outside of the hospital. But the State has been reluctant to sustain him since then."

Dustin suffers from a metabolic disorder that affects his mobility, speech, cognitive development, digestion, and other bodily functions. This disorder, believed to be mitochondrial in origin, causes sudden metabolic crises that can attack and destroy entire body systems and has rendered him completely incapacitated. Dustin functions at the cognitive level of a six-month-old; he is aware of his environment, recognizes his nurses and family, and communicates by smiling, twitching, and using other subtle signals. Because Dustin is so incapacitated, he requires extraordinary care to stay alive.

When Dustin first came to the Pratts, his health needs were less complex and required only a few hours of nursing each day. But as Dustin got older, his condition worsened to the point that, by 2004, he required 24-hour monitoring. Because Medical Assistance nursing reimbursement rates were limited, it was nearly impossible for the Pratts to find qualified and dedicated nurses willing to work with Dustin; they were left to provide 2,600 hours of nursing care each year on their own. "We lost a lot of great nurses and were doing our best to pay them what we could afford out of our own pocket," said Mrs. Pratt. "But I am not a nurse,



**“It was such a relief to finally have the financial resources to be able to afford the quality of care that Dustin needed and deserved.”**

— Mrs. Pratt

and it got to the point where it was financially impossible to afford the care that Dustin needed to survive.”

In 2005, after the Pratts lost most of their life savings from supplementing nurses’ pay with their own money, Attorney Holmes filed a request for a hearing on Dustin’s behalf and asked that DSS require that Dustin receive 24/7 nursing care. The juvenile court ruled that DSS must ensure around-the-clock care, and the State approved a payment supplement that increased the Medical Assistance rate, which enabled the Pratts to hire new registered nurses (RNs). “It was such a relief to finally have the financial resources to be able to afford the quality of care that Dustin needed and deserved,” said Mrs. Pratt.

Years later in 2011, the State reversed course and declared that the Medical Assistance supplementation it was voluntarily providing to the Pratts was illegal. Foreseeing the complexity of this case, Mrs. Pratt and Attorney Holmes asked **Mitchell Mirviss, partner at Venable LLP** and a former attorney at Maryland Legal Aid, to co-counsel Dustin’s case pro bono. “I cannot tell you how valuable the partnership with Mitch was,” said Holmes. “His willingness and expertise were enormous. He took on the administrative hearing responsibility and created the most thorough record that the administrative law judge had ever seen.”

Despite losing the appeal, the Pratts had also filed for exceptions, which took more than a year before a decision was determined. “I really think that nobody wanted to be the one whose pen stroke caused this child’s death,” Holmes explains.

With Dustin’s 21st birthday in December 2013 quickly approaching, he faced a potentially lethal cut in life-sustaining services when he transitioned out of foster care and would have to receive all of his services from DHMH. “No child should have to lose their home, family, or life just because they have a birthday,” said Mrs. Pratt. DHMH would not reveal its plans for Dustin once he aged out of foster care. So the Pratts and Dustin’s resource coordinator, who was an independent liaison between Dustin and the Department of Disabilities Administration (DDA), submitted to the DDA a proposed service funding plan that outlined the services and funding needed to allow Dustin to remain with the Pratts after

he turned 21. The budget maintained the level of care and support that Dustin had been receiving for years.

DHMH, however, rejected the proposal and instead provided a plan that would have cut 75% of the care that Dustin was receiving. “This was a life and death situation,” stated Mrs. Pratt. “We knew that if we couldn’t afford to meet his needs, he would be severely affected, and that the minute he left our home, he wouldn’t make it.” The Pratts, on Dustin’s behalf, moved quickly for a hearing, which resulted in a juvenile court ruling in his favor. Finding that DHMH’s plan did not meet Dustin’s needs and was life-threatening, the court signed “Proposed Findings and Order.” However, just before Dustin turned 21, there was a final hearing at which the judge continued the order requiring DHMH to provide Dustin with services after Dustin’s 21st birthday and crossed out the word “proposed”. DHMH appealed. A year later, without any briefing on the issue, the Court of Special Appeals of Maryland determined that the first signed order was invalid, stating that it was merely an application for relief; ignoring the fact that the proposed order had been amended and signed by the judge and that a second order had been entered. Dustin was now 22 years-old and by law, could no longer return to Juvenile Court. Refusing to give up, Attorneys Holmes and Mirviss filed a petition on behalf of Dustin to the Court of Appeals of Maryland to hear the case.

In December 2015, the Court of Appeals reversed the decision of the Court of Special Appeals and ruled that DHMH must continue to support Dustin’s extensive medical care necessary for him to stay alive. This ruling now gives juvenile courts the authority to order services for foster children beyond age 21, which means the Pratts can continue to care for and support Dustin in their home with the life-sustaining care he requires.

Fighting back tears, Mrs. Pratt thoughtfully stated, “Dustin is happy. He loves his nurses, his animals, and his family. He has a yard and a garden. He shouldn’t have to lose that. They forget that he is a person who still has a life.” Mrs. Pratt concluded, “If it hadn’t been for legal counsel, we wouldn’t be here. There is absolutely no way a family can overcome these systems on their own.”

## NEW PARTNERSHIPS

### The Lawyer in the Library Project

2015 was a year full of new and rewarding partnerships and collaborations for Maryland Legal Aid. Together with the Enoch Pratt Free Library (EPFL), Maryland Legal Aid introduced the *Lawyer in the Library* project—a community lawyering initiative developed to provide direct civil legal assistance and outreach services to individuals in their neighborhoods and to hear from communities about civil legal issues that affect them and their families.

The concept for *Lawyer in the Library* was primarily driven by the civil unrest in Baltimore City last year. Maryland Legal Aid was inspired by EPFL's Pennsylvania Avenue branch manager, Melanie Townsend-Diggs, who, amid the epicenter of the turmoil, kept the library open as a peaceful haven and resource for members of the community. Benjamin Rosenberg, former co-chair of Maryland Legal Aid's Equal Justice Council and EPFL Board member, said about the project, "it was as if someone turned on a light in a very dark room. The Pratt Library has an amazing branch network throughout the city which is visited by thousands of Baltimoreans. Increasing access for citizens to highly-qualified Maryland Legal Aid lawyers by placing the lawyers on a scheduled basis in library branches sounded to me like a match made in heaven."

The project kicked off with three presentations in July and August led by Maryland Legal Aid advocates on housing,



government benefits, and family law. Attendees of these presentations received information and asked questions about civil legal issues in their communities. In September, Maryland Legal Aid attorneys and paralegals, volunteer attorneys, and law students began offering one-on-one advice to clients for their civil legal issues on Tuesday afternoons. The project also includes a monthly Saturday expungement clinic, where advocates from Maryland

Legal Aid and volunteer attorneys answer questions and help participants handle their record expungements. From September to December 2015, *Lawyer in the Library* helped more than 500 participants by providing one-on-one civil legal advice and help with criminal record expungements—which has helped to remove barriers to obtaining basic needs such as affordable housing, employment that pays a livable wage, and child custody.

All *Lawyer in the Library* one-on-one sessions and expungement clinics are free, and attendees are helped on a first-come, first-served basis. The EPFL Pennsylvania Avenue branch is currently the only location for *Lawyer in the Library*. Maryland Legal Aid hopes to expand this project to other libraries and locations around the state, as the need for direct civil legal services continues to increase.

### District Court Self-Help Resource Centers Expand Services

Through a contract with the Administrative Office of the Courts, Maryland Legal Aid operates three District Court Self-Help Resource Centers—two walk-in facilities in Glen Burnie and Upper Marlboro, and a call-in center in Annapolis. Since the opening of the first center in 2009, the District Court Self-Help Resource Centers have served over 100,000 people through in-person consultations as well as call-in, email, and live chat. The District Court Self-Help Resource Centers deal with a wide range of civil legal matters, including landlord-tenant, consumer matters, debt collection, and credit card cases. In October 2015, the hours for the call-in and live chat services were expanded and are now available from 8:30am-8:00pm. Individuals can now also receive help for matters typically handled in circuit courts, such as family law issues. In addition to the services already provided in District Court civil matters, help is now available for criminal record expungements.

There are Times when excellence in service is innocently or routinely Taken for granted. It is for this reason That I write you regarding The excellent legal counsel and advice That I received from Mr. Samuel Minnitte. Mr. Minnitte was instrumental in addressing all of my questions and his professional advice was invaluable To me in filing my case. As a senior citizen of Prince George's County, I feel it is important To let you know of Mr. Minnitte's impeccable professional service for The record. Sincerely, Mr. R.

Letter from District Court Self-Help Resource Center client, August 19, 2015



## NEW PARTNERSHIPS

### Spreading Warmth with Soles4Souls



In 2015, Maryland Legal Aid partnered with Soles4Souls, Inc.—a Nashville-based charitable organization—as well as several other local agencies and organizations (see at right), to host four events to distribute 4,000 new Macy’s coats and 1,000 new pairs of Stride Rite shoes to children and adults in need in Baltimore City and Frederick, Washington, and Harford counties. The coats were donated by Macy’s through Soles4Souls as part of its “Buy 1, Get 1” program. Stride Rite donated the shoes to Soles4Souls as part of its annual Barefoot Week. Soles4Souls selected Maryland Legal Aid to distribute the coats and shoes because of its involvement with the communities it serves. In addition to distributing shoes and clothing to young children and adults, Maryland Legal Aid provided information about its civil legal services and programs and provided free, one-on-one pro bono civil legal advice. Tiffany Johnson, Outreach Coordinator at Soles4Souls, shared, **“We have wonderful partners, but for Soles4Souls, Maryland Legal Aid is a shining example of the type of organization we strive to work with daily!”**

**Spreading Warmth:  
Free Coat Closet & Resource Day,  
March 21, 2015**

Frederick Douglass High School  
Baltimore, MD  
PARTNERS: Family League of Baltimore  
and Baltimore City Public Schools

**B’More Barefoot Week:  
October 14, 2015**

PARTNERS: Weinberg Family Center,  
Baltimore City Recreation & Parks’ Lillian  
Jones Recreation Center, Enoch Pratt  
Free Library Waverly Branch, and  
the Baltimore Police Department-  
Western District

**Spreading Warmth:  
Free Coat Closet & Resource Day II,  
December 9, 2015**

Elgin Station Community Center  
Hagerstown, MD  
PARTNERS: Housing Authority of  
Hagerstown and Washington County  
Department of Social Services

**The Great Coat Distribution Event:  
December 22, 2015**

Edgewood Senior Center  
Bel Air, MD  
PARTNER: Harford County Government

Top: Coat recipients at the Hagerstown, MD event. Above: Baltimore Police Department–Western District

## PROJECT HOUSEHOLD

### Bringing Foreclosure help to Older Adults in Baltimore City

In 2015, Maryland Legal Aid was awarded a three-year grant from the **Leonard and Helen R. Stulman Charitable Foundation** for \$450,000, payable over three years. The grant supports an initiative called *Project Household* that helps low-income older adults in Baltimore City stay in their homes.

Maryland Legal Aid employs a holistic approach to preserving homeownership through four primary areas: avoiding loss of homeownership through foreclosure or tax sale; promoting the financial stability necessary for homeownership; preventing and addressing financial exploitation that can lead to the loss of homeownership; and creating advanced planning documents

to ensure homes are not lost due to lack of clear title. *Project Household* also includes collaboration with social workers from Civic Works’ Housing Upgrades to Benefit Seniors (HUBS), a program which provides additional resources to clients for lasting solutions to their housing issues.

Maryland Legal Aid **Staff Attorney Aaron DeGraffenreidt** from the Baltimore City Housing and Consumer Law Unit provides extended representation to clients, and **Staff Attorney Scott Black** performs client intakes and provides advice through the Maryland Senior Legal Helpline.

## The Equal Justice Council

The Equal Justice Council (EJC) comprises managing attorneys from Maryland's top law firms and other prominent members of the Maryland Bar and corporate community. Since 1997, members of the EJC have raised critically needed funds for Maryland Legal Aid in order to promote equal access to justice, while also serving as dedicated advocates who raise awareness of the organization's important work.

### Equal Justice Council Leadership

**Co-Chairpersons:**

Martin S. Himeles, Jr., Esq.  
Lee H. Ogburn, Esq.

**Law Firm Campaign Co-Chairpersons:**

Jessica A. duHoffmann, Esq.  
Andrew Freeman, Esq.  
Paul M. Nussbaum, Esq.

## EJC Annual Awards Breakfast

Well over 200 people attended the 18th Annual Equal Justice Awards Breakfast on June 2, 2015. The featured guest speaker was Roy L. Austin, Jr., Deputy Assistant to the President for the Office of Urban Affairs, Justice and Opportunity, and member of the White House Domestic Policy Council. Mr. Austin spoke about the White House's efforts to formulate and implement federal policy in order to guarantee equal access to justice.

**The event honored the following award winners:**

**Champion of Justice Award:**

Paul M. Nussbaum, Esq.

**Pacesetter Awards:**

Goodell DeVries  
Saul Ewing LLP

**Trailblazer Awards:**

DLA Piper  
Venable LLP

**Executive Director's Award:**

Sayra Wells Meyerhoff, Esq.

### Andrew Jay Graham and Benjamin Rosenberg: Exemplars of Equal Justice

The first ever Exemplar of Equal Justice Awards were presented to the immediate past co-chairs of the Equal Justice Council, Andrew Jay Graham and Benjamin Rosenberg. Andy's and Ben's combined 18 years of service have left an indelible mark on the EJC. Under Andy's and Ben's outstanding leadership, more than \$3 million dollars were raised to provide high-quality legal services to low-income Marylanders. Though stepping down from their leadership positions, both Andy and Ben plan to continue their service as members of the Equal Justice Council.



From the top:  
Roy L. Austin Jr., Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera, Wilhelm H. Joseph, Jr., and ret. Chief Judge Robert M. Bell

Wilhelm H. Joseph, Jr., Benjamin Rosenberg, Lee H. Ogburn, Martin S. Himeles, Jr., and Andrew Jay Graham

Roy L. Austin, Jr. and Baltimore City Circuit Court Judge Pamela J. White



**“Support of legal services for the poor is not an act of charity; it is the execution of a lawyer’s professional responsibility.”**

–Decatur “Deke” Miller

## IN MEMORY: Decatur “Deke” Miller

In February 2015, the Baltimore legal community lost one of its most renowned and formidable members, Decatur “Deke” Miller. Deke was a prominent member of the Equal Justice Council’s (EJC) founding team. From the beginning of his participation in the EJC’s work, and particularly in his role as co-chair of the EJC, Deke dedicated substantial time, enormous thought, and significant material resources to the task before him.

Deke personally visited many law firms and managing partners to deliver, in a firm yet collegial manner, a consistent plea: “Support of legal services for the poor,” he said, “is not an act of charity; it is the execution of a lawyer’s professional responsibility.” Almost all of his colleagues heeded that call, and today the EJC is an effective, integral partner with Maryland Legal Aid in our determined quest to make meaningful access to justice available to all Marylanders, regardless of economic status. While Deke’s legacy endures, his wonderful presence and involvement are irreplaceable.

## THANK YOU!

The EJC sincerely appreciates all who support Maryland Legal Aid, and wishes to particularly thank those Partners for Justice who contribute \$1,000 or more toward ensuring equal access to justice for all. (See page 15 for listings.)

### **We also thank our outstanding Law Firms of Distinction for contributing at least \$300 per attorney:**

BaldwinLaw LLC  
Brown, Goldstein & Levy, LLP  
Gorman & Williams  
Hylton & Gonzales  
Iloff, Meredith, Wildberger & Brennan, P.C.  
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Law Offices of Julie Ellen Landau  
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Saiontz & Kirk P.A.  
Saul Ewing LLP  
Shapiro Sher Guinot & Sandler, P.A.  
Whiteford, Taylor & Preston LLP  
Zuckerman Spaeder LLP

We greatly appreciate the assistance of Gordon, Wolf & Carney, Chtd; Brown, Goldstein & Levy, LLP; Williams & Santoni LLP; the Law Offices of E. David Hoskins, LLC, and the Law Offices of Robert W. Murphy in the awarding of cy pres settlements to Maryland Legal Aid.

For more information regarding the Equal Justice Council or to make a contribution, contact Graham Cowger, Director of Development, at 410-951-7706 or [gcowger@mdl原因.org](mailto:gcowger@mdl原因.org). To donate online, please visit [www.donate.mdl原因.org](http://www.donate.mdl原因.org).

## Maryland Legal Aid's Pro Bono Honor Roll

Much of Maryland Legal Aid's success depends on support from pro bono attorneys who provide representation, legal support, and educational/training services to Maryland Legal Aid and its clients. We are grateful for their efforts in helping Maryland Legal Aid advance its mission. Attorneys included on the Pro Bono Honor Roll are those who have provided 50 or more hours of direct legal representation to Maryland Legal Aid and/or its clients, and/or have supported the organization through a wide range of professional services such as expert legal counsel, accounting, and procurement.

Philip M. Andrews  
Michael Bakhama  
Scott Black  
Christina Bostick  
Douglas Bregman  
Susan Cassidy  
Jack Condliffe  
Robert Fulton Dashiell  
Neil E. Duke  
Andrew Freeman  
Sheila R. Gibbs  
Gregory M. Gill  
Alex Hastings

Martin S. Himeles  
Nooree Lee  
Scott A. Livingston  
Robert A. Manekin  
Sayra Wells Meyerhoff  
Mitchell Y. Mirviss  
Marilyn Ogburn  
Warren Oliveri, Jr.  
Daniel Rosenberg  
Paul Mark Sandler  
Suneil Vemuru  
Anuj Vohra  
Jessica Weber

**"You have never really lived, until you have done something for someone who can never repay you."**—John Bunyan

Read just a few of the reasons why attorneys choose to support Maryland Legal Aid pro bono:

"Service has always been important to me. **Doing pro bono work gives me the opportunity to effectuate societal change while giving the disenfranchised a stake in getting a second chance.** I support Maryland Legal Aid pro bono because they work tirelessly in assessing and representing the needs of the community. They get the job done and they do it very well!"

—Deliah Lawrence

"I went to Antioch School of Law to become a public interest lawyer, helping poor people deal with law. This is why I volunteer to represent Maryland Legal Aid in contract procurements, most notably for the Department of Human Resources' Child in Need of Assistance and Termination of Parental Rights contracts. While Maryland Legal Aid has great expertise in child welfare law, procurement law is not within their areas of practice. **As a procurement lawyer, it is most fulfilling to know that my work can help vulnerable child clients.**"

—Scott Livingston



Amy Petkovsek, Maryland Legal Aid's Director of Advocacy for Training and Pro Bono, and Sharon Cole from the Office of the Public Defender at Maryland Legal Aid's Baltimore City Pro Bono Day, June 2015

**"Pro Bono is a fundamental component of being a well-rounded human being.** I have found that the clients are so grateful to be getting help from a big law firm that acknowledges their case as being just as important as someone who can afford counsel—that sense of gratitude is also reaffirming."

—Mitchell Y. Mirviss

"I've been able to substantially assist veterans in need of advice on a number of issues [as part of Maryland Legal Aid's *Joining Forces* Project]. I am glad that **Maryland Legal Aid has given both myself and our veterans an opportunity to work together and solve the legal issues** that they deal with on a day-to-day basis."

—Suneil Vemuru





The Harry and Jeanette  
Weinberg Foundation, Inc.

## Foundation Focus: The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation

The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation grants approximately \$100 million each year to nonprofits that provide direct services for low-income and vulnerable individuals and families, primarily in the US and Israel. Since 1999, the Weinberg Foundation has made grants to Maryland Legal Aid totaling more than \$3 million. The focus of this funding has primarily been legal services for low-income older adults. As part of its *Making Maryland the Best Place to Grow Old* initiative, the Weinberg Foundation most recently awarded \$800,000 over two years for Maryland Legal Aid's *Legal Services for Older Marylanders and their Caregivers Project*. The primary objective of this project is to strengthen the economic security of older adults and their caregivers while building on the organization's longstanding, statewide provision of legal services that help them meet their basic human needs. This will be done mainly via the provision of free civil legal services to at least 5,000 older Marylanders and their caregivers each year during the two-year grant period. A secondary, but critically important, objective of this project is to build the field of professionals and enhance professional knowledge regarding the needs of low-income, vulnerable older adults and their caregivers in Maryland.



Maryland Legal Aid will provide free civil legal services to at least 5,000 older Marylanders and their caregivers each year during the two-year grant period.

# THANK YOU!

The list that follows reflects the generosity of donors in calendar year 2015.

*\*Law Firms of Distinction contributed a minimum of \$300 per attorney.*

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The Leonard and Helen R. Stulman Charitable Foundation  
The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Inc.

### Premier Partners \$50,000 to \$99,999

DLA Piper LLP (US)\*  
Kramon & Graham, PA\*

### MVP Partners \$25,000 to \$49,999

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Every effort was made to ensure accuracy in this listing. If we have inadvertently omitted any donor, please accept our sincere apologies.

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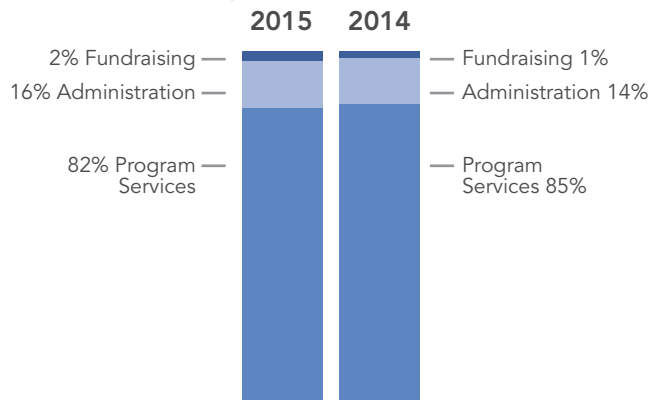
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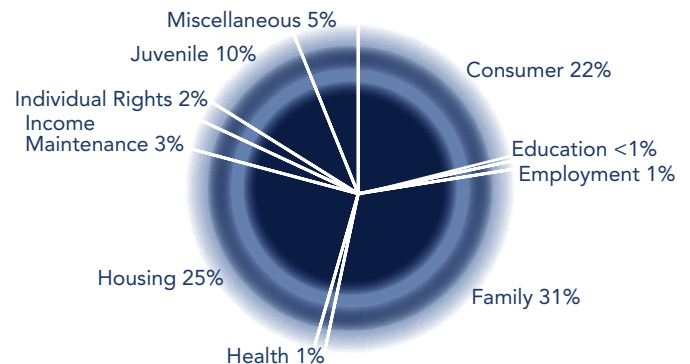


## FINANCIAL REPORT 2015

### Expenditure Allocation



### Client Case Types



	2015	2014
<b>Operating Income</b>	\$ 25,263,958	\$ 23,720,561
<b>Operating Expenses</b>	\$ 24,295,979	\$ 22,171,834
<b>Net Assets, End of Year</b>	\$18,275,071	\$18,549,501

The components of Net Assets at 12/31/2015 were: unrestricted \$11,804,828; temporarily restricted \$6,463,243; and permanently restricted \$7,000.

### Served by County 2015

	Cases	Persons
<b>Total</b>	<b>79,577</b>	<b>99,834</b>
Allegany	882	1,438
Anne Arundel *	18,512	19,615
Baltimore City	17,217	23,737
Baltimore	6,452	7,952
Calvert	750	805
Caroline	390	688
Carroll	662	800
Cecil *	1,950	2,347
Charles	1,520	1,802
Dorchester	169	282
Frederick	1,903	2,687
Garrett	270	403
Harford	2,095	3,027
Howard	1,585	2,240
Kent	114	187
Montgomery	4,630	5,930
Prince George's *	14,129	16,695
Queen Anne's	328	465
Somerset *	264	529
St. Mary's	931	1,120
Talbot	316	560
Washington	899	1,072
Wicomico	1,177	2,605
Worcester	321	640
Out-of-state	2,111	2,208

\* Includes *pro se* litigants assisted through Maryland Legal Aid's courthouse *pro se* projects and the District Court Self-Help Resource Centers in Anne Arundel and Prince George's counties.

### Selected Sources of Funds

#### Federal; Federal/State/Local Partnerships:

	2015	2014
Legal Services Corporation	\$3,973,489	\$3,725,631
Ryan White/HIV/AIDS Legal Assistance/Baltimore City	\$124,962	\$91,322
Legal Assistance to Victims Grant (OVW)	\$136,191	—

#### State:

	2015	2014
Maryland Legal Services Corporation	\$10,707,049	\$10,707,049
Contract services regarding abused and neglected children, District Court Self-Help Resource Centers, domestic violence and child custody	\$6,682,318	\$6,148,418
Attorney General Foreclosure Settlement (administered by Maryland Department of Housing & Community Development)	\$1,186,472	\$1,119,214

#### Local:

	2015	2014
Title III-B/Elderly Assistance: Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, Queen Anne's and St. Mary's Counties; Lower and Upper Eastern Shore	\$315,276	\$325,781

#### County Grant:

Prince George's - Community Partnership	\$30,000	—
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#### County Grants-In-Aid:

Anne Arundel	\$18,000	\$22,000
Baltimore City	\$139,668	\$126,734
Baltimore	59,601	\$70,000
Harford	\$ 29,412	\$ 29,412
Howard	\$ 95,890	\$ 102,890

#### Circuit Court Pro Se Grants:

Anne Arundel	\$170,000	\$162,405
Cecil	\$30,000	\$ 25,000

#### Private Donations:

Contributions	\$748,049	\$ 529,414
Foundations	\$ 593,369	\$ 226,447

This report contains a summary of 2015 financial information. Complete audited financial statements are available from Maryland Legal Aid upon request.

# THE RIPPLE EFFECT

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