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**Leaders from Florida Blue, Community First Credit Union and
Fisher, Tousey, Leas & Ball to co-chair Freed to Run 3.0**

Third annual Capitol to Coast six-marathon series supports civil legal aid for pediatric patients

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The exponential growth of Jacksonville Area Legal Aid’s largest fundraiser, Freed to Run, will get a boost this year from three newly appointed co-chairs of the event: Darnell Smith, Florida Blue’s market president for North Florida; Eric Krall, mortgage sales manager with Community First Credit Union; and Ryan M. Ludwick, an attorney with Fisher, Tousey, Leas & Ball.

The trio will work to attract more sponsors and relay teams, with Smith focusing on the health-care community, Krall on the business community, and Ludwick on the legal community.

All proceeds from the Dec. 15-20 Capitol to Coast six-marathon relay series will go toward an endowment for the Northeast Florida Medical Legal Partnership and will be matched at 125% by Baptist Health. The NFMLP provides civil legal aid to pediatric patients and their families to ensure they have safe and sanitary housing, as well as access to health care, educational accommodations, and other needed services.

Each co-chair explained his reasons for joining the cause:

“Florida Blue is a proud supporter of Freed to Run and Jacksonville Area Legal Aid. Children in our community who are confronted with serious health challenges shouldn’t have them compounded by legal issues associated with poverty. I invite my colleagues in the health-care community to join Florida Blue in supporting the endowment for the Northeast Florida Medical Legal Partnership.”

- Darnell Smith, Market President – North Florida Region, Florida Blue

“As lawyers, we understand the importance of legal representation and advocacy, and as human beings we value our community’s children. That’s why Fisher, Tousey, Leas & Ball supports Freed to Run, and it’s why I believe my colleagues throughout the legal community will rise to the challenge.”

- Ryan Ludwick, Fisher, Tousey, Leas & Ball

“At Community First Credit Union, we really do put community first. And we know that Jacksonville Area Legal Aid does so much to ensure opportunity and well-being for so many Northeast Florida families. That’s why we’re proud to sponsor Freed to Run, and we’re eager to bring more businesses on board so that over the next few years JALA can reach the \$2.25 million goal for the endowment and fund the Northeast Florida Medical Legal Partnership in perpetuity.”

- Eric Krall, Community First Credit Union

Freed to Run began in 2017 when Gunster shareholder Mike Freed ran six consecutive marathons from the steps of the Florida Supreme Court to the lawn of the Duval County Courthouse, stopping at

courthouses along the route and raising more than \$70,000 for JALA. Last year he repeated the six-day journey accompanied each day by relay teams, and together Freed, the 17 teams and other sponsors and supporters raised \$400,000, with more than half coming from Baptist Health's match.

"What Mike Freed started has generated an unprecedented level of community-wide support for JALA, and we are thrilled to add the star power of these three leaders from the health-care, business and legal communities," said JALA CEO Jim Kowalski. "We offer our deepest gratitude to Darnell Smith, Eric Krall and Ryan Ludwick and to Florida Blue, Community First Credit Union and Fisher, Tousey, Leas and Ball for lending their support and talent. With their help, I know we'll have the most successful fundraising effort in JALA's history."

For information about sponsoring Freed to Run, registering a team or donating, visit <https://www.jaxlegalaid.org/freedtorun/>.

About Jacksonville Area Legal Aid

The mission of Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, Inc. is to obtain and provide high-quality legal assistance to low-income and other special-need groups and to stimulate and empower groups of poor people to accomplish energetic and affirmative advocacy, all to alleviate the circumstances, incidence and causes of poverty.

About the Northeast Florida Medical Legal Partnership

The [Northeast Florida Medical Legal Partnership](#) is part of a nationwide network of projects in which professionals from the medical and legal communities combine resources to produce outcomes for low-income and vulnerable patients (children and adults) that positively impact their health and ability to thrive. Through the partnership, Jacksonville Area Legal Aid serves about 200 children a year, including patients of Wolfson Children's Hospital, Nemours Children's Specialty Care, Jacksonville, UF Health Specialty Pediatric Clinics, and Community PedsCare®, a pediatric program of Community Hospice & Palliative Care.