

2021 Annual Report

Protecting & Strengthening

INDIVIDUALS | FAMILIES | COMMUNITIES



Jacksonville Area Legal Aid
A WEALTH OF JUSTICE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NEITHER

From housing instability to domestic violence to asylum, Jacksonville Area Legal Aid addressed many challenges facing Northeast Florida in 2021.

Requests for help were up 125% for eviction prevention and 136% for domestic violence restraining orders over pre-pandemic levels.

As 4,027 Floridians used JALA's online Eviction Answer Interview to create a legal response to an eviction filing, JALA staff worked to increase the professional services available for housing counseling and eviction protection.

In late 2021, JALA was awarded a Housing Stability Counseling Program grant. With funding from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, JALA offers housing counseling and help with Emergency Rental Assis-

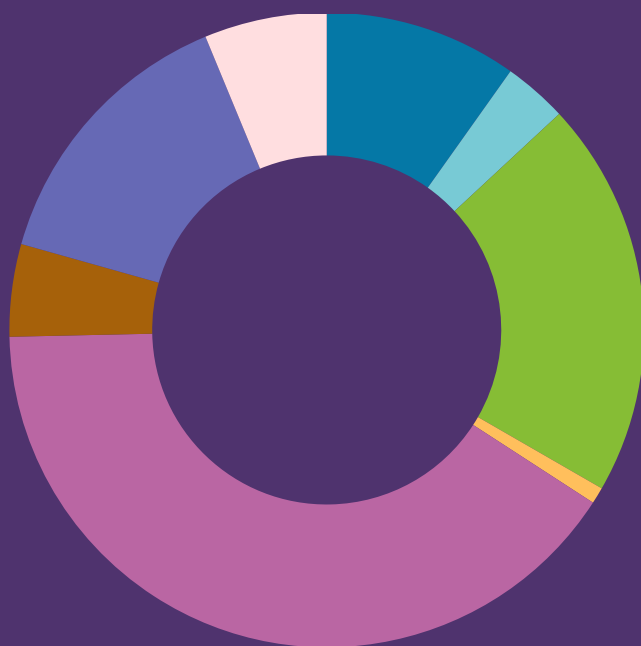
tance Programs and mortgage loan modification applications. Its attorneys also advocate with landlords, lenders, loan servicers, and assistance program administrators.

In addition, JALA received a competitive \$2.4 million HUD Eviction Protection Grant. Along with five partnering legal aid organizations across Florida, JALA is piloting a novel approach of deploying non-attorney "navigators" to help clients secure emergency rental assistance while staff attorneys handle threatened or pending eviction litigation. The program is also tackling the emerging problem of land-

lords accepting rental assistance while continuing to wrongfully pursue eviction.

Meanwhile, JALA's immigration unit began working with Lutheran Social Services of Northeast Florida to assist hundreds of refugees resettling in our community in the wake of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

These are among just some of the ways JALA has protected and strengthened the individuals, families and communities of Northeast Florida. On the following pages you will find out more about our far-reaching impact.



SERVICES PROVIDED BY CASE TYPE

Consumer	668
Employment	221
Family & Children	1,375
Health	57
Housing	2,752
Disability Rights & Benefits	320
Individual Rights	978
Miscellaneous	424
TOTAL CASES HANDLED	6,795
TOTAL PEOPLE IMPACTED *	16,289

* based on number of people in client households

JALA'S SERVICES IN 2021



8,576

Applications for Help

3,257

Advised Through Legal Clinics

\$1,041,976

in Legal Services Provided by Private Attorneys Through JALA

466

Veterans Served



1,558

Domestic Violence Survivors Sought Legal Help (Up 68% Over 2019)

\$752,192

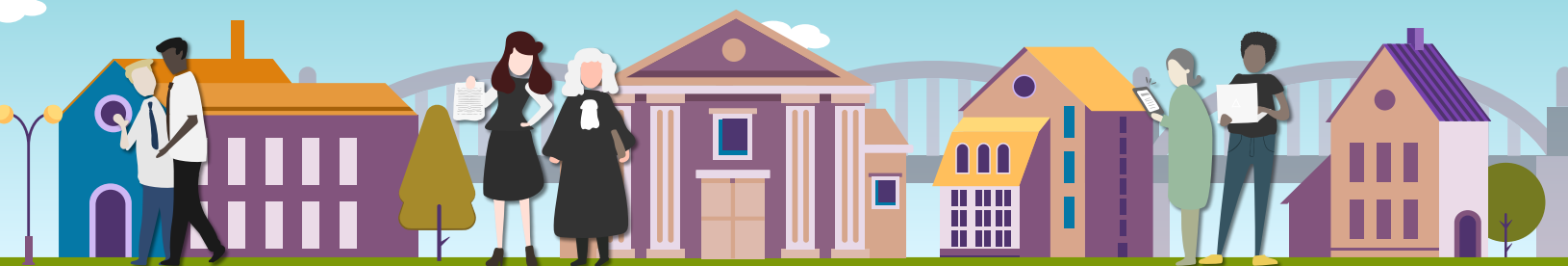
in Family Support for Domestic Violence Survivors & Others Secured

180

DV Survivors Requested Protective Orders (Up 64% Over 2019)

\$1,016,774

in Income & Assets Protected by Averting Predatory Lending & Illegal Debt Collection



125%

Increase in Eviction Prevention Requests Since 2019

160

Evictions Avoided Through Attorney Intervention

4,027

People Used JALA's Online Eviction Prevention Tool

42

Foreclosures Prevented & \$1,101,366 Secured in Financial Relief



1,324

Elders Served

\$139,563

Secured for Tenants as Restitution for Substandard Housing Conditions & Discrimination

1,541

People with Disabilities Served & \$1,076,980 in Disability Benefits Secured

391

Children Referred to the Northeast Florida Medical Legal Partnership



"As JALA moves toward some sense of normalcy during what we hope are the final days of the pandemic, many of those we serve have not recovered, or are facing more issues ahead. We are seeing rising evictions and a worsening of the affordable housing crisis throughout Florida; foreclosures, particularly among seniors in reverse mortgages, who have been affected by property insurance issues; and lawful refugees seeking shelter from crises abroad. Other challenges are continuing. JALA receives zero general support from the State of Florida, zero general support from the City of Jacksonville, and zero general support from The Florida Bar Foundation. With our partners, however, we will do what we have always done—confront the problems facing our most vulnerable community members."

Jim Kowalski, President & CEO

PRO BONO ATTORNEYS ANSWER THE CALL

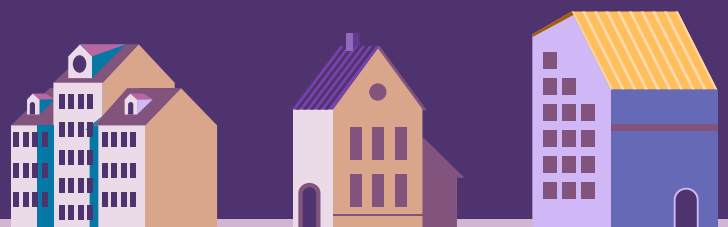
With just 36 staff attorneys to respond to 8,576 requests for help in 2021, JALA counted on the assistance of more than 300 pro bono attorneys to meet the legal needs of our neighbors.

JALA quickly pivoted to virtual delivery of services for as many projects as possible during the pandemic, shifting its Eviction Defense Self Help Project from an in-person weekly clinic to telephone or Zoom appointments within just a week.

Volunteer attorneys continue to provide valuable legal advice and help clients create rent withholding letters for poor conditions in rental units. Meanwhile, JALA

moved to offering its monthly Family Law and Bankruptcy information clinics in a Zoom format, which kept everyone safe but also gave self-represented litigants vital information.

In 2022, JALA will continue to leverage the technology that proved crucial during the pandemic, while also rebuilding its schedule of in-person events. We hope to re-engage our roster of longtime pro bono attorneys, while also recruiting new volunteers to support our in-person clinics and take cases for full representation.



NICK PULIGNANO HELPS WIDOW AND MOTHER OF THREE ESCAPE A NIGHTMARE HOME



Christina McEuen was still adjusting to life as a widowed mother of three when she signed a lease on a small home in the Mandarin neighborhood of Jacksonville.

She soon found the house had leaks everywhere, including the roof, pipes, and water heater. The handyman sent to correct the problems essentially applied useless Band-Aids to gaping wounds.

"This house was a nightmare," said McEuen, whose youngest was born with a compromised immune system and other special needs, including severe autism. Early in her pregnancy, her husband had died in a trucking accident, so she was alone in caring for her three sons.

After pouring more than \$10,000 into the court registry and representing herself in an effort to withhold rent until the landlord made proper repairs—and after she and her children had endured years of the extreme health effects of toxic mold—McEuen finally found salvation through JALA and pro bono attorney Nick

Pulignano, head of the Business Practice Group at Marks Gray.

"JALA took a huge weight off my shoulders when they found Mr. Nick Pulignano for my case. That was truly incredible, because up until that point we were just winging it," McEuen said.

The case went to mediation, where the landlord agreed that McEuen would be paid \$4,500 from the court registry. All claims and counterclaims were dismissed.

McEuen, who was living on \$1,600 a month from her Social Security survivor's benefits and her son's disability benefits, was able to repay several small loans she'd used to move. The settlement funds allowed her to repay the debt and other moving expenses and replace furniture that had been damaged or destroyed by water, mold and mildew.

McEuen deeply appreciated Pulignano's prompt and courteous attention.

"He was amazing. He was on point," said McEuen, who also credits JALA for the outcome. "It blew me out of the water how much JALA cared and looked after me. I'm just a random fish in the sea, and these guys were looking out for me and my family, and so was Nick."



LAWYERS AND LAW FIRMS SUPPORT JALA'S WORK

Jordan Shaw helps direct over \$50,000 to JALA

JALA recently received a \$51,356 cy pres award resulting from a case in which attorney Jordan A. Shaw represented a class of patients who were improperly billed by a hospital.

"We are quite proud of the result in this case," said Shaw, a partner at Zebersky Payne Shaw Lewenz, LLP. "We were able to obtain meaningful compensation for class members, including a 100% refund of actual damages plus statutory damages. As a bonus, and because the settlement was non-reversionary, we were also able to give back to the community in the form of a cy pres award."

Under cy pres doctrine, the courts can approve a charitable donation out of unclaimed class action funds, or a direct grant in lieu of damages to an organization that could vindicate class member rights in the future.

Legal aid programs are often the beneficiaries of cy pres awards, as the public interest work they do, including in consumer cases, often benefits people who face civil legal issues not unlike those of the class from which the award came.

Shaw also credits Christi Lawson, the attorney for the defendant. "Both her team and mine agreed that JALA was the absolute best recipient for the cy pres funds. The case involved the Jacksonville community, and we wanted to give back to that community—a goal that JALA serves with excellence."

JALA CEO Jim Kowalski said the award will go a long way in supporting JALA's work, including consumer protection. "We are extremely grateful to the attorneys as well as the judge in this case," Kowalski said.



Pajcic & Pajcic Yard Golf raises over \$600,000 for JALA over 10 years

For Michael Pajcic's 12th birthday, his family created a Wiffle-ball golf course in their yard. The game turned out to be so much fun that over the years the Pajcics continued to play yard golf and make improvements to the course.

Years later, after Michael became a lawyer and went into practice with his father, Steve Pajcic, the family decided a yard golf tournament would be a fun way to raise money for Jacksonville Area Legal Aid. So in 2012, Steve and Anne Pajcic hosted a two-person scramble tournament, beginning a tradition that over the past decade has raised more than \$600,000 for JALA.

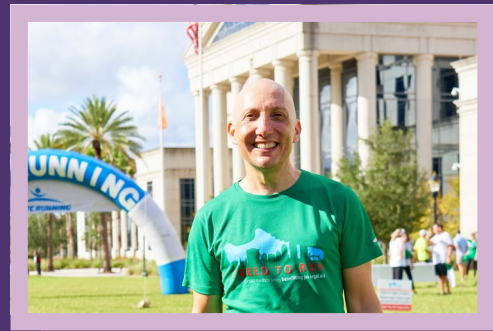
Each year, Steve and Michael Pajcic of Pajcic & Pajcic have matched 100% of donations, including registrations, hole-in-one winner prizes and sponsorships, while many of those winning the "Hole in One" challenge have donated their \$6,000 winnings to JALA.

The event expanded in scope and attendance each year until 2020-21, when it was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Early on it grew to encompass the neighboring yards of both Pajcic families and to include a "Celebrity Shoot Out," which in 2022 included six current and former Jaguars, NBA Hall of Fame member Artis Gilmore and former PGA golfer Mark McCumber.

"We couldn't be more grateful to the Pajcic families and to the firm," said JALA CEO Jim Kowalski. "They found an incredibly fun way to raise money for JALA, and with the help of the talented Robyn Sieron they have grown it into a much-anticipated annual event."

FREED TO RUN CLOSES IN ON ITS \$2.25 MILLION GOAL

Multi-marathon series Freed to Run reached \$1.9 million in fundraising in 2021. All funds raised will be used to permanently endow the Northeast Florida Medical Legal Partnership, which helped more than 400 pediatric patients access legal aid in 2021. With the goal of \$2.25 million now clearly in sight, the event founded by Gunster Shareholder Mike Freed in 2017 is expected to cross the ultimate finish line in 2022.



JALA'S IMMIGRATION UNIT HELPS AFGHAN REFUGEES FLEEING TALIBAN



Working hand-in-hand with Lutheran Social Services of Northeast Florida, JALA has been instrumental in helping about 350 Afghan refugees settle in Northeast Florida after fleeing the Taliban.

"We are working on filing their asylum applications and on clinics to get pro-bono attorneys to help to file their asylum applications," said Andrea Pinzon, division director of JALA's Immigration Unit. "Many of these people are women and family units that fled because they had direct ties with the United States, had family members that worked for the U.S.A., or women with children that fled because of the Taliban taking power."

Lutheran Social Services, which manages a refugee resettlement grant from the Florida Department of Children and Families, is seeking volunteers for a series of asylum clinics, including people who can translate Dari or Pashto, as well as pro bono attorneys, paralegals and law/pre-law students.

In addition to her work with refugees, Pinzon established a sliding-scale affordable fee structure for immigration clients and is active in class action work on behalf of separated families.

REVENUE AND FINANCIALS

2021 EXPENSES

● Program *	\$6,212,726
● Management & General	\$829,339
● Fundraising	\$150,408
TOTAL	\$7,192,473

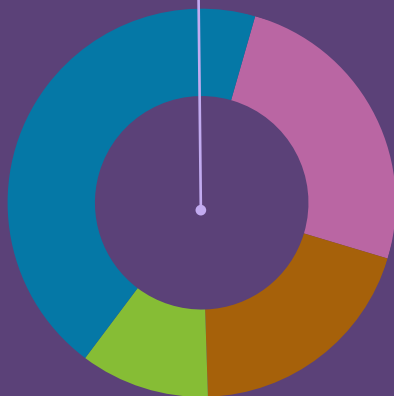
* Including the Value of Donated Services & Supplies



2021 REVENUE

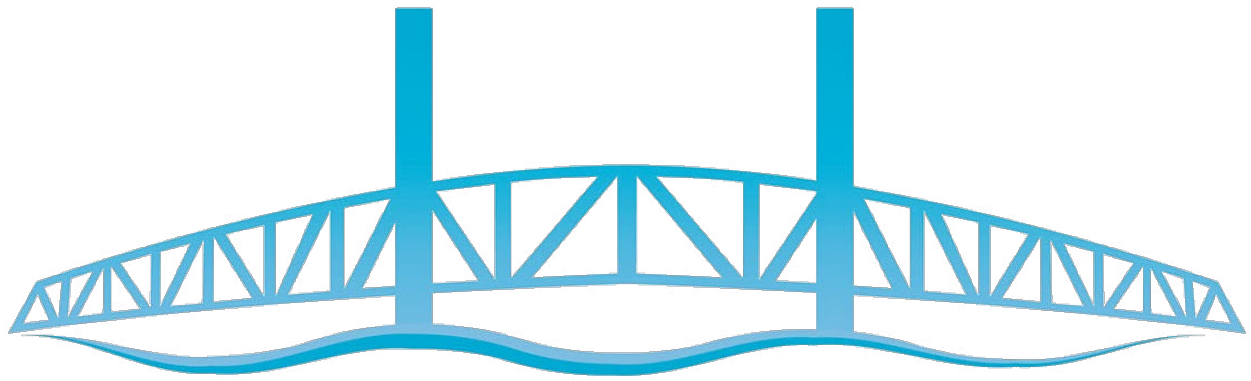
● Grants	\$4,209,609	53.32%
● Donated Services	\$1,041,976	13.20%
● COVID Assistance	\$948,260	12.01%
● County Funding*	\$777,372	9.85%
● Contributions/Fundraising	\$482,406	6.11%
● Earned Income	\$434,918	5.51%
TOTAL	\$7,894,541	100%

County Funding Breakdown



● St. Johns County <i>Article V fees plus general support</i>	\$343,559	44.19%
● Duval County <i>Article V fees only</i>	\$195,819	25.19%
● Clay County <i>Article V fees plus general support</i>	\$154,339	19.85%
● Nassau County <i>Article V fees plus general support</i>	\$83,655	10.76%
TOTAL	\$777,372	100%

* General Support Funding Provided by St. Johns, Clay and Nassau Counties only



Jacksonville Area Legal Aid

A WEALTH OF JUSTICE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NEITHER

Downtown Jacksonville Office

126 W. Adams St.
Jacksonville, FL 32202
Phone: (904) 356-8371
Toll-Free: (866) 356-8371

St. Johns County Legal Aid

222 San Marco Avenue
St. Augustine, FL 32084
Phone: (904) 827-9921
Toll Free: (877) 827-9921

Clay County Legal Aid

Located inside the Clay County Courthouse
825 N. Orange Avenue, Rm 308
Green Cove Springs, FL 32043
Phone: (904) 284-8410
Toll Free: (866) 284-8410

