



SEMINOLE COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION
LEGAL AID SOCIETY



FISCAL YEAR

REPORT 2018-2019



**SERVING THE COMMUNITY AND
ENHANCING ACCESS TO CIVIL JUSTICE
IN SEMINOLE COUNTY SINCE 1975**

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Message from the Executive Director, Silvia McLain

Thank you for taking the time to learn about Seminole County Bar Association Legal Aid Society, Inc. Our mission is to provide quality civil legal services to low income and vulnerable residents of Seminole County. For many, we provide their only pathway to our judicial system. All our services are provided free of charge.

Our work benefits our clients, our communities and our county. For example, we annually obtain court orders requiring the payment of child support, health insurance and daycare costs for their children. We secure court orders requiring abusers to act to end their violence and obtain safe timesharing schedules for their children. The stability provided by this representation allows formerly battered women to work and raise their children in a safe and stable environment where they can focus on life, rather than on their safety. To the larger community this translates into reduced demands on law enforcement, the courts, prisons, paramedics, emergency rooms and public assistance.

I want to thank our supporters and philanthropic leaders who share a passion of improving the lives of vulnerable and low income community members. They play a vital role in making Seminole County a more just and equitable community. They join us in rooting out the inequities that keep people in poverty and dire circumstances.

Thank you for our incredible pro bono attorneys, college and law student volunteers, and our dedicated members of our board of directors for their generosity of their time and efforts to make our Legal Aid Society be the best at what we do.

Also, I want to add my appreciation for our talented staff, who provides quality legal services to our clients; produces a monthly newsletter with educational content and resources; maintains our informative website; participates in the Seminole County Domestic Violence taskforce and the Child Abuse taskforce and engages in numerous local and statewide organizations.

We stay committed to protecting and advocating for our clients who, daily find themselves in crisis and fear. We are dedicated to building stronger families and communities and are inspired by the positive changes we witness each day. We appreciate your continued support.

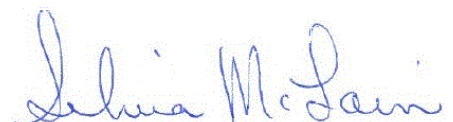


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MISSION

Seminole County Bar Association Legal Aid Society opened our doors in 1975.

We provide high quality civil legal services and education free of charge to disadvantaged and low income residents of Seminole county so as to protect their personal safety, promote their self-sufficiency, and improve their quality of life.

For many, we provide their only access to the judicial system to resolve critical legal problems.

We assist:

- ◆ Survivors of domestic violence
- ◆ Veterans, who need to resolve a civil legal matter
- ◆ Relatives seeking custody of minor children when parents are addicted to opioids
- ◆ Families of disabled children requesting appointment as guardian advocate when their child turns 18 years of age
- ◆ Elderly people seeking legal help to preserve their housing
- ◆ Disabled foster youths needing to obtain Medicaid waivers
- ◆ Unemployed persons seeking the sealing and expungement of an eligible crime to obtain a job
- ◆ Economically disadvantaged parents wanting to obtain a safe timesharing plan for their child and support to financially care for the child

In addition, we also administer the pro bono attorney project in Seminole County which expands our ability to help additional Seminole County residents with their legal needs. We also participate in several special legal projects, members of domestic violence and child abuse prevention taskforces, and on the Seminole County Affordable Housing Advisory Board.

All legal services are provided in Seminole County to benefit our clients, their children and our community.



2018-2019 FISCAL YEAR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Our services are provided through the unified efforts of excellent pro bono attorneys, experienced staff attorneys, devoted and compassionate support staff, volunteer college students, and strong leadership of a dedicated board of directors. As a result of this collaboration, we can provide legal assistance in various areas of the law such as family, housing, guardianship of the disabled, immigration, juvenile, elder, consumer, and sustain several legal workshops and legal advice clinics.

This past fiscal year, our volunteers and staff attorneys served **962 families**, which includes **1,201 children** with their legal needs. We obtained court orders establishing child support in the amount of **\$356,154.05** to sustain vulnerable families. Volunteer attorneys donated pro bono legal services valued at an estimated **\$207,060** and contributed **\$27,100** in lieu of service donations. Please read more about our accomplishments and special projects on the following pages.



**We are your local Nonprofit Law Firm in Seminole County
located in the beautiful historic city of Longwood.**



ASSISTING VICTIMS OF CRIME WITH THEIR CIVIL LEGAL NEEDS

Being poor dramatically increases a woman's chances of being abused. One analysis of data collected by the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics showed that women in the lowest income households experience seven times the rate of abuse suffered by women in the highest income households. Likewise, women who experience food and housing insecurity experience a significantly higher incidence of rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner.

Studies have found that availability of civil legal aid can be effective in reducing rates of violence, and even more effective than alternative interventions such as the provision of shelters or counseling services. Increased funding to enhance the availability of civil legal services to low-income families can lower the societal costs of domestic violence, generating substantial economic benefits. Legal services help survivors with practical matters (such as protective orders, custody, and child support) appear to present survivors with real, long-term alternatives to their relationships.

Our free civil legal project is designed to build the economic self-sufficiency of the survivors and conversely lower the societal costs of domestic violence, generating substantial economic benefits. We assisted **849 families** who were victims of crime with their civil legal needs.



Tamara's Story

Tamara, a survivor of domestic violence applied for assistance with our office after her estranged husband physically abused her. Her husband then moved out of the state, leaving her and the parties' minor child without sufficient means to pay their basic living expenses. Tamara, a now single mother had been diagnosed with Stage IV Congestive Heart Failure and continued functioning with the use of a mechanical heart pump, while waiting for a heart transplant. Unable to work, Tamara had applied for but was initially denied Social Security Benefits. Desperate for help and direction, Tamara applied for assistance. Our office provided full legal representation for Tamara's dissolution of marriage action. We obtained a Final Judgment of Dissolution of Marriage providing Tamara with majority timesharing of the parties' minor child, child support (beyond the age of emancipation—by 1.5 years) and alimony. Now Tamara and the child are living without the continued fear or concern of unpaid bills and the loss of their home.



AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT

Fighting the Affordable housing problem.

Central Florida (including Seminole County) is one of the worst metropolitans in the nation for affordable housing. We rank first among the largest metropolitan areas for the most severe affordable housing beating Las Vegas, Los Angeles and Houston. There only exists 13 affordable and available housing for every 100 extremely low income renters. Hasty relocations, disrupts employment and hinders the education of children creating instability and homelessness. Seminole County Legal Aid helped **100 families** preserve their housing or help soften the consequences when housing disruptions are unavoidable.



Alissa's Story

Alissa, a single mother, rented a room in a beautiful home in Seminole County. She was very happy that she could provide a nice home in a good neighborhood and good school for her daughter. After a few months, the landlord raised her rent. Alissa struggled to pay the rent because she did not want her daughter to have to relocate schools and the neighborhood. Her salary from working full time at a local hospital provided just enough income to meet the increased rental demands. She went to the local food pantry to obtain donations of food and household goods to stretch her budget.

One day when she returned from work, she found a summons and complaint requesting her removal from the home despite Alissa just paying her monthly rental obligation. The complaint alleged Alissa was a transient and had no rights to stay in the home and needed to move. Alissa sought legal assistance from one of our staff attorneys. Alissa found out that her landlord was actually not the owner of the home but was only just a tenant renting the home and was not allowed to sublease any portion of the home. The attorney immediately reviewed the legal documents and filed the necessary pleadings with legal defense seeking to dismiss the court case. After a hearing in court, the judge dismissed the case and told the Landlord that she needed to provide adequate legal notice and follow proper court procedure. Alissa now has sufficient time to find another home in a good location and has learned to be more discerning when choosing another location.



DISABLED CHILD LEGAL PROJECT

We assist families establish guardian advocacy when their developmentally challenged child reaches the age of 18. Last year we assisted **24 families** establish guardian advocacies for their children. We also assisted **53 families** complete their required annual plans. We also developed an informative video concerning guardian advocacy which is broadcast on our website.

These families struggle in meeting the special needs of their children and need our help to lighten their responsibilities in establishing guardian advocacies to secure their children's future and well being.



Marta's Story

Marta, a senior citizen, has been caring for her autistic grandson, Kyle, since he was 12 years old. His parents were young and could not manage their son's special needs. Neither parent visits or support their son. Marta has been his primary and only caregiver. Marta was distraught when she arrived at our office. She said that Kyle's guidance counselor had told her that Kyle had to leave the school because she did not have legal custody of Kyle. She was very worried. She wanted Kyle to complete his senior year at his local high school and earn his high school diploma. An attorney was immediately assigned to her case and contacted the school's attorney to determine what issues or problems existed prohibiting Kyle's continued attendance of high school. The attorney determined that there was a misunderstanding and that the school staff was merely requesting Marta to be appointed guardian of Kyle so that she had the power to sign necessary special education documents upon Kyle's upcoming 18th birthday.

The attorney immediately prepared and filed the necessary pleadings with the court needed for Marta to become appointed Guardian Advocate of Kyle. The judge reviewed the documentation and the recommendation of the court appointed attorney for Kyle and appointed Marta as Guardian Advocate. Now Marta has full power and authority to advocate for Kyle in school and make sure that he graduates with his high school diploma. Kyle is also very happy that he will continue to live with his grandmother. He had been very worried that the state would remove him from his grandmother.



FIGHTING THE OPIOID CRISIS

According to the Seminole County Sheriff's office about 650 people in Seminole County overdosed on Opioids, and 82 died in 2018—a 32% increase in deaths in 2 years. Every day, misuse and addiction to opioids destroys families. We see babies born addicted to opioid, children neglected or abandoned, and families torn apart. We strive to fight the effects of the opioid crisis on children by assisting responsible relatives obtain temporary custody of neglected or abandoned children while their parents fight their addictions and stabilize their lives. This past year, we have assisted **20 families** obtain temporary legal custody allowing our clients to provide a happy and healthy life to the children trapped in this epidemic.



Thomas' Story

Thomas walked into our office and stated he had an emergency and needed help. He was about to be deployed to the Middle East within the next 2 weeks and needed help in seeking the appointment of his mother in law as temporary custodian of his young autistic son while he was on active orders. His wife is addicted to opioids and was just committed for treatment. He expressed the importance of going overseas with his team as they had specially trained for the important mission and he did not want to let down his team but wanted to be assured that his son was well taken care of while he served our country. He told the front office staff that he had been to the law library to research what he needed to do legally but determined that the process was too involved to proceed on his own. The librarian suggested going to the legal aid office to seek assistance.

Recognizing his urgency, Thomas was immediately assigned to a staff attorney, who turned her attention to drafting the necessary pleadings and securing a court order to appoint the temporary custodian for his special needs son. Fortunately, the court order was obtained, and Thomas was able to deploy overseas with his team. Thomas was very grateful for our legal services and expressed that now he was able to focus on his mission knowing his son's special needs could be legally addressed by his mother in law.



PRO BONO ATTORNEYS ARE AWESOME

Last fiscal year, our pro bono attorneys assisted **111 indigent clients** donating legal services with a **value of \$207,060** to help vulnerable families in Seminole County.

Attorneys also made monetary contributions in the amount of **\$27,100** to support our program. The volunteer attorneys held **12** veteran legal advice clinics; **11** sealing and Expungement Legal Workshops.

Pro Bono Attorneys held **36** family law advice clinics helping self represented litigants with their cases this year.

Our pro bono attorneys helped with our school supply drive and donated **150** backpacks full of school supplies for vulnerable Seminole County Children. Over 50% of Seminole County students are on the free or reduced lunch program, this means that over 33,000 students are unable to afford lunch at school. Of those 33,000 there are over 1,700 students identified as homeless.

Our pro bono attorneys collected hurricane supplies to assist the Hurricane Dorian victims of the Bahamas.



Do something wonderful, people may imitate it.
- Albert Schweitzer



VETERAN'S LEGAL ADVICE CLINIC

Monthly Legal Advice Clinic at Casselberry Public Library

This past fiscal year, we have assisted **43 Veterans** at the monthly legal advice clinic.



Attorney Sue Selsky at the Veterans Clinic



London Rotundo, with U.S. Senator Marco Rubio's Mobile Office, at the Casselberry Public Library ready to help residents of Seminole County during our Veteran Legal Clinic.



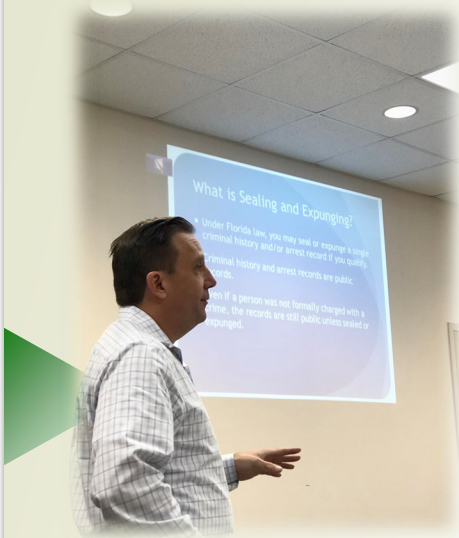
Javier's Story

Javier attended the Veterans Legal Clinic to obtain free legal advice. Noting that Javier needed further assistance due to his combat injuries, he was assigned for full legal representation. Javier is a combat wounded veteran who was stationed in Afghanistan and hit with enemy fire; as a result he is disabled. He was seeking a divorce from his wife who was living in Puerto Rico in his home which he had purchased before the marriage. He had no idea how to go about filing for divorce, or how he would get his wife served with the divorce papers since she was not living in Florida. He was also concerned that his wife could make a claim on the home. He consulted with the staff attorney who conducts the monthly veterans clinic and the attorney agreed to help Javier with his divorce and to represent him. The staff attorney took the necessary steps to secure service on the wife in Puerto Rico by using a private process server, and then appeared in court with Javier to get his divorce. At the trial, Javier's home in Puerto Rico was granted to him exclusively, and he was officially divorced.

Javier was extremely thankful and appreciative of the help Seminole County Legal Aid gave to him.



SEALING AND EXPUNGEMENT LEGAL WORKSHOPS



Volunteer Attorney Chmelir

Presenting Sealing and Expungement Legal Clinic at Goodwill Job Connection Center

For people, who have a criminal record, there are many roadblocks to employment as employers are reluctant to hire people with criminal records. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement reported that over 3,169,593 residents in Florida have dispositions other than conviction (e.g., adjudication withheld, acquitted, or no disposition reflected in the criminal history file). This type of record creates an insurmountable barrier to employment. Ultimately these records become a life sentence of under or unemployment.

Every month, our Pro Bono Program hosts a Sealing and Expungement Legal Workshop at the Goodwill Job Connection Center. The curriculum for the seminar was developed by a pro bono attorney. She developed an extensive and informative power point presentation that is used by the other pro bono attorneys teaching the class.

The pro bono attorneys teach job seekers at the Goodwill site of the Sealing and Expungement process and how to Seal or Expunge a record without having to hire a private attorney. After the presentation, the pro bono attorneys meet with each job seeker and review their individual cases and dispositions and notify the job seeker if they would be eligible of Sealing or Expunging their record. Packets are provided, containing the FDLE application for each person in attendance of the class, along with all the necessary "pro se" documents for future use. We assisted approximately **40 job seekers** this past fiscal year at the workshop at GoodWill Job Connection.



PRO BONO PROJECT

2019 Pro Bono Panel

Arthur Bryant Applegate, Esq.

Aaron Baghdadi, Esq.

Steven Lawrence Barcus, Esq.

Nadine AnnMarie Brown, Esq.

Karl Andrew Burgunder, Esq.

Christopher Von Derrick Butler, Esq.

Leonard Peter Cabral, Esq.

Christopher Charles Cathcart, Esq.

Ayesha Nwamaka Chidolue, Esq.

Andrew Joseph Chmelir, Esq.

Stephen Harrison Coover, Esq.

Clarence William Counts, Jr., Esq.

Michael Patrick Cusick, Esq.

Deborah M.R. O'Brien Daly, Esq.

Daniel De Paz, Esq.

Robert A. Edwards II, Esq.

Karen Kay Estry, Esq.

Debra Ferwerda, Esq.

Jennifer Carol Frank, Esq.

Rachel Anne Gorenflo, Esq.

Erin Lynette Greene, Esq.

Stephanie Ann Griffin, Esq.

Julianna Easter Groot, Esq.

Adam Anthony Haba, Esq.

Lisa Diane Haba, Esq.

Amy Christine Hamlin, Esq.

Melissa Martinez Hernandez, Esq.

Peter Thomas Hickey, Esq.

Heidi A. Hillyer, Esq.

Amanda Regina Jacobson, Esq.

James Marc Jones, Esq.

John Howard King, Esq.

Steven D. Kramer, Esq.

Steven Lamar Laurence, Esq.

Jennifer Rachel Lawson, Esq.

Norman David Levin, Esq.

Richard Louis Mamele, Esq.

Robert Kenneth McIntosh, Esq.

Melisa Lyn Medina, Esq.

William Scott Orth, Esq.

Douglas Wayne Oswald, Esq.

James Justice Partlow, Esq.

Shivon Patel, Esq.

Thomas R. Peppler, Esq.

Dean Andrew Reed, Esq.

Taras Stefan Rudnitsky, Esq.

Michael A. Sasso, Esq.

Megan Cloninger Sladek, Esq.

Kimberly Marie Soto, Esq.

Leslie S. Stewart, Esq.

Michael Barry Swindle, Esq.

Joanna Ruth Tolbert, Esq.

Tyrone Nathaniel Watson, Esq.

Jan K. Wichrowski, Esq.

Ben Zaeri, Esq.



PRO BONO PROJECT

Attorneys Who Contributed in Lieu of Service Donation

Gary Abriola, Esq.

Jonathan Benson Alper, Esq.

Daniel Anthony Amat, Esq.

Ileana Hazel Azcúnaga, Esq.

Matthews Ryan Bark, Esq.

David Beers, Esq.

Brooke Lacy Boltz, Esq.

Michael Bennett Brehne, Esq.

Kevin Scott Cannon, Esq.

Tracy Duda Chapman, Esq.

Paul Henry Chipok, Esq.

Katherine Ann Christy, Esq.

Evelyn Watts Cloninger, Esq.

William Troy Cochran, Esq.

Michael J. Cortes, Esq.

Michael Lynn Crofts, Esq.

Dana Lynne Crosby-Collier, Esq.

Joseph M. DeFranco, Esq.

Corina Maria De La Torre, Esq.

Alan Adee Dickey, Esq.

Harris Neil Dvores, Esq.

Maria Elsa Espinosa, Esq.

Debra Fields, Esq.

Nancy Sue Freeman, Esq.

Thomas Gene Freeman Jr., Esq.

Howard Mark Furman, Esq.

Mary Ellen Gannon-McMurry, Esq.

Ann Marie Giordano Gilden, Esq.

James Thomas Gordon, Esq.

Karen Eileen Greene, Esq.

Nicole Guillet, Esq.

Adam Anthony Haba, Esq.

Randy Ellis Hillman, Esq.

Robert F. Hoogland, Esq.

John M. Iriye, Esq.

Harry Nathan Jacob, Esq.

Marc Jandy, Esq.

Andrew John Jones, Esq.

John Edwards Jones, Esq.

Ned N. Julian Jr., Esq.

Mary Beth Kelly, Esq.

Perette M. Lawrence, Esq.

Marcia Kay Lippincott, Esq.

David Alan May, Esq.

Paul John Mayer, Esq.

William J. McCabe, Esq.

Bill McCollum, Esq.

Hugh James McDonnel, Esq.

Silvia Maria McLain, Esq.

Melisa Lyn Medina, Esq.

Scott Bryan Miller, Esq.

Samuel Marcus Nelson, Esq.

Linda Lu Parkinson, Esq.

Lynn Patrice Porter-Carlton, Esq.

Meera Shenoy Prabhu, Esq.

Lance Anthony Ragland, Esq.

Guy Thomas Rizzo, Esq.

Krista Riddick Rogers, Esq.

Thomas Robert Rogers, Esq.

William Glenn Roy Jr., Esq.

Neil Alan Saydah, Esq.

Cameron Elzey Shackelford, Esq.

David George Shields, Esq.

Elaine Terry Silver, Esq.

Kathryn Smith, Esq.

Christopher Sprysenski, Esq.

Gregory Warren Stoner, Esq.

Janki Amar Thakkar, Esq.

Christian Pomeroy Trowbridge, Esq.

Brock E. Turk, Esq.

Berry James Walker Jr., Esq.

Deborah Gallagher Warner, Esq.

Scot Daniel Warner, Esq.

Robert Edward Wolfe Jr., Esq.



VOLUNTEER INTERNS



Julianna Burchett



Cheyenne Dunn



Angelica Duran



Olivia Garcia



Maria Andreina Machado



Ashley Montalvo



Jon Prusinowski



Lucas Stafford

Volunteers Not Pictured:

Phillip Arroyo
Alessandra Barbuto
Karen Cadet
Laurem Calderon
Sandra Ekioyr-Katimi
Sean Fann
Ryan Gousse
Kristina Kamel
Jillian Reid
Marina Wagner

Heartfelt 
THANKS
TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!



ATTORNEY ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR



Amy Christine Hamlin, Esq.

Amy Hamlin has been a family law attorney since 2000. She started her legal career at Greater Orlando Area Legal Services, working in their Tavares office. Later that same year, she became a staff attorney with Seminole County Legal Aid. Amy started working for Norman D. Levin, P.A. in 2004 and, at that time, became an active member of the Family Law Section of the Florida Bar. In June of 2019, she became Chair of the Family Law Section of the Florida Bar. Amy is also on the Boards of the Central Florida Family Law Inn and the FLA FCC. She has been actively involved on the Family Law Section legislation, publications, and continuing legal education committees. Amy has received numerous awards including the 2008 Circuit Award of the Florida Bar President's Pro Bono Award for volunteering legal aid services. She has published articles and lectured on various family law issues. Amy loves spending time with her family, friends, and rescue miniature poodle, Elle.

Amy donates one morning each month to provide free legal advice and counsel to indigent persons with family law issues at the legal aid office. She also has been instrumental in assisting in obtaining scholarships for CLE education for our staff.

"Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle." -Plato



LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR: **Jacobson, Chmelir & Ferwerda**

Amanda Jacobson, Esq.



Amanda R. Jacobson has been an attorney since 1996, practicing in the areas of criminal law and family law. After graduating from Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida, Ms. Jacobson attended the University of Miami School of Law, where she successfully competed in trial team events as a member of the Moot Court Board. While in law school, Ms. Jacobson interned at the Office of the State Attorney in Orange County, Florida, the office that she later joined as an attorney when she graduated in 1996. In 1999, Ms. Jacobson, along with her three partners, left the Office of the State Attorney to form the law offices of Jacobson, Chmelir & Ferwerda. Since that time, she has defended numerous criminal cases in the Central Florida area. She has provided full legal representation to our family law clients.

Andrew Chmelir, Esq.



Andrew is a partner in the law firm of Jacobson, Chmelir and Ferwerda where he primarily handles family law, criminal law (including federal criminal defense) and appellate matters. During the past twenty-two years his volunteer work has included pro bono work for the Legal Aid Societies in both Orange and Seminole counties. He has participated in the VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) program, served as a guardian ad litem for numerous dependent children, advised and judged teen court cases, and represented indigent parties in contested Seminole County dissolution of marriage proceedings. Additionally, throughout most of his adult life, Andrew has volunteered countless hours in some capacity related to youth football, baseball and basketball. He had the pleasure of assisting individuals in the Sealing and Expungement Workshop at Goodwill located in Sanford, Florida.

Debra Ferwerda, Esq.



Debra L. Ferwerda was born and raised in Tampa, Florida. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Communications from Florida State University. She attended St. Thomas University School of Law in Miami, where she served on the Law Review and later graduated with honors with a Juris Doctor degree. Ms. Ferwerda is a well-respected Central Florida Divorce and Criminal Defense Attorney who has earned a reputation for her integrity and no-nonsense approach inside and outside of the courtroom. She gives all her cases the personalized attention they deserve and the hard work it takes to win. From 1996 to 1999, Ms. Ferwerda was an Assistant State Attorney for the Orange and Osceola County State Attorney's office where she received extensive trial experience in Felony and Misdemeanor divisions prosecuting cases from DUI to Murder. In 1999, she resigned from the State Attorney's office and became a founding member of Jacobson, Chmelir & Ferwerda where she now focuses on family law in addition to state and federal criminal defense. She participated in our monthly Veterans Clinic and assisted individuals at the Sealing and Expungement Workshop.



PRO BONO SERVICE AWARDS

Clarence William Counts, Jr., Esq.



Clarence W. Counts, Jr., graduated from Howard University School of Law in 1976 with a Juris Doctor Degree. Counts is the author of Note, Goldfarb v. Virginia State Bar—Applying the Anti-Trust Laws to the Legal Profession, 19 Howard Law Journal 149 (1976). Counts served in the Judge Advocate General's Corps, United States Navy, from 1976 to 1983. He continued to serve in the United States Naval Reserve until his retirement in 2000 with the rank of CAPTAIN (O-6). He served as an Assistant State Attorney, State Attorney, Second Judicial Circuit of Florida from 1983 until 1985. He continued his service as an Assistant State Attorney, State Attorney, Eighteenth Judicial Circuit of Florida from 1985 until 1990. Counts served an Assistant Federal Public Defender, Federal Public Defender, Middle District of Florida, from 1990 until his retirement in 2010. Counts served as President, Paul C. Perkins Bar Association from 2008 until 2010. He is the founder of Law Office of Clarence W. Counts, Jr and focuses his practice in the areas of family and criminal law. He donates his time to provided free full legal representation in family law matters.

Jennifer Carol Frank, Esq.



Jennifer C. Frank is a Board Certified Marital and Family Law attorney, she is AV rated through Martindale Hubbell, and she is a Florida Bar Certified Family Law Mediator. Jennifer has been handling family law matters since 1994. She graduated from the University of Miami School of Law in 1994 and started her career as a family law attorney with Gulf coast Legal Services in St. Petersburg, Florida. She moved to Central Florida in 1996 where she handled family law cases at Drage, deBeaubien, et al until 2002 when she joined the firm of Wendy L. Aikin, P.A. In 2008 Jennifer opened Frank Family Law Practice, where she and her team handle the full gamut of family law related cases. In addition to her litigation work, she has an active Collaborative Family Law practice and an active Family Law Mediation practice. She is the 2014/2015 Past President for the Central Florida Family Law Inn of Court. She is a Board member for the State-wide Collaborative Family Law Council of Florida. She is an active member of the Collaborative Family Law Group of Central Florida. In 2007 she served as chair of the Florida Bar Association Grievance Committee. She is married and has a daughter in the 3rd grade. Jennifer studied music (piano performance) and political science in college. In addition to lawyer, wife, and mother, Jennifer is a pianist, a tennis player, a political junkie, and enjoys studying history. She donates her time to provide free full legal representation in family law matters.



PRO BONO SERVICE AWARDS

Lisa Diane Haba, Esq.



Lisa D. Haba is a licensed attorney in the state of Florida. She is a partner in The Haba Law Firm. Attorney Haba spent seven years as an Assistant State Attorney in Seminole County, where she prosecuted human trafficking, sex crimes, child abuse, homicides, career criminals and violent crimes. At the time she left this position, Mrs. Haba had tried over 75 jury trials, leaving her with extensive trial experience and a high rate of success. Mrs. Haba tried the first human trafficking trial to occur in Seminole County and won, securing justice for the victim and a lengthy prison sentence for the trafficker. She has presented trainings statewide on the prosecution of human traffickers and how citizens can recognize the warning signs. She donates her time to provide free full legal representation with immigration issues.

Steven Lamar Laurence, Esq.



Attorney Steven Laurence has been in private practice in Central Florida since 1985. He received his bachelor's degree from FSU and his law degree from the University of Arkansas. He took and passed both the Arkansas and Florida Bar exams in 1983. Mr. Laurence's first job in the legal profession was with the State Attorney's office in Sanford, Florida. Mr. Laurence now has his own law practice in Altamonte Springs. He donates his time to provide free full legal representation to clients in family law matters.

Jennifer Rachael Lawson, Esq.



Jennifer Lawson received her B.A. in Political Science from the University of Florida in 2008. She received her Juris Doctor from the University Of Florida Levin College Of Law in 2011. Jennifer is currently an active member of the Florida Bar, Orange County Bar Association, Seminole County Bar Association, Central Florida Family Law American Inn of Court, Collaborative Family Law Group of Central Florida, Central Florida Association for Women Lawyers and Central Florida Gator Club. Jennifer currently serves on the committees for Domestic Violence and Amicus Curiae with the Family Law Section of the Florida Bar and as the Vice President of Communications for the Central Florida Gator Club. She donates her time to provide free full legal representation to clients in family law matters.



COMMUNITY PARTNER AWARD

Seminole County Community Service Department

“As I reflect on the great work and accomplishments over the past year, I am truly humbled and grateful to lead the Community Services Department. The work that is being done in Seminole County is truly amazing. During the quarter the Department assisted 8 families in becoming new homeowners and provided assistance to 14 low-income households for much needed housing repairs. Our Veterans section staff in partnership with Heels and Holsters, a local nonprofit group provided food baskets for approximately 40 Veterans and their families for Thanksgiving and Christmas. In addition, Community Services staff also volunteered at Harvest Time International’s Christmas Bag of Joy event which serve over 500 families. Staff also continue to provide much needed services for the homeless. In December the Community Services Department voluntarily sponsored two homeless families by providing a variety of Christmas gifts for their 8 children. Staff continue to work closely with our nonprofit partners by providing technical assistance and training to meet the need of our most vulnerable residents. I applaud the Community Services Staff and community partners for their hard work and dedication and I look forward to continuing our efforts in serving the community in 2019.” - Former Director, Olivette Carter

The Department supports the legal aid program as a community partner. Their support assist the legal aid program ‘fighting the effects of the opioid crisis’ in Seminole County.

Embrace Families Diversion Program

Embrace Families proudly serves as the state-designated lead agency for child welfare services in Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties, Florida. The organization works to prevent child abuse and neglect, to strengthen families, and to care for our community’s children in foster care. Their goals are to ensure safety, provide permanency, and maintain the well-being of the children served by child welfare.

The goal of our diversion program is to help stabilize and strengthen families before the need for removal occurs. Embrace Families partners with our legal aid program in identifying families who need free legal services to stabilize their families. Often a responsible relative is identified, who needs legal assistance to establish custody of a neglected or abandoned child, while their parents fight the opioid addiction and stabilize their home. Our joint efforts help bring stability and wellbeing to the lives of the children.



COMMUNITY PARTNER AWARD

Liliana Continanzi

Embrace Families Diversion Manager



You can often catch Liliana Continanzi, in the middle of a crisis figuring out how to stabilize a family and prevent children from entering foster care. Liliana provides oversight to a team who is tasked with serving some of the most at-risk children in Seminole County. Over the past eight years of her child welfare experience she has learned to use community resources and service providers to help increase parent's protective factors in an effort to provide safe and healthy environment for their children. Her goal is to provide these services in the least intrusive manner while the children remain in the most familiar setting possible. While every case requires a certain level of creativity and out of the box thinking, Liliana has been able to achieve stability and permanency for many children through the help of the Legal Aid Program.

"You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending."
C.S. Lewis

PRESIDENTS AWARD

Julianna Groot, Esq.



Julianna earned her Juris Doctor and Certificate in Environmental and Land Use Law from the Florida State College of Law in 2007. She was also the recipient of the Pro Bono Service Award upon graduating from law school. Julianna is licensed to practice in all Florida state courts, all federal courts in the Middle District of Florida, and the United States Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit. Julianna is currently full-time faculty and Program Manager for Seminole State College's ABA approved Legal Studies Program, where she has discovered a passion for teaching aspiring paralegals and law students how to be exceptional legal professionals. Prior to becoming Program manager, she served as the college's interim in-house counsel. Julianna has served on the Seminole County Bar Association Legal Aid Society since 2016. She is the current president of the Board of Directors.

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We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop. —Mother Teresa





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*Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality.
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We have an experienced and diverse staff. Our staff include members who are fluent in English, Spanish, Creole, Macedonian, and Bulgarian. In addition to a Florida Bar member, Attorney Sue Selsky is a member of the Connecticut State Bar and Joanne Desile is a member of the Georgia State Bar.

In addition to services provided to clients, our staff members are active in the community. A few of the committees include but not limited to the following:

- Seminole County Prevention Task Forces of Spousal Abuse Child Abuse, and Human Trafficking
- Affordable Housing Advisory Board
- Seminole State Advisory Board of Legal Studies
- Vice Chair and Member of the Florida Bar Family Law Section Domestic Violence Committee
- Secretary of The Florida Bar Family Law section on Children's Issues

None of us, including me, ever do great things. But we can all do small things, with great love, and together we can do something wonderful. ~ Mother Teresa



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