Justice Rising 2017/18

Are you familiar with the legend of the phoenix? According to mythology, this magical bird bursts into flames at the end of its long life, and is reborn as it rises up, transformed, from the ashes.

Transformation is not easy. Like the phoenix, Legal Aid of Nebraska took a leap of faith to transform our services.

In 2017-18, we unveiled a new three-year strategic plan and reaffirmed our legal priorities. Critical projects were launched and expanded: assisting vulnerable elders and victims of domestic violence, meeting and serving clients in their own neighborhoods, and recruiting volunteer attorneys to assist in case of catastrophic disasters in Nebraska. And we survived our own catastrophic disaster — a devastating fire that destroyed our Lincoln offices on February 19, 2018.

Inspired by our clients who face strife and injustice every day, Legal Aid has risen to the challenges of our work and mission. Our nearly 50 attorneys, and additional staff and volunteers provide a remarkable range of legal help, changing the lives of Nebraska’s low-income families.

There is far more to come. Justice is rising.

Milo Mumgaard
Executive Director, Legal Aid of Nebraska
On Presidents Day 2018, an early morning, three-alarm fire in downtown Lincoln ripped through and destroyed Legal Aid’s long-time home in the historic Terminal Building. Fire, smoke and water damage caused a total loss of our law firm, including the self-help Access to Justice Center and the offices of two dozen attorneys and staff. In just a few hours, over 30 years of history representing Lincoln’s poor was obliterated.

But the next morning, Legal Aid’s lawyers were exactly where they needed to be: in court, representing the vulnerable clients who rely upon them every day. Legal Aid did not miss a beat, continuing its mission and, over the weeks and months since the disastrous fire in Lincoln, has become even stronger. Staff will move into new offices in the Terminal Building in early 2019.

We knew all along Legal Aid in Lincoln could rise up from these ashes — because we see it every day from our low-income clients. Every day we use the law to help them escape horrific abuse, keep a roof over their families’ heads, end the constant worry of too much debt and too little income, and stop the instability in their lives. Each day, Legal Aid’s clients find hope and optimism that previously seemed too far out of reach, too much to overcome. In the face of unrelentingly bad odds, our clients daily teach us what it means to rise up and come out better on the other side.

Legal Aid’s story of hope needs to be repeated for many more low-income Nebraska families, so that even more can “rise from the ashes.”
FOCUS ON PRIORITIES

Focus. Legal Aid is taking huge steps forward to improve our focus. After talking with hundreds of clients, allies, and leaders over 18 months, Legal Aid refocused its time and resources on the most significant legal needs impacting the daily lives of our low-income clients: housing, income & benefits, family and debt.

This focus on basic legal needs – including wrongful foreclosures or evictions, debt collection by predatory lenders, domestic violence, vulnerable families in unsafe and unstable homes, denial of basic supports and lost wages to bad employers – now directs everything we do. Because we are focused, Legal Aid can make even more of an impact on the relentlessly stressful daily lives of Nebraska’s low-income families.

Legal Aid fought to protect the rights of:

- **Housing:** 1,253 households facing unfair evictions, unsafe residences and other housing issues
- **Income & Benefits:** 1,722 families in need of income supports such as social security, SNAP, health insurance, taxes, veteran benefits and unpaid wages
- **Family:** 6,093 families striving for stability through protection orders against domestic violence, child custody, divorce and guardianships
- **Debt:** 1,631 individuals with consumer needs, including medical debt, bankruptcy and utility shut-offs

### Cases by Priority

- **Housing:** 12%
- **Income & Benefits:** 16%
- **Family:** 57%
- **Debt:** 15%

12% + 16% + 57% + 15% = 100%

IN 2017

Justice Rising 2017/18

legalaidofnebraska.org
WHERE, HOW AND WHO WE SERVE

In 2017, the work of Legal Aid of Nebraska impacted 26,747 people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cases handled and closed</td>
<td>10,699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases involved a victim of abuse</td>
<td>1,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.1% of all households served were in deep poverty</td>
<td>3,016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.6% of all households helped included children</td>
<td>2,154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.8% of all clients were older adults (over 60)</td>
<td>1,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>469 cases involved U.S. veterans</td>
<td>18,427 requests for assistance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2017, the work of Legal Aid of Nebraska impacted 26,747 people

“I’m glad I took the step and fought for my kids. It was a long journey, but so worth it! I’m so thankful for Legal Aid!”

– Jessica

To hear Jessica’s whole story, please go to www.legalaidofnebraska.org/jessica
Many thanks to all the generous individuals who helped make “equal justice happen” in 2017. We appreciate you and respect your privacy.
“I’ve always had a commitment to public service – I was raised that way. That’s why Kutak Rock is a good place for me, because they have always had an emphasis on building a better community.”

Kutak Rock attorney Amy Van Horne has been a member of the Legal Aid Board of Directors since 2015 and is Chair of the Board’s Planning Committee.

‘After I learned about Legal Aid and the work they did, I wanted to get involved,’ she said. ‘When people need an attorney and can’t afford one, Legal Aid attorneys are in the trenches providing services to those who otherwise wouldn’t have it. It is critically important.”

Kutak Rock also has a long history of support for equal justice. “It is humbling to be serving today with a strong Legal Aid that is, in many significant ways, a direct result of the hard and selfless leadership of Nebraskans like Bob Kutak, David Jacobson and Harold Rock,” said Legal Aid Executive Director Milo Mumgaard.

The generous support of Nebraska’s law firms, including Kutak Rock and many others, and of board members like Amy are an embodiment of the attorney’s ethical obligation of financial and professional service.
Thank you to our volunteers and interns for dedicating time and energy to Legal Aid's mission.
Justice Rising 2017/18

2017 VOLUNTEERS & PRIVATE ATTORNEY INVOLVEMENT

Tara Gardner – Lincoln
Vanessa Gorden – Lincoln
Angela Heimes – Omaha
Josh Johnson – Hastings
Stephen Knudsen – Aurora
Steffanie Kotik – Lincoln
Jeff Kurtz – Omaha
Cheryl Marsh – Broken Bow
Angelia McClure – Lincoln
Megan McCollow – Lincoln
Lisa Meyer – York
John Moeller – Sioux City IA
Stephanie Payne – Lincoln
Mark Porto – Grand Island
Kay Prather – Beloit KS
Katy Reichert – Scottsbluff
Kathy Rockey – Norfolk
John Sabott – Grand Island
Audrey Sautter – York
Lisa Shifflet – McCook
Melissa Schutt – Fremont

Ashley Spahn – Benkelman
Lisa Shifflet – McCook
Shaylene Smith – Crete
Gail Steen – Lincoln
Sandy Stern – Omaha
Erin Urban – Grand Island
Nicholas Wurtz – Omaha

“ ”

“We advocate for the most vulnerable whether it be due to illness, risk of homelessness or domestic abuse. We give a voice to those who would otherwise not be heard.”

– Ann Mangiameli
Managing Attorney, Health, Education & Law Project

PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

Legal Aid makes equal justice happen through numerous statewide programs and projects:

- Native American Program
- Farm and Ranch Program
- Ag Worker Rights Program
- Health Education and Law Project (HELP)
- REACH Initiative
- Tax Law Project
- Juvenile Justice Project
- Elder Justice Project
- Disaster Relief Project
- Clean Slate Project
- Juvenile Reentry Project
- UPLIFT Project
- Housing Justice Project
- Private Attorney Involvement
- AccessLine® (centralized intake, advice and counsel)
- Access to Justice (assisted self-help center and online through LawHelpNE.org)

Legal Aid of Nebraska does not discriminate on the basis of religion, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, color, age, marital status, citizen or authorized alien status, veteran status, or disability in the administration of any of its programs.

Justice Rising 2017/18
“To come home and have a notice on your door is gut-wrenching. Without Legal Aid, I would have been literally homeless with three children and none of my belongings.”
– Brooklynn

To hear Brooklynn’s whole story, please go to www.legalaidofnebraska.org/brooklynn

FINANCIAL SUMMARY
Legal Aid of Nebraska for the year ended December 31, 2017

2017 Revenue by Percentage
$7,379,206

2017 Expenses
$7,177,371

NOTE: Best practices for non-profit organizations indicate that the organization should have operating reserves equal to between three and six months operating expenses. At 12-31-17, Legal Aid of Nebraska had operating reserves of approximately 3.1 months, based on the 2017 budget.
The Hon. David Piester, who has been a longtime supporter and President of the Legal Aid of Nebraska Board of Directors for five years, retired from the Board on September 30, 2018. He had this to say:

"2017 was a year of increased focus for Legal Aid to be as effective as we can, with even more fiscal stability. Legal Aid's Board and staff maintained a firm eye on the bottom line, while looking to our future full of exciting growth. The Board's completion and launch of Legal Aid's Strategic Plan 2018-20 gives a practical roadmap for our vision of bringing meaningful civil legal assistance to low-income Nebraskans in all corners of our amazing state.

"When 9 out of 10 civil legal problems facing our clients continue to go unaddressed, it is imperative Legal Aid seeks new and even more effective ways of making equal justice happen. The new Strategic Plan opens the door to so many new opportunities, partnerships, and funding. And with a growing, talented, and caring staff, Legal Aid continues to be an excellent employer, well-administered non-profit, and remarkable community asset – a source of great pride for all involved.

"Most of the time we are thrown into transformation by life and unavoidable circumstances. While the beginning of 2018 was a little rocky, Legal Aid will emerge from the Lincoln fire stronger and even more empathetic to the plight of our clients. But in order to keep up this focus and momentum on behalf of the most vulnerable members of our state, Legal Aid needs your help. With your ongoing and increased financial support, Legal Aid can bring the promise of justice to so many more Nebraskans who need it. Please help with what you can. I personally can vouch for how far your support goes, and how much difference it makes for children, families, and other struggling Nebraskans. Thank you again for your support."

Hon. David Piester
OUR MISSION
To promote justice, dignity, hope and self-sufficiency through quality civil legal aid for those who have nowhere else to turn.

LEGAL AID LOCATIONS

OMAHA
209 S. 19th St., Suite 200
Omaha, NE 68102-1709

LINCOLN
(beginning late February, 2019)
941 O Street, Suite 300
Lincoln, NE 68508

GRAND ISLAND
1811 W. 2nd St., Suite 440
Grand Island, NE 68803

NORFOLK
214 N. 7th St., Suite 10
Norfolk, NE 68701

NORTH PLATTE
102 E. 3rd St.
Suite 102
North Platte, NE 69101

SCOTTSBLUFF
1423 1st Ave., P.O. Box 1365
Scottsbluff, NE 69363

BANCROFT
415 Main St.,
P.O. Box 325
Bancroft, NE 68004

LEXINGTON
200 W. 7th Street, Suite 220
Lexington, NE 68850

Gender Breakdown

Demographics

70% Female
30% Male

83% Caucasian
10% Hispanic
17% Black or African American
5% Native American

1% Asian
4% Other

Caucasian
Hispanic
Black or African American
Native American

Asian
Other