



Funding for Three Rivers Legal Services comes from the following:

- The Legal Services Corporation
 - The Florida Bar Foundation
 - Victims of Crime Act
 - Office of the Florida Attorney General
 - Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence
 - United Way of North Central Florida
 - United Way of Suwannee Valley
 - University of Florida Community Campaign
 - Elder Options in Alachua, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Suwannee & Union Counties
 - Alachua County Community Agency Partnership Program
 - Santa Fe College
 - Supportive Services for Veteran's Families with Meridian Behavioral Healthcare
 - USDA Rural Development
 - City of Gainesville CDBG
 - HUD Continuum of Care
 - County Commissions of Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Levy, Madison, Suwannee, & Union Counties
- Donate at www.trls.org
Support Three Rivers Legal Services, Inc. when you shop at smile.amazon.com



Jacksonville office Managing Attorney Felicia Wilcox, Executive Director Chris Larson, Pro Bono Coordinator Marcia Green and Board President Ray Brady enjoy the Chicago sites while attending the Equal Justice Conference

2017 ANNUAL REPORT



Three Rivers Legal Services, Inc.

Providing Civil Legal Aid since 1978

Three Rivers Legal Services, Inc. is a non-profit law firm dedicated to the provision of quality legal assistance to the poor, abused, disabled and elderly, and to empowerment through preventive legal education.

“Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life . . .”

~ Nelson Mandela

www.trls.org
Toll Free 866-256-8091



A Message from our Board President

Ray Brady

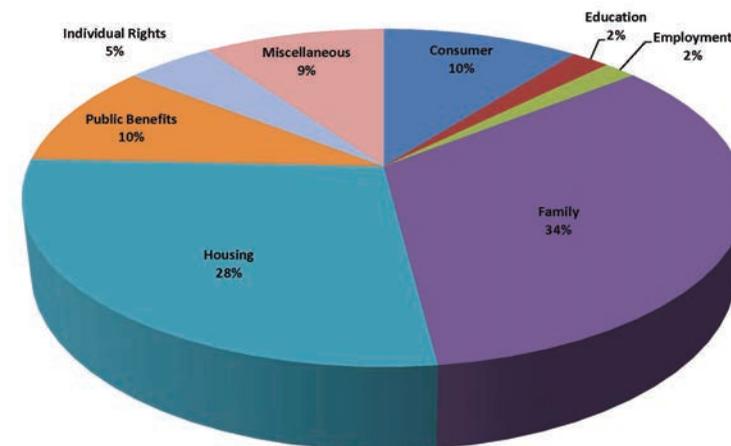
Dear Friends,

I am privileged to serve as the President of the Board of Directors for Three Rivers Legal Services. As you will see from this Annual Report, the past year was one of great progress and many accomplishments. In 2016, Three Rivers closed more than 4,150 cases for low income families and recovered benefits and other financial awards for clients valued at almost \$2.3 million dollars. We continued to work to expand our services to veterans, the elderly, and survivors of domestic violence. And we successfully partnered with the private bar to provide legal assistance projects for seniors, low income tax payers, and persons experiencing homelessness.

Many people living in poverty face life-changing adversity on a daily basis. Often their children lack adequate nutrition, healthcare and safe and secure housing. Seniors living in poverty are more vulnerable, and are the frequent targets of scams and abuses. Every day, Three Rivers strives to secure justice and transform the lives of clients, and the communities in which they live. We invite you to read further to see how this is being done.

Of course, none of our achievements would be possible without the efforts of our committed Board of Directors, dedicated volunteers, hard-working staff and law students, generous donors and funders, and supportive community partners. We are grateful for all of their efforts and for their commitment to fairness and justice for all. The coming year holds many challenges. Funding to provide the necessary resources and services may prove to be difficult. Your continued support is more important than ever, and is much appreciated.

Legal Issues for 4,153 Cases Closed in 2016



Staff attorneys Lakesha Thomas and Merise Jalali attend community outreach event

Our firm closed 4,153 cases for low income families in 2016. That total consisted of assistance to households with 5,769 adults and 3,953 children. We also provided free legal information and education on a wide range of topics to more than 1,000 people. Below is a breakdown of the types of services provided to individuals, throughout our service area, from January to December of 2016:

Consumer	437	Housing (Evictions & Foreclosures)	1151
Education	85	Public Benefits	411
Employment and Tax	72	Individual Rights	195
Family Law (Victims of Domestic Violence)	1400	Other (Wills, Probate, Advance Directives)	402

2016 Cumulative Benefit Amounts Obtained for Clients

Tax Relief	\$ 370,861
Social Security, Reemployment, Other Public	\$1,036,690
Consumer Law and Debt Relief	\$ 63,084
Alimony, Child Support, Family Law	\$ 399,881
Educational Benefits and Supports	\$ 75,900
Assets obtained in Probate	\$ 259,355
Housing and Real Property	\$ 91,690
Total:	\$2,297,461

During 2016, our Helpline answered more than 1900 telephone calls per month.



Gainesville Managing Attorney Gloria Walker is sworn in as 2016-2017 President-Elect Designate of the Eighth Judicial Circuit Bar Association

Services Delivered to Veterans and other groups from January to December of 2016

TRLS assisted 570 veterans with their individual civil legal needs and provided intake and information at 38 separate veterans' outreach events, to more than 1300 veterans across our service area.

TRLS kept individuals from potential homelessness through representation in obtaining benefits, and prevention of evictions and foreclosures. We also helped keep families safe by providing advice and representation to almost 1,200 domestic violence survivors, and by helping to obtain more than 117 injunctions for protection. Vulnerable seniors made up 20% of our caseload in 2016, with 843 cases closed for elders.

Some Typical Case Examples - 2016

70-year-old **AB** resides with her disabled husband in a rural county. She was facing foreclosure of more than \$100,000 from her reverse equity mortgage, after some confusion about payment of taxes and insurance. TRLS helped her apply for a state rescue program to keep seniors in their homes, and agreed to represent her in court. However, the lender refused to accept those funds and continued the foreclosure. After extensive litigation, the lender finally agreed to accept funds from the rescue program and dismissed the court case. AB and her husband are still in their home

CD, a homeless veteran sleeping in a storage unit for four years, was denied rental housing based on lack of credit and rental history. TRLS requested an informal hearing about the denial decision and went with him to his previous residence (prior to 2012) to obtain his payment history and get character statements from former neighbors. With this evidence, CD won his hearing and was approved for rental housing.

GH's husband was convicted of sexual battery on their very young daughter and sent to prison. GF struggled to support her children and elderly parent on her SSI benefits. TRLS requested child support be paid from the Husband's VA retirement benefits. The court ordered apportionment of the VA benefits and GH was awarded \$22,000 in back support and over \$2,000.00 per month allowing her to now support her family.

Single mother, **IJ**, was working as a hotel maid to provide for her family. Although her biweekly wage was small, she suddenly found that over \$175 was being garnished from her paycheck by a creditor. TRLS helped her to prove that she was entitled to an exemption as head of household. The garnishment was dismissed by the court, and she was again able to pay her living expenses.

The SSI benefits were terminated for **EF**, a homeless disabled veteran living in shelter, because he had missed a reconsideration hearing; his notice had been sent to the wrong address. We made a written request to the Appeals Council asking that the case be reopened and demonstrating the error. The client got a new hearing and prevailed. He was overjoyed when his benefits were reinstated. He and his dog are now in their own apartment.

Three Rivers Legal Services, Inc. is a private, not-for-profit corporation serving North Florida since 1978. TRLS provides free civil legal help to indigent families and veterans in seventeen counties with three offices and a staff of 35, including 21 full time attorneys. We also provide legal information and education to low income persons and groups. Our offices are located in **Jacksonville, Gainesville and Lake City**. Each office is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM until 5:00 PM, and the offices serve residents from all of the counties listed above.

Applicants can access services through a toll free hotline number **866-256-8091** or they can come in-person to one of the three offices.

This service area covers more than **11,000 square miles**. Within this area, there are approximately **319,000** individuals living below poverty guidelines. The rural parts of our region face many challenges, including the fact that many of the counties we serve have the lowest number of attorneys per capita in Florida. However, we are fortunate to have two law schools in our service area and to be able to recruit well trained and motivated student volunteers to assist with our work.



Thank you to artist Pedro Jermaine for his generous donation of his "I am Music" painting for the Suds & Songs Fundraiser



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Three Rivers Legal Services, Inc. is guided by a 15 member Board of Directors. Five board members represent low-income client groups or are low-income clients themselves. The other members are attorneys recommended by local bar associations and one community representative.

2016-2017 TRLS Board of Directors OFFICERS

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Three Rivers Legal Services staff gather for training and staff retreat.