



# 2022

## Annual Report

Advocating for legal rights,  
continuing a tradition of  
service in DuPage County



## From Our Executive Director

Bill Scott for helping build the long history of volunteerism through our program and for helping our clients with their legal matters for decades.

Even more heartwarming are those individuals that give in memoriam. Our legal community lost one of our champions this year, Kent Gaertner. He was a bankruptcy guru, gentle giant with hearty laugh, and always had a warm smile to give any one of his colleagues. He was a very active member of the DuPage County Bar Association and one of our past presidents who is missed by all. His memory was honored by many that donated to DuPage Legal Aid Foundation, according to his wishes, and continued his legacy of kindness. I feel very grateful to have known Kent.

DLA continues to provide our clients an avenue to a brighter future. Seeing the progress that our clients make towards their individual goals after we help remove legal barriers has long been one of my great joys. I recently had the opportunity to talk with a client who was a domestic violence survivor. We helped her obtain an Order of Protection and assisted her with her divorce, established child support, maintenance, and helped her solidify a parenting schedule that gave the family more stability. Because of our program, she was able to separate from her abuser and gain self-sufficiency. At the time we represented this client, she was working part time and was raising her three minor children. Fast forward five years after her divorce, and she is now working as a social worker helping other domestic violence survivors. Her oldest child has since graduated from college, and now working as a nurse. Her second child is attending college, and her youngest is serving in the

armed forces. Her strength and spirit are truly inspirational.

This year, DLA also continued to grow the services it offers. We are so grateful to have formed a new partnership with the DuPage County State's Attorney Office. The partnership helps provide comprehensive legal assistance to domestic violence survivors in criminal matters by providing legal assistance with obtaining child support through the State's Attorney's IV-D Program, and temporary parenting issues and contributions to day care or school expenses through DLA. The partnership allows for the State's Attorney's Office to file Petitions for Support within days of a criminal case being filed. DLA then follows and provides legal assistance with filing appropriate petitions for temporary parenting issues. This lends some stability to families that are experiencing discord after a domestic violence situation. DLA also continued to hold a successful Judges' Nite fundraiser. The event raised \$35,224 for DLA. This is astounding considering we were not even sure whether we would even have an event this year.

We are so grateful for each and every individual contribution and opportunities that have lead to even more growth for our program. We would also like to take the time to thank the Eighteenth Judicial Circuit, the Lawyers Trust Fund, and Milton Township for financially supporting our program and the individuals that we help.

If you are inclined to volunteer or donate to our program, or have any suggestions, concerns, or questions for us, please do not hesitate to call (630-653-6212) or visit us at [dupagelegalaid.org](http://dupagelegalaid.org).

Sincerely,  
Cecilia Najera

Dear Friends,

We have closed the 2021-2022 fiscal year. This is my fourth year as Director and 20th year working with DuPage Legal Aid ("DLA"). I continue to be amazed by the kindness and generosity of the DuPage County legal community. Our volunteers continue to give their time and talents even when attorneys are overscheduled, and it has become less convenient to take on the responsibility of a pro bono family law case. Our staff and volunteers continue to work hard and provided 589 individuals with legal assistance.

This year we recognized the volunteers that are the very lifeblood of DLA's every success. More specifically, we recognized the following volunteer attorneys for giving and volunteering their time and talent to represent our less fortunate neighbors in family law cases. Wendy Musielak, Leah Setzen, Lindsay Stella, Deborah McCoy, and Christopher Zaruba donated over 50 hours of legal assistance. Jacqueline Aldrich and Marsha Celluci gave over 75 hours of service; and Lisa Giese, Laura Baldwin, Bryan Estes, Will Stogsdill, and Frank Valenti so generously provided over 100 hours of pro bono hours. We also recognized Ed Pacili for going the extra mile and finishing his client's case even though he had to ask a colleague to cover the case for him while he was out of the office for an extended period of time. Recognition also went to

*DLA has over 400 volunteer attorneys that give legal assistance to our clients. They are the reason our program continues to thrive and carry on the tradition of service, to our community, for over 47 years. Many of our volunteers believe that our profession is truly a service profession and part of our responsibility as lawyers is to assist individuals that are in need of legal assistance and cannot afford private counsel. Our volunteers are not only appreciated and valued greatly by our staff and Board, but also by their clients. Recently, we received some feedback from a client who really articulated how our program impacted their life. The client was assigned a volunteer attorney, Lee Marinaccio.*

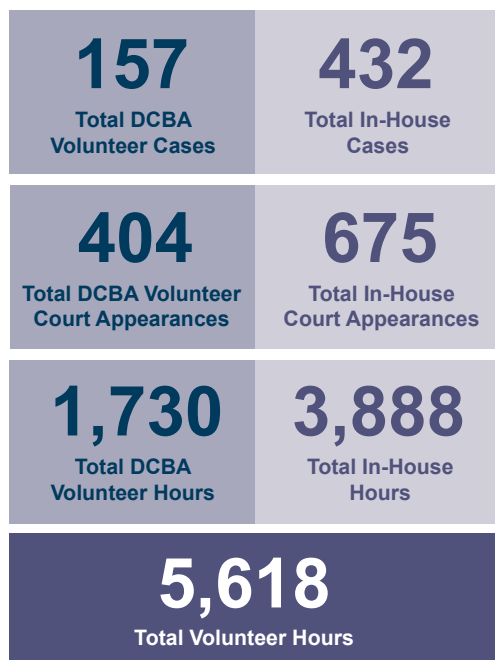
The client wrote,

*"I can't thank DLA and Lee A. Marinaccio enough! They were very professional and empathetic to my situation. I was given a top-notch legal staff to help me navigate a very difficult time for me. When you are poor of money, legal issues can seem insurmountable and terrifying. I was relieved of so much stress and anguish..."*

2020/21 2021/22

2021-22 Total Program Activity

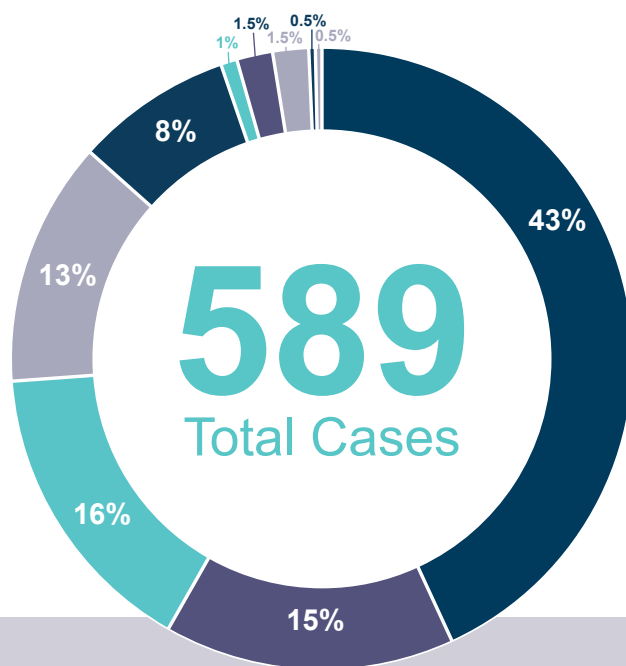
Total New Cases Screened:	1006	1075
Assigned to In-House Counsel:	310	322
Assigned to DCBA Volunteers:	116	59
Referred to DCBA-LRS:	331	350
Referred to Other Legal Service Organization:	0	0
Referred to Out of County Services:	6	10
Referred to No Retainer Attorney:	2	0
Modest Means (DCBA program):	2	5
Completed by In-House Counsel:	287	329
Completed by DCBA Volunteers:	122	58



## DuPage Legal Aid Service

### FY 2021-22 Cases by Type — Percentage

Order of Protection/Domestic Violence	254	43%
Divorce	89	15%
Parentage	92	16%
Guardian Ad Litem	75	13%
Guardianship	48	8%
Bankruptcy/Consumer	5	1%
Miscellaneous Legal	11	1.5%
Support (Maintenance)	11	1.5%
Housing Issues	2	0.5%
Wills & Estates	2	0.5%



### Why do you take pro bono cases? What benefit, value, or positives do your pro bono cases give to you?

“I am so fortunate to have been blessed with the opportunity to become an attorney. We become attys and accept an oath to uphold the Law, promote Justice and provide a service for those who need legal assistance. Our goal should be to solve problems, and do justice for our clients, not initiate new problems. Sometimes we lose sight of our responsibilities as problem solvers and focus on the business aspects of our practice. We are professionals who need to remain true to our professional standards and when needed give

back to those who need our assistance. The time spent volunteering on pro bono services is personally very rewarding, especially when you are able to provide assistance that changes a person’s life. Volunteering our time is a responsibility we all must assume to promote the good things we do as attorneys. The reputation of our profession could use some positive promotion. Volunteering is good for the attorney and great for our profession.”

- Lee Marinaccio.





*DuPage Legal Aid is dedicated to enlisting the pro bono aspect of lawyering by connecting DuPage County residents to high quality, compassionate legal representation. We educate and support individuals, families and community partners, and we provide our clients with the legal link to a brighter future.*

## Board of Directors and Staff 2021-22

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President: Lisa Murphy  
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Dave Pugsley, Administrative Assistant (PT)  
Nicole Janssen, Grant Coordinator (PT)

### Interns

Natalie Wenk  
Hema Yaddanpudi

## Thank you to our Donors!

**\$10,000**

100 Women Who Care

**\$5000+**

Anonymous

**\$1,000- \$4,999**

Andy Cores, George Frederick, Stephanie Husnick, John Pcolinski, Wendy Musielak, Mirabella Kincaid Frederick and Mirabella, McSwain Nagle Giese and Rapp

**\$500- \$999**

Cart and Guth Law In Memoriam of Kent A. Gaertner, Mark Bishop, Michael Sitrick, Angel Traub, Aronberg Goldgehn, Huck Bouma, PC, Monahan Law Group

**\$100-\$499**

Victoria Jozef In Memoriam of Kent A. Gaertner, Thomas Kenney In Memoriam of Kent A. Gaertner, B. Kocsi, LLC In Memoriam of Kent A. Gaertner, David Armamentos, Carolyn Armbrust, Rachel Boehm, Judith Cheney, Hon. John Demling, Ret., Joe Donat, Ted and Melissa Donner, Hon. Rodney Equi, Ret., Hon. William Ferguson, Ret., Joel Fina, Napoleon Griffin, Tania Harvey, Angela Iaria, Justice Ann Jorgensen, Ronald Kas, Vicki Kelly, Rebecca Krawczykowski, Ann Marie Lampariello, James Laraia, Stacey McCullough, Karen Mills, Christina Morrison, Roger and Sarah Poeppel, Steven Powers, Nicholas Rodriguez, Arthur Rummmler, Christopher and Cynthia Stacey, Eileen Trac, Alison Wardein, Charles Wentworth, Kimberly Verest, Kiley Whitty, Alexa You

**Less than \$100**

Victoria Jozef, Robert Rupp

### Grants

DuPage County Bar Association  
18th Judicial Court Civil Filing Fee Grant  
Lawyers Trust Fund  
Anonymous Grantor  
Richard Schulze Matching Grant  
Wayne Township