



# 2017

## Annual Report



## ► Our Mission

To create safe and stable homes and families by inspiring attorneys to fight for equal justice.

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# ▶ From the Executive Director .....

Dear Friends,

With pride, we present our 2017 Annual Report. We hope that you will enjoy reading how, through the power of partnership, Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation is directing the generosity and abundance of the Atlanta community into the provision of meaningful legal help for those who have too little. The Report also makes clear how AVLF's pro bono programs will only result in safe and stable homes and families if we are able both to maintain our focused efforts and convince our partners to sustain their strong support.

**In 2017, AVLF enjoyed growth beyond the dreams of even our very ambitious 2020 Strategic Plan,** which we laid out only three years ago. We expanded our staff to serve a record number of clients and place a record number of cases. We enhanced the capabilities of the Safe Families Office to help survivors of intimate partner violence, from the initial protective order to true safety. We continued the deeply effective and successful model of the Saturday Lawyer Program to help workers receive earned wages and tenants address dangerously inadequate housing conditions. Our Standing with Our Neighbors program expanded the work of AVLF's school-based lawyers and community advocates into, now, seven Atlanta Public Schools.

**We are grateful beyond easy words for the spirit of generosity and compassion that drives our friends in every part of Atlanta, who know**

**that the purpose of partnership is to accomplish more than we can do alone.**

Our partners are many. They include the lawyers of this city who seek meaningful pro bono opportunities, the funders who lift our community through their gifts, the courts that promote justice, the school system to whom we entrust our children, and our fabulously effective sister service providers. Each of these partners has generated a series of legal responses that are significantly beyond that which was accomplished before we and our partners formed this alliance.

**We understand that we are at the beginning of what is possible,** and that we are able to reach through to the next step of the struggle only with the help of the breadth of this community.

On behalf of those who are resource-poor and have no access to justice except through the Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation, we call upon you to add to the common good.

For the sake of those who stand alone, we ask you to stand with us.

Most sincerely,



Martin L. Ellin



## ▶ AVLF in 2017: Answering the Call

### Our Mission

**Our Fight for Safety and Stability** - Since its founding in 1979, Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation has provided free, high quality legal services to the underrepresented in Atlanta. The need is great. Our neighbors who seek our help each year are at critical times in their lives, and they need the power and expertise of an attorney to help them navigate the courts.

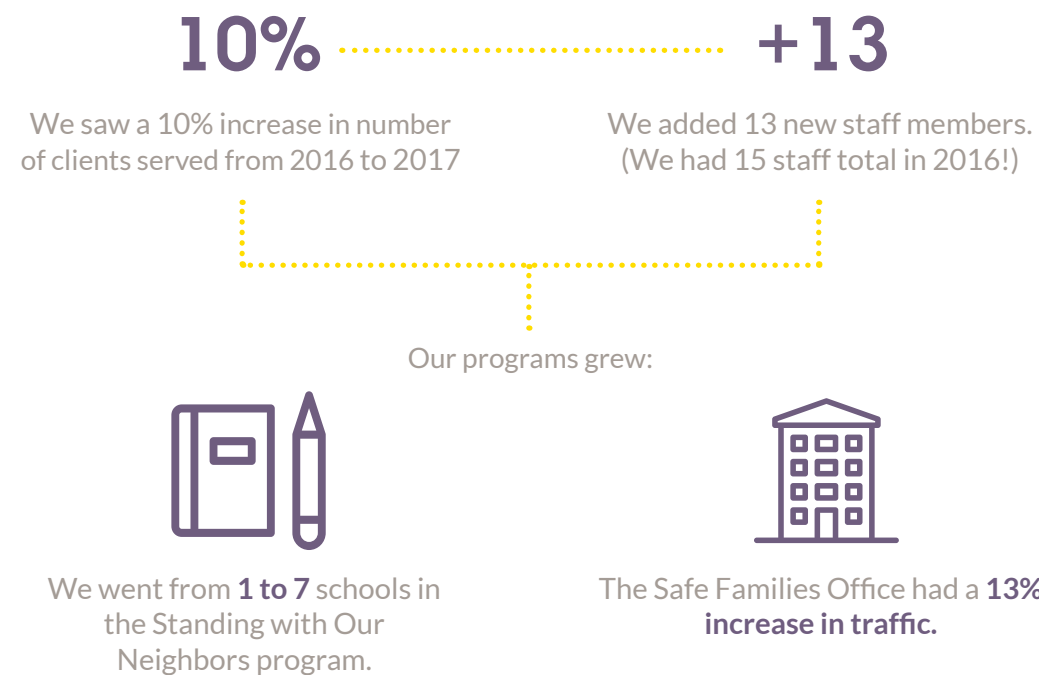
We directly serve nearly 5,000 Atlantans each year and reach hundreds more through community outreach and workshops. Our staff trains, mentors, and supports pro bono attorneys to assist low-income Atlanta residents in critical situations. We uplift and empower our neighbors in need.

**National Problems, Local Action** - Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation seeks to tackle national problems—like intimate partner

violence and housing instability—by taking local action in our community. We seek to inspire Atlanta lawyers to use their expertise to the betterment of our city, promoting safer and more stable homes and families.

Our programs provide extensive legal assistance, education, and advocacy for at-risk individuals in Atlanta - at no cost. We provide both legal support and holistic, community-focused services to those in need. Our programs cover family law and domestic violence cases, landlord/tenant disputes, evictions, unpaid wages, and probate issues.

**Growth in 2017** - This year, we celebrated unprecedented growth as an organization—growth that allows us to provide better services, create more efficient processes, and have greater meaningful impact in Atlanta.



### The Phones

Our phones are open from 9:00am to 1:00pm, Monday through Thursday, to assist Atlantans in finding the legal help they need.

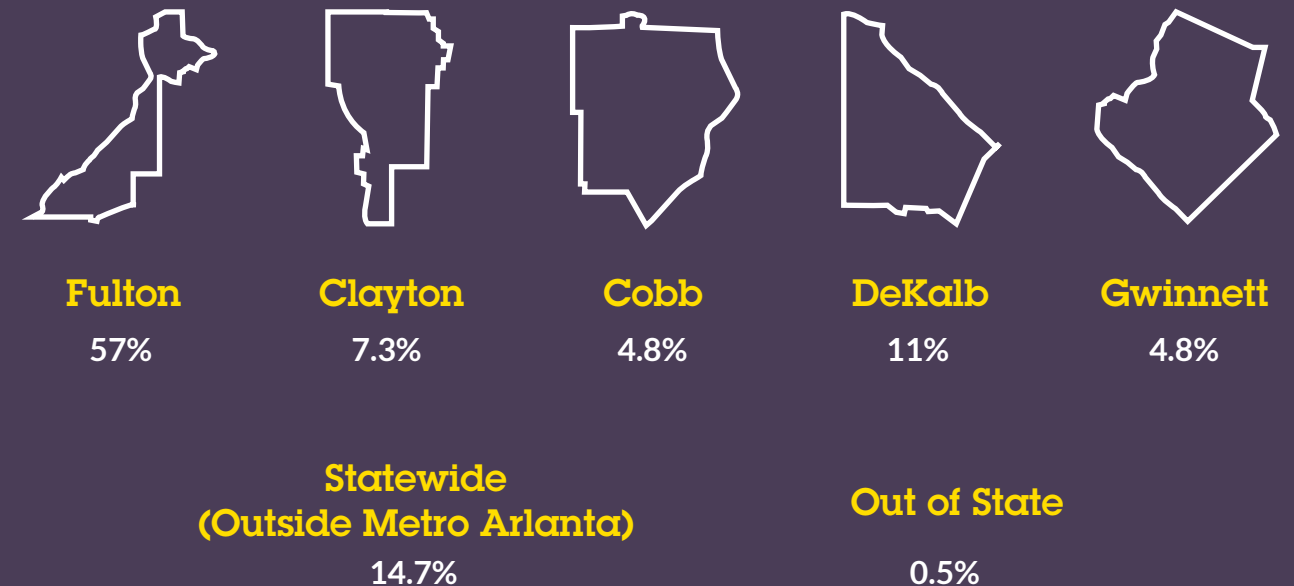
thoughtful and thorough advice by one of our staff attorneys, or a tailored referral to the best available resource, we strive to be the last call someone has to make to get help.

Whether we offer direct representation by one of our hundreds of volunteer attorneys,

**814 calls**

directed toward screening in one of our programs

From **WHERE** are people calling?



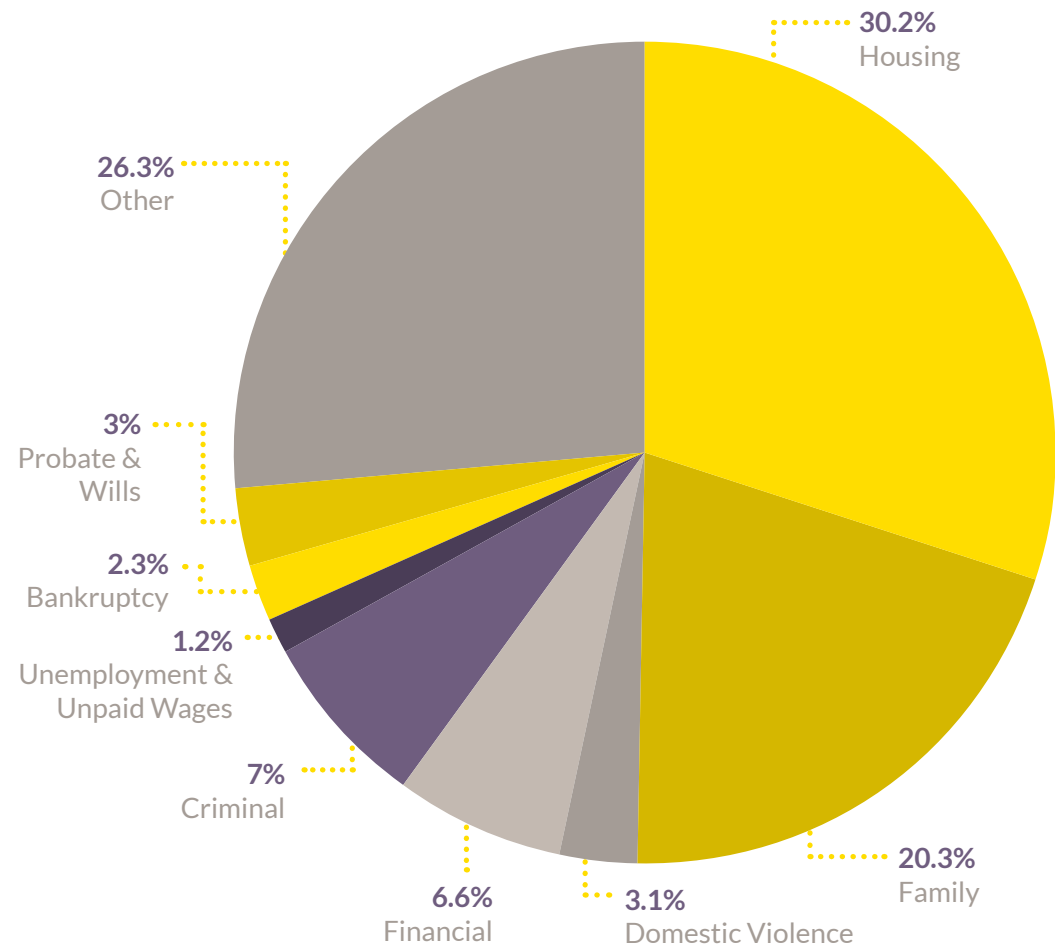
\*This number does not include calls to our place-based satellite offices.

Our programs are innovative, community-conscious, and nationally recognized for their impact. We strive to make it as easy as possible for lawyers to engage in meaningful pro bono work – and through this, we change lives.

By **WHOM** are callers referred?

- Atlanta Bar Association
- Atlanta Legal Aid Society
- Georgia Legal Services Program
- Lawyers for Equal Justice
- United Way
- DeKalb Volunteer Lawyers Foundation
- State Bar of Georgia
- Fulton County Courts and Law Library
- Georgia Law Center for the Homeless
- Word of mouth and avlf.org

**WHY** are they calling?



## ▶ Our Programs

### Safe and Stable Homes

- Saturday Lawyer Program (SLP)
- Standing with Our Neighbors (SWON)
- Eviction Defense
- Bankruptcy Program
- Dollars for Judgments (DFJ)
- Probate Information Center (PIC)

### Safe and Stable Families

- Safe Families Office (SFO)
- Family Law Program (FLP)
- Guardian ad Litem (GAL)

## ► Safe and Stable Homes

The Safe and Stable Homes Project houses a variety of programs that address various housing and finance issues of low-income Atlanta residents. The project seeks to stabilize Atlanta homes - because stability leads to security, and security leads to opportunity and growth.

### She Walked into Court with an AVL F Army. *Client Story* .....

The Cochrans, a family of four, were living in an 18-unit building in Atlanta's English Avenue neighborhood. Their apartment was owned by an inexcusably negligent landlord, who allowed the apartment to fall into complete disrepair before attempting to evict the Cochran family.

The apartment had no gas, due to a leak. And no water, either - the main water pipe had been stolen. There were no locks on the front or back door. Mold flourished on the walls - enough to labor one's breath after only a few minutes inside. There was no electricity in the bedroom, only an extension cord that snaked along the wall, feebly taped. An open area in the front of the building was backed up with leaking sewage.

Jeff Nix, a partner at Taylor English, enthusiastically agreed to represent the Cochrans in their pursuit of justice.

Ms. Cochran didn't have to face the court alone: flanked by two attorneys, two damages

experts, a mold expert, two witnesses from the apartment building, and an officer with the Atlanta Police Department's Code Enforcement Section, Ms. Cochran walked into the courtroom with an army.

The trial lasted four hours.

On January 5, 2018, in an eight-page decision, Hon. Linda Borsky ruled in favor of the Cochrans, denying the landlord's request for past due rent and possession of the home, citing "willful misconduct, malice, fraud, wantonness, oppression, entire want of care, and conscious indifference for the consequences of its actions."

The judge awarded the Cochrans over \$18,000.

No family should have to make a home of such horrific conditions, no matter their income. No one should have to withstand such deliberate neglect.

"One of our attorneys came in this morning raving about what a great experience he had Saturday with this group called AVL F. Glad to hear things are still flying high there." - Volunteer paralegal for Saturday Lawyer Program

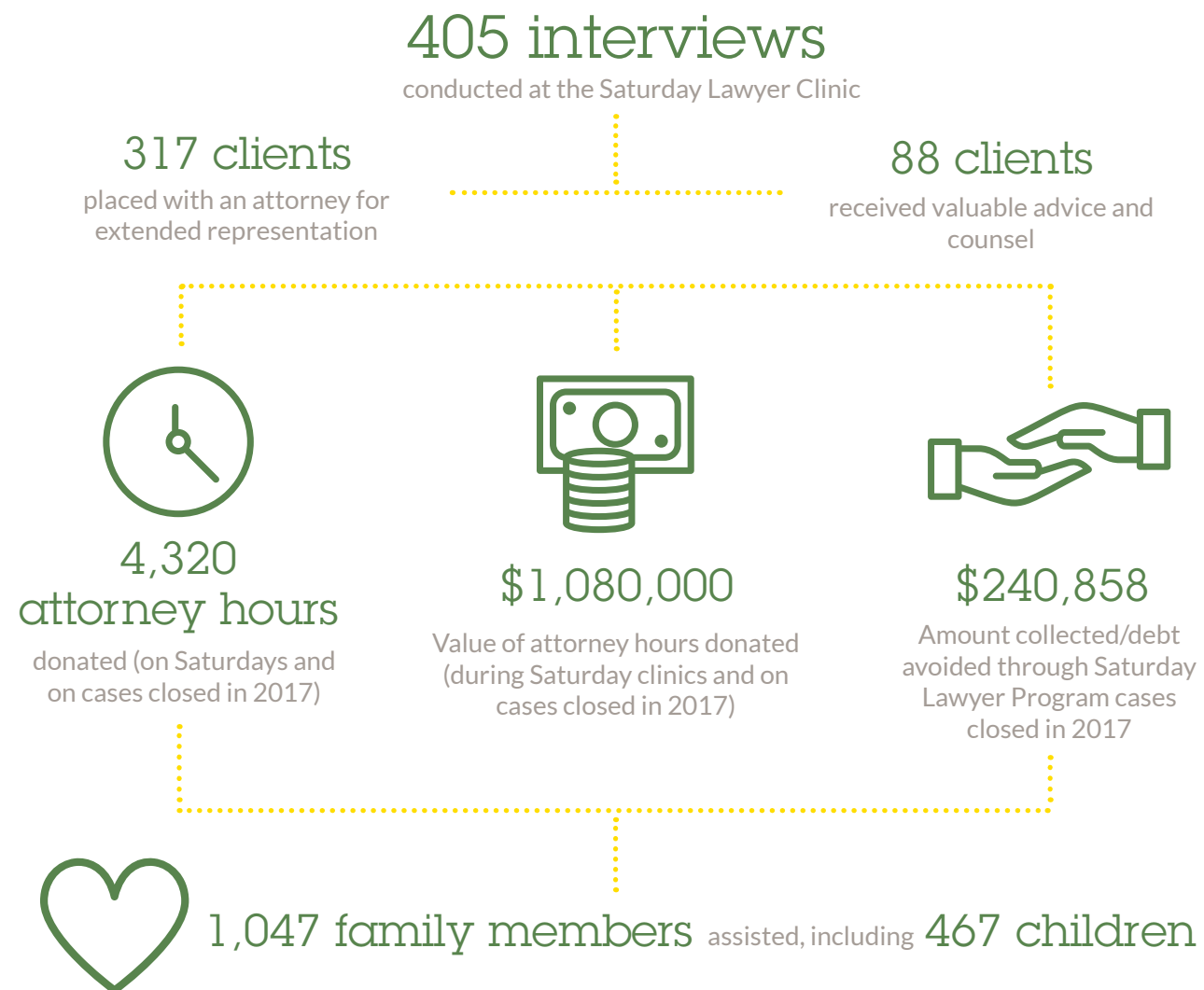


## ► Safe and Stable Homes

### Saturday Lawyer Program (SLP) .....

For forty years, the Saturday Lawyer Program – AVLF’s oldest and largest program, which was created before the Foundation even existed – has provided low-income Atlantans with access to volunteer attorneys. We serve our community in areas vital to economic security, including landlord/tenant disputes and unpaid wage claims.

“I felt I had the best person to listen to my problem. She went above and beyond to solve what I asked her to do.” – Saturday Lawyer Program client



## ► Safe and Stable Homes

### Standing with Our Neighbors (SWON) .....

Families cannot thrive without affordable housing that is safe, stable, and healthy. Schools cannot thrive with a student body forced to live in unstable housing and deplorable conditions.

In Atlanta, where nearly half of the residents are renters, far too many families struggle to obtain and maintain rental housing that lives up to those basic but critical standards. Our children suffer as a result, from deteriorating health to roadblocks to pursuing their education.

**SWON is a place-based program that seeks to overhaul the typical legal services model in favor of something more accessible and equitable.** AVLF partners with schools and

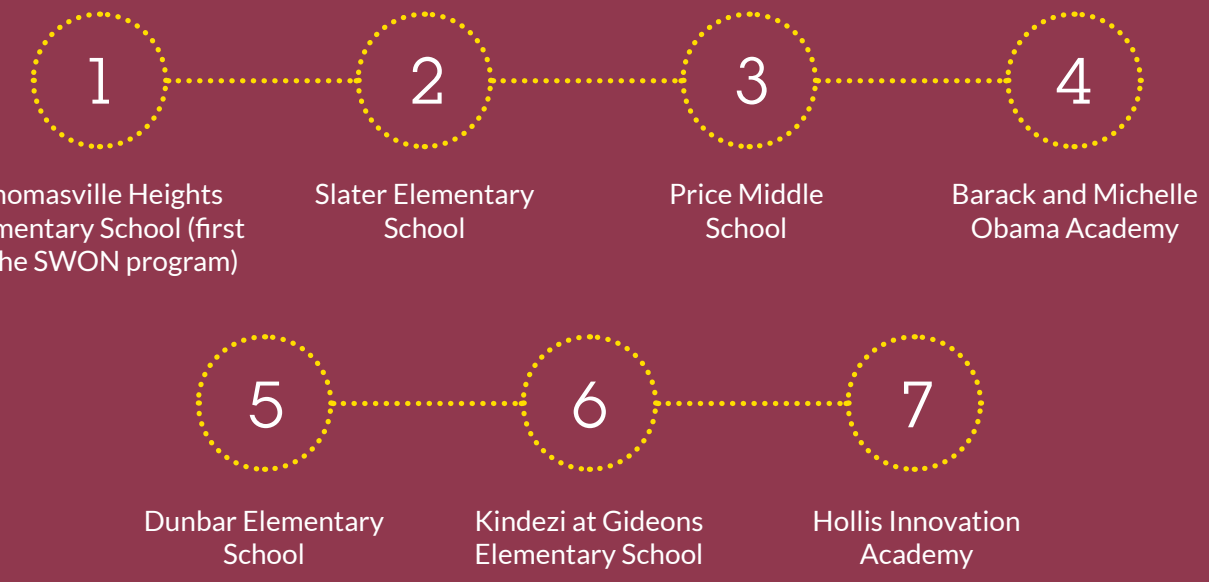
other community allies to focus our volunteer resources on improving living conditions and housing stability in low-income neighborhoods – all to improve resident health, reduce school enrollment turnover, and enhance student attendance and performance.

**Our program staff is embedded within neighborhoods to stop housing instability early and work as a first responder when problems do arise.** The initiative is led by dedicated staff attorneys and full-time community advocates who are embedded in the community. We deliver these services by partnering with the city's leading law firms to "adopt" each school and surrounding neighborhoods.

"If you all had not been here, it would have taken another year for the issues to be resolved. My kids and I deserve to live in a place that feels like home."  
– Standing with Our Neighbors client



This year, Standing with Our Neighbors has expanded **from 1 to 7 schools.**



In 2017, AVLF and its volunteer attorneys opened **118 cases** for Standing with Our Neighbors families, including **325 children.**

39 of those cases were placed with volunteer attorneys from our partner firms and numerous others received extensive advice and assistance from AVLF staff.



Photo by Bonnie Moret

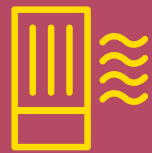


## ► Safe and Stable Homes

### Standing with Our Neighbors (SWON) .....

While work is on-going in many cases, **61 SWON cases were closed** in 2017. Of these, **36 households received repairs** to their units or were transferred to safer, healthier units, and **8 evictions were avoided or favorably settled**.

In addition to legal representation in 2017, the SWON program:



Distributed **8 high-quality dehumidifiers** and numerous other items to improve household health. These included anti-allergen mattress covers, rat and roach traps, fans, smoke alarms, and carbon monoxide detectors.



Paid past due utilities for **11 families (totaling \$1,930)** to prevent utility disconnections, which often result in eviction.



Contracted professional mold testing services on **33 occasions**, nearly all of which uncovered dangerous conditions.



Made **11 referrals** for SWON residents to the Furniture Bank and **covered the \$100 fee in all cases**.

### SWON Partner Firms .....

ALSTON & BIRD

**Arnall Golden Gregory** LLP  
Attorneys at Law

JONES DAY

KILPATRICK TOWNSEND

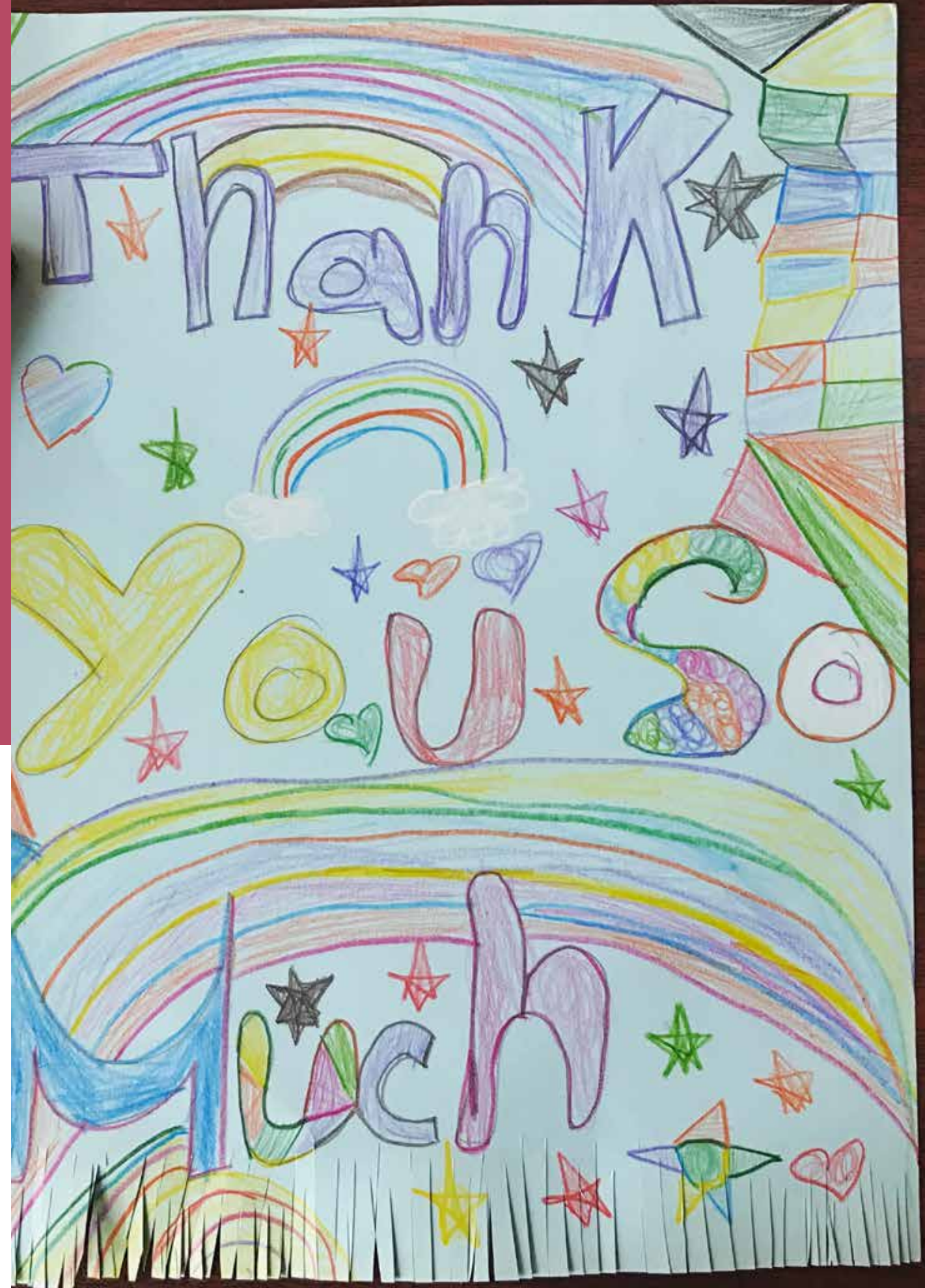
KING & SPALDING

NELSON MULLINS

EVERSHEDS SUTHERLAND

troutman sanders

taylor | english



## ► Safe and Stable Homes

### Eviction Defense

The Eviction Defense program provides low-income and unrepresented tenants facing eviction with attorneys to represent them in court in their time of critical need.



50 tenants

received valuable advice and counsel

26 tenants

received full representation to defend eviction within 10 days

\$26,875

Amount awarded to/debt avoided for tenants facing eviction

### Dollars for Judgments

The Dollars for Judgments program puts places creditors' rights attorneys to work on behalf of low-income clients who have obtained a judgment as a result of a case won by an AVLF staff or volunteer attorney.



14 clients

assigned expert attorneys to collect on their judgments

\$12,249

Amount collected in 2017

### Bankruptcy Program

The Bankruptcy Program was developed in 2004 as a cooperative effort between the law firm of Clark & Washington and AVLF to respond to the significant need among low-income individuals for counseling and/or assistance in filing Chapter 7 bankruptcy petitions.



86 clients

were referred for free representation in Chapter 7 proceedings in 2017

### Probate Information Center

At the Fulton County Courthouse, volunteer attorneys working with AVLF provide free 30-minute appointments to individuals with questions about active probate issues surrounding a deceased loved one. Common areas of consultation include the probate of simple wills, the administration of estates, and poverty affidavits.



171 appointments scheduled

for free expert consultation at court-based clinic

15 expert volunteer attorneys

gave an afternoon to staff the clinic

\$21,000

Value of attorney hours donated during PIC clinics

## ► Safe and Stable Families

The Safe and Stable Families Project provides advocacy, resources, and legal assistance to Atlantans with family law needs - at no cost. The programs under Safe and Stable Families address intimate partner violence, custody cases, divorce, and more - because a safe and stable family provides a solid foundation on which Atlanta families can thrive.

### At Long Last—Safety. Client Story

27 years. Nearly three decades of marriage.

Leila and her husband came to the States many years ago to start a family. Together, they raised three children—and, with the encouragement of her husband, Leila stayed home to raise them.

But throughout their marriage, Leila's husband drank heavily and often verbally abused her in front of the children. The abuse escalated over the years. Eventually it became physical, and when Leila confronted her husband about his multiple affairs, he threatened to beat her so severely that she would not escape alive.

Leila feared for her life. Her husband insisted that if she called the police, no one would believe her—and she would die. Her husband controlled all of the finances, kept her isolated from her friends and family, and relentlessly humiliated her in front of the children. She knew he was capable of anything.

With nowhere to turn for help, Leila sought the guidance of the Safe Families Office. She petitioned the court for a protective order against her husband, and with a lawyer by her side, Leila won.

Her husband was forced to leave and to remain at least 200 yards away from her at all times. She was granted temporary custody of her youngest child—the only minor—and the court ordered her husband to pay nearly \$30,000 in child support for the year. Leila and her youngest child were connected with counseling services to help them heal. When an abuser threatens your life, healing can seem impossible. Safety and stability seem so far away.

But from the moment a survivor steps into our Safe Families Office, they are protected by our staff, by our attorneys. Their courage to reach out often saves their lives, and AVLF's staff and volunteers do everything in our power to protect them.

## Safe Families Office

The Safe Families Office is located in the Fulton County Courthouse, and is **Georgia's very first lawyer-staffed, courthouse-based resource for victims of intimate partner abuse.**

When a survivor of intimate partner violence walks into the courthouse for help, our team—in collaboration with Partnership Against Domestic Violence (PADV)—provides **comprehensive consultation services that address every foreseeable aspect of a survivor's safety and well-being.**

Our society encourages victims of intimate partner, elder, and child abuse to address the violence through the courts. But these families can face insurmountable challenges when trying to navigate the legal process: they may have insufficient knowledge of the justice system, inadequate education to take advantage of the court's power, financial constraints, emotional and psychological barriers, and the ever-worsening fear of retaliation from their abuser, should the abuser become aware of legal action.

**Each appointment includes legal consultation, safety planning, access to shelters, and thorough guidance that respects the survivor's opinions and goals.**

Lawyers, paralegals, and law students trained by AVLF in the law and psychology of domestic violence offer legal consultation, advice, direction, and direct representation in their effort to secure long-term protective orders—the highest protection offered in civil court for the victim and her family.

AVLF's social workers at the SFO provide holistic support to survivors - such as **resume building, rent and utility assistance, low-cost counseling, child care, and more** - so that survivors can break free from abuse and regain their independence.

**Having access to legal counsel, safety planning, and holistic services offers real hope for rebuilding healthy, positive lives.**

"I have never been so grateful for someone who would take a complete stranger's personal life so seriously and fight for them with the magnitude that my attorney did for me and my daughter." – Safe Families Office client



3,294  
visitors

to the Safe Families Office  
(including people who  
visited multiple times)



1,658  
survivors

received assistance in filing a  
petition, safety planning, and  
accompaniment to ex parte hearing

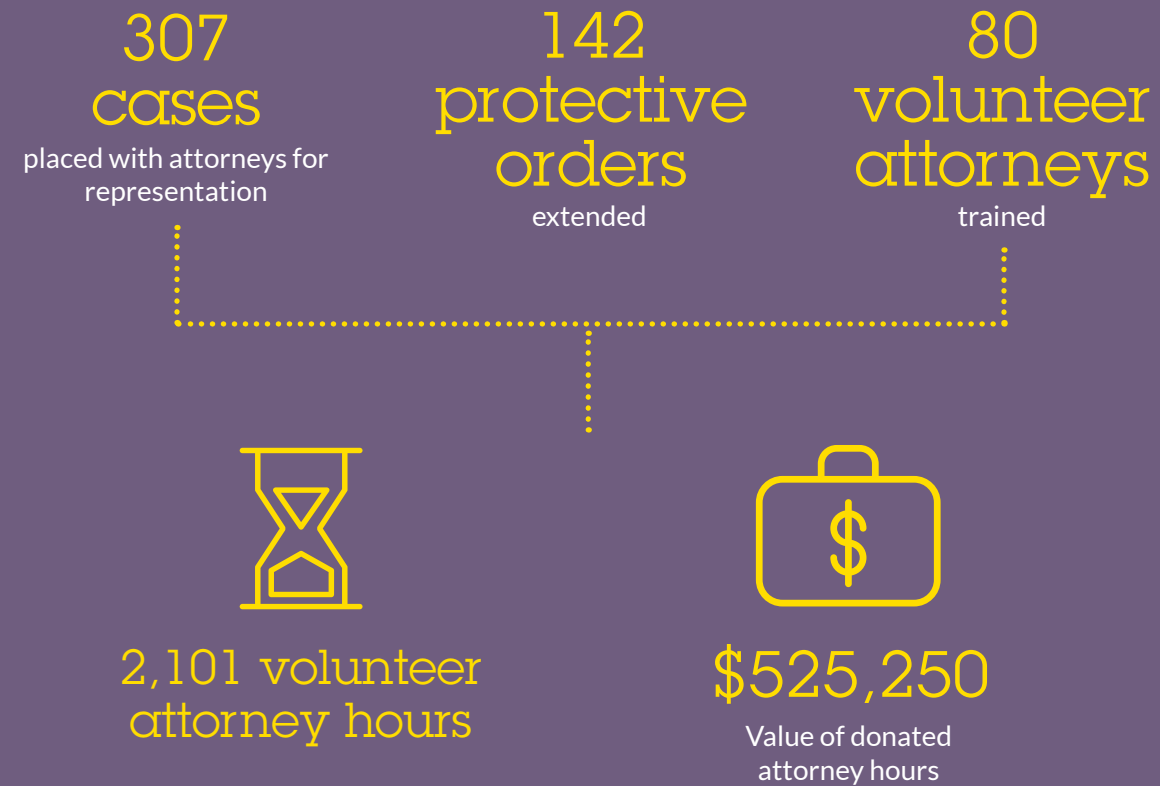


2,506  
children

directly impacted by the  
Safe Families Office

## ► Safe and Stable Families

### Safe Families Office



**TechBridge**<sup>®</sup>  
Business smart. Community focused.

In collaboration with TechBridge, the Safe Families Office began integrating **5 tablets and 4 desktop computers** into our intake process. With a full roll-out in early 2018, these devices make paperwork easier, faster and more intuitive for staff and clients—meaning more one-on-one time to make the best decisions for each individual client.

"I will never forget what you have done for me. I will remember you for life!"  
– Safe Families Office client



## ▶ Safe and Stable Families

### Family Law Program

Often, obtaining a Temporary Protective Order is just the first step in breaking free from the cycle of violence. Many survivors of domestic violence are married to or have a child with their abusers and need help with divorce and custody matters. Many have claims for unpaid child support and need legal assistance. Many are men who have not legitimated their children, meaning that if he

desires a Protective Order against the abusive mother, the children may remain in her care.

To assist in family law matters beyond the protective order, AVLf has a full-time family law staff attorney, who coordinates the provision of pro bono family law services, and a social worker, who provides social service support to clients.

"Thank you so much for helping me. My divorce is now final and my life is going the direction I want. I had very good people handling my case from the beginning until the end, and I'm truly grateful from the bottom of my heart." – Family Law Program client

..... Number of client applications to Family Law Program: 102 .....

49  
clients

assisted by the Family Law Program

16  
cases

placed with an attorney

5  
clients

given limited legal assistance

49  
clients

given comprehensive advice and counsel

..... Case Breakdown: .....



13 divorces



1 legitimation defense



1 grandparent visitation case



1 child support case



## ▶ Safe and Stable Families

### Guardian ad Litem Program

Divorcing parents often fight over custody of their children. Judges are responsible for deciding with whom and on what terms the children of a divorce will live and visit. To determine the children's best interests, especially in high conflict cases, judges frequently ask to have the help of a Guardian ad Litem—someone appointed by the court to represent and protect the interests of a minor.

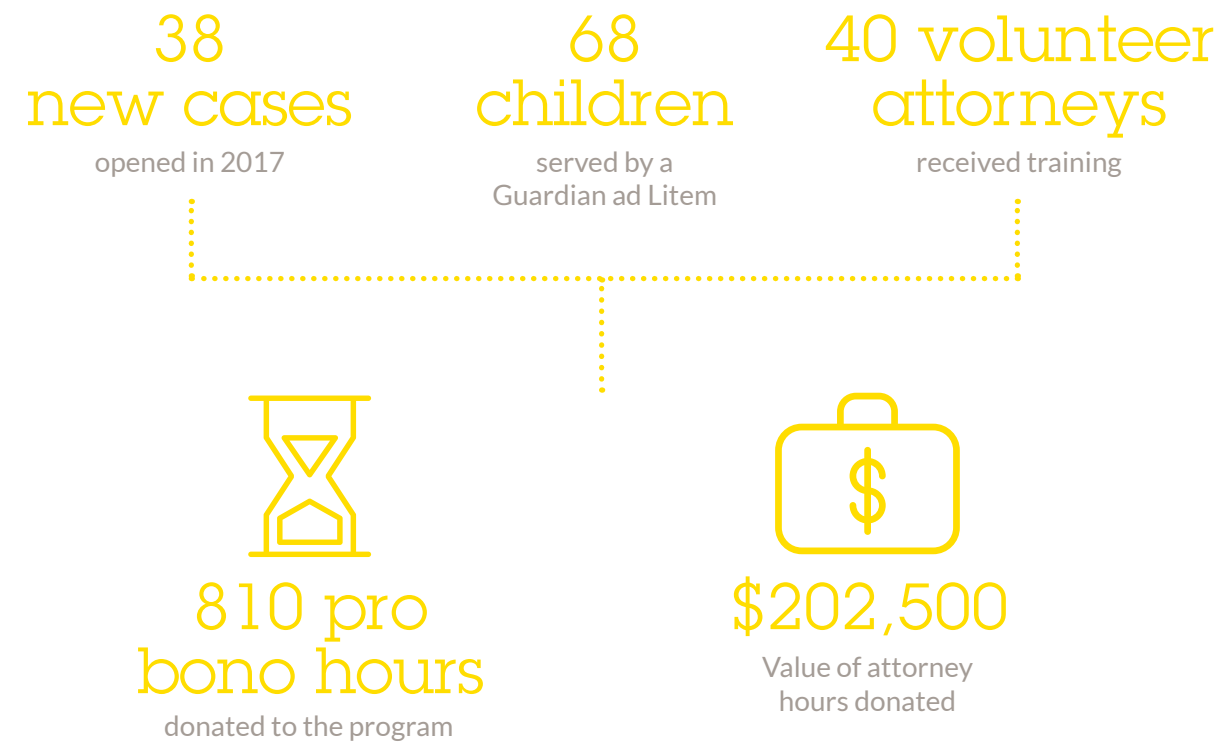
AVLF recruits private lawyers to serve as Guardians at no cost to the parties. We train lawyers from various backgrounds to identify the best interests of the children. After a full-day

CLE training, attorneys are added to the list of eligible volunteers.

AVLF's Safe and Stable Families Project Director mentors and supervises those lawyers as they make thorough investigations and recommendations to the Court about the best course of action.

The partnership between the Court and AVLF promotes a prompt, effective, and efficient outcome for the Court and for the parents, and, most importantly, provides much-needed advocacy to children torn between two homes.

## ▶ Our Community



### Outreach Spotlights & Fundraisers

Community involvement is crucial to the success of our programs. We cherish each opportunity to participate in the conversation, to enhance our community, and to learn. AVLF hosted and participated in an assortment of community outreach events, including movie nights, staff appreciation days, award ceremonies, Lawyer in the Library events, fall festivals, and more.

## ► Our Community: Outreach Spotlights

### Safe and Stable Families

On October 5th, the Safe and Stable Families team participated in Tapestri's domestic violence forum, The Refugee & Immigrant Journey: Past, Present & Future. AVLF was honored to have Staff Attorney Nilufar Abdi-Tabari invited to speak at the forum about the implications of divorce and custody cases for immigrant survivors of domestic violence.

AVLF was also named one of Tapestri's Community Partners of the Year. The award recognizes "the outstanding commitment to Tapestri and the many families [they] serve."



### Safe and Stable Homes

As our projects in the Safe and Stable Homes Project continue to grow exponentially, we become increasingly connected to and invested in the communities we serve. Safe and Stable Homes has hosted and participated in numerous outreach events throughout 2017, including the monthly Thomasville Heights Turn Up and Turn Out event, the Lawyer in the Library series, know-your-rights presentations, and more.

In October 2017, the Safe and Stable Homes team joined students, families, and staff at Gideons Elementary School for their Fall Harvest Festival, where students played games, ate food, and enjoyed the cooling weather. AVLF sponsored food, candy, and games, and had a table set up at the event for families to stop by. This fall festival was one of 11 that AVLF either organized or participated in.

## ► Our Community: Outreach Spotlights

### AVLF at the Movies: *Class Divide* .....

On Tuesday, September 19 at the Landmark Midtown Art Cinema, AVLF hosted a screening of the HBO Documentary film *Class Divide*. The screening was followed by a discussion about the intersecting issues of affordable housing, gentrification, and education in Atlanta. Speakers included affordable housing advocate and

BeltLine founder Ryan Gravel and Atlanta Public Schools' Superintendent Dr. Meria Carstarphen. We are grateful to event sponsors Taylor English and Daily Report, without whom the evening would not have been possible, and to our speakers, who invited a critical look at the issues facing Atlanta today.



## ► Our Community: Fundraisers

### 5th Annual PurSHOEing Justice .....

**One in three women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.** PurSHOEing Justice is a fundraiser designed to recognize the legal issues facing domestic violence victims and the volunteers and programs who help them.

as **300 friends of AVLF** sipped and shopped the night away, raising **over \$70,000 for the Safe Families Office**. Inspiring Guest of Honor Tameka Webb stole the show with her moving survivor story.

Event Chair Ashley Heintz led an amazing team of women who made this fourth annual event a resounding success. King & Spalding was lively

We offer a special thank you to **presenting sponsor Esquire Deposition Solutions**.



## ► Our Community: Fundraisers

### 4th Annual Beer Tasting and BBQ Battle .....

The Beer Tasting & BBQ Battle is a collaborative effort of the Atlanta Legal Aid Society and Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation to raise funds—and awareness—to **support critical programs administered by each organization in the Atlanta area.**

In 2017, more than 800 friends of AVLF and ALAS attended the event at Park Tavern, raising **over \$100,000** to support equal access to justice in our community. We are so grateful to the chefs who

donated their time and food: Grand Champion BBQ, Saltyard, **Sweet Auburn Barbeque**, **Two Urban Licks**, and **Righteous Cues**. Grand Champion BBQ won the Judge's Award while Sweet Auburn Barbeque took home the People's Choice Award.

We couldn't have done it without event co-chairs **Sarah Zampell** and **Ansley Sluss**—or without the support of **United Distributors** and the **Atlanta BBQ Club**.



### 6th Annual Warner Bates Guardian ad Litem Benefit .....

Each August, one of the metropolitan area's largest family law firms hosts a party at its law office to raise funds for AVLF's **Guardian ad Litem Program**. On August 24th, the beautiful penthouse offices of Warner Bates were the perfect backdrop for delicious hors d'oeuvres and cocktails provided by Taco Cowboy. We are grateful to all of the event's sponsors, in particular platinum sponsor IAG Forensics and Daily Report, as well as gold sponsors State Bank & Trust and Signature FD.

The event is the primary pillar of support sustaining a program that has **proven invaluable to the Fulton County Superior Courts Family Division**. As in years past, judges, attorneys and other family law professionals gave generously (and celebrated convivially) at the event, which raised **more than \$25,000 for the Guardian ad Litem program**.

## ► Our Community: Fundraisers

### 26th Annual Winetasting .....

On November 2nd, the Atlanta legal community kicked off the 2017 holiday season with the 26th Annual AVLF Winetasting at the beautiful Biltmore Ballrooms. **More than 1,000 lawyers and other friends of AVLF** celebrated Atlanta's commitment to pro bono service with a party that featured exceptional wines courtesy of United Distributors and delicious food from A Divine Event.

**This year's Winetasting raised \$600,000.** We are extremely grateful to all our generous friends and donors, without whom this event would not have been possible. **More than 540 different law firms, corporate legal departments, Atlanta and State of Georgia Bar Sections, and individuals donated to AVLF** in connection with the event.



## ► Our Supporters .....

Donors  
Grants  
Celebrating Service Award Winners

## ► Our Supporters: Donors

We are humbled and honored by the support of the following partners, who gave gifts this year of \$10,000 or greater.

Allison Hill / H. Foundation in honor of Liz Whipple  
Alston & Bird LLP  
Arnall Golden Gregory LLP  
John Chandler & Beth Tanis  
The Coca-Cola Company Legal Division  
Deloitte Financial Advisory Services LLP  
Dentons US LLP  
DTI / Epiq  
Eversheds Sutherland  
Elizabeth Finn Johnson & Stuart Johnson  
Kilpatrick Townsend  
King & Spalding LLP  
KrollDiscovery  
Paul J. Murphy & Gia M. Partain  
Richard K. Paradies Philanthropic Fund in honor of Liz Whipple  
Smith, Gambrell & Russell, LLP  
SunTrust Bank Legal Specialty Group  
Taylor English Duma LLP  
Troutman Sanders LLP  
Warner Bates

## ► Our Supporters: Grants

We could not achieve our goals without the support of the following organizations, who provided AVLF with grants of \$10,000 and greater in 2017:

May P. & Francis L. Abreu Charitable Trust  
Annie E. Casey Civic Site  
Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation  
Atlanta Bar Foundation  
Mary Allen Lindsey Branan Foundation  
Thalia and Michael Carlos Foundation  
Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta  
Equal Justice Works Georgia Housing Corps  
Fulton DeKalb Hospital Authority  
Georgia Bar Foundation  
Georgia Power Foundation  
Wilbur and Hilda Glenn Family Foundation  
The Imlay Foundation  
Jesse Parker Williams Foundation  
Jones Day Foundation  
Kaiser Permanente  
Kendeda Fund  
Purpose Built Schools  
W.G. Raoul Foundation  
Rich Foundation  
Sartain Lanier Family Foundation  
United Way of Greater Atlanta Spark Prize  
Victim Legal Assistance Network  
Victims of Crimes Act Assistance  
David, Helen and Marian Woodward Foundation

## ► Our Supporters: Celebrating Service Award Winners

On October 20th, AVLF honored our 2017 award winners at the Atlanta Bar Association's Celebrating Service Luncheon.



### Safe Families Office Volunteer of the Year: Elizabeth Finn Johnson

Elizabeth Finn Johnson has been volunteering with AVLF's domestic violence program for the past 10 years. Elizabeth is a fierce advocate for women, especially survivors of domestic violence. Upon retiring from The Coca-Cola Company in 2015, where she worked as an employment litigator, Elizabeth took her passion for working with survivors to the next level.

Now, in addition to representing survivors in protective order hearings, she now devotes at

least two full days each week volunteering as a legal intake advocate in the Safe Families Office in the Fulton County Courthouse.

Elizabeth's energy, enthusiasm for this work, and brilliant legal mind inspire us and ensure that Safe Families Office clients receive a volunteer lawyer and advocate who is truly devoted to hearing their stories and zealously advocating for their safety and stability.

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### Guardian ad Litem: JoAnna Smith

JoAnna Smith has been volunteering with AVLF's Guardian ad Litem program for the past two years. She has a passion for helping others. As the managing partner of Anderson Rupani & Smith, LLC—a family law firm featuring sliding scale and unbundled family law services—JoAnna has realized her noble goal of making family law legal services more accessible to low and middle-income Georgians.

While JoAnna and her firm partners have volunteered for all of AVLF's Safe & Stable

Families Project's programs, she has dedicated a significant amount of her time to the GAL program. She has exhibited a genuine desire to do what is best for each child involved in her GAL cases and thoughtful consideration of the various options in play. Even in the toughest contested custody cases, the children can rest assured they have a friendly, intelligent, and devoted advocate for their best interests.

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### Family Law Program Volunteer of the Year: ivory t. brown

When AVLF officially launched its Family Law Program for survivors of domestic violence in April 2016, ivory t. brown was one of the first attorneys to sign on as a program partner. She was committing to represent at least one survivor of domestic violence in his/her family law legal matter on a pro bono basis in the next year.

When AVLF came knocking, ivory did not hesitate to accept her first case. She provided the highest quality representation for her client

in a legitimation defense action, with the final order favoring her client. Shortly thereafter, ivory jumped right back in and accepted a divorce action for another survivor.

ivory's willingness to partner with and serve AVLF's Family Law Program in its infancy and generosity in giving her time to our clients has helped set the standard for this program and allowed it to thrive as we proceed in our second year.

## ► Our Supporters: Celebrating Service Award Winners

### Safe and Stable Homes Firm of the Year: Eversheds Sutherland

EVERSHEDS  
SUTHERLAND

Eversheds Sutherland is our Safe & Stable Homes Firm of the Year for being a steadfast partner of AVLF’s diverse initiatives to help struggling tenants. Eversheds Sutherland is a pillar of AVLF’s Saturday Lawyer Program, sponsoring four Saturdays in 2017 alone and consistently accepting cases on behalf of our most vulnerable clients.

Without diluting its commitment to Saturday Lawyer Day, Eversheds Sutherland is also a key partner of the Standing with Our Neighbors program, hosting trainings, conducting research, and achieving stellar results for Thomasville Heights residents.

While the firm boasts too many standout attorneys to name, Melissa Conrad-Alam exemplified the high caliber of Eversheds Sutherland’s representation when she got her client, a grandmother, out of her rat- and wasp-infested apartment and got her security deposit refunded in full. Led and supported by attorney John Fleming and Pro Bono Manager Aileen Bleach, the pro bono work of Eversheds Sutherland consistently improves the lives of tenants across Fulton County and sets an example for other firms.

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### Safe and Stable Homes Firm of the Year: Emerson W. Girardeau III, Eversheds Sutherland

Emerson W. Girardeau III has earned the distinction of the Safe & Stable Homes Volunteer of the Year for his strong commitment to Atlanta’s low-income tenants, through both our Standing with Our Neighbors program and our county-wide tenant programs.

In every case, Emerson advocates for his clients in a gentle-but-persistent way that overcomes stubborn landlords and opposing counsel like the steady drip of water on rock.

One of his clients was living in a rat-infested apartment with her newborn baby when she called AVLF. Thanks to Emerson’s persistence, the landlord relocated the family to a clean and safe unit. For another client, he found a local charity that paid her large outstanding electric bill—a barrier that had prevented her from leaving her moldy apartment.

Emerson is consistently patient, unruffled, and kind to his clients, who are often experiencing deep trauma. For always going the extra mile and for achieving great results with both skill and heart, Emerson is the Safe & Stable Homes Volunteer of the Year.



## ► Our People .....

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Administrative Assistant, Safe & Stable  
Homes Project

"I love to work with AVLf because I know how much courage it takes for AVLf's clients to stand up for themselves—to their landlords, to their abusers—and what a difference the right lawyer can make in their lives."  
—Jimmy Rusert, Junior Board President



► **Our People:** Safe & Stable Families Project Staff

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► **Financial Report** .....





## ► Financial Report

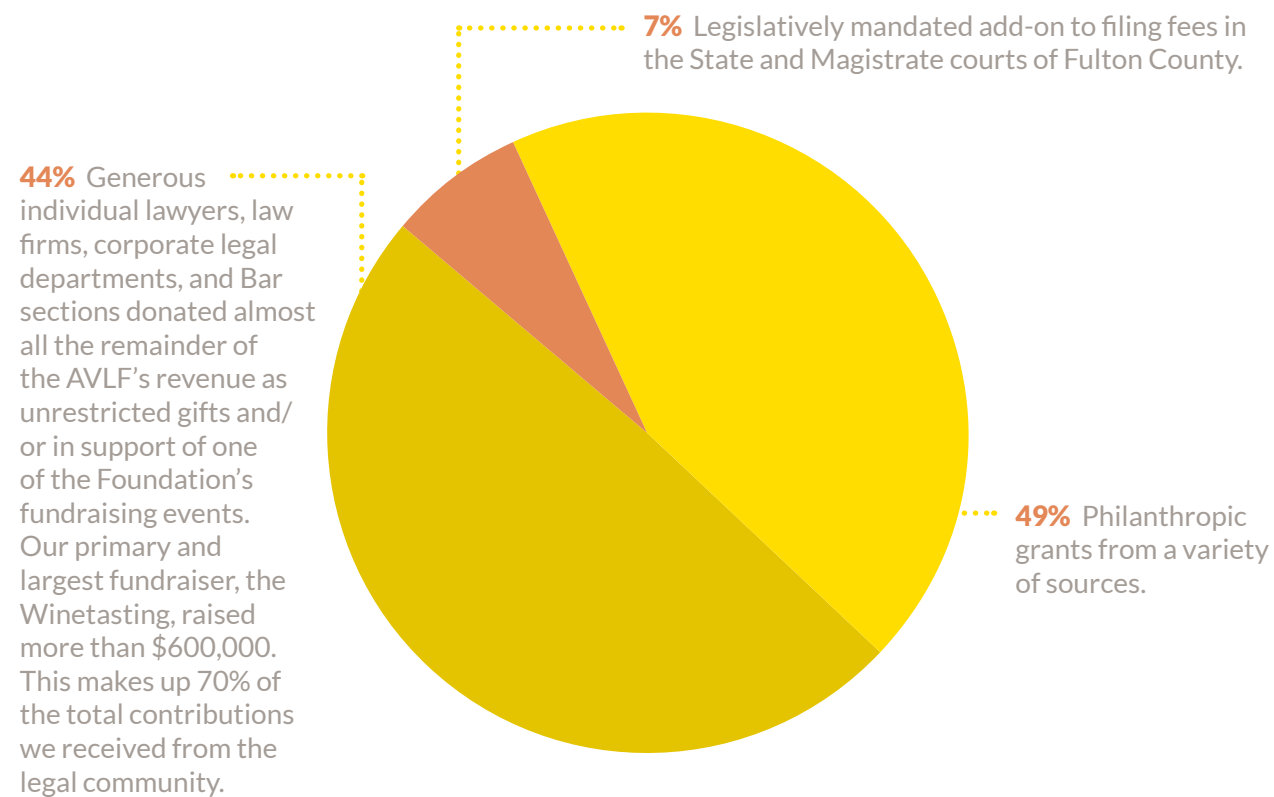
In order to serve our clients, we need volunteers. These generous volunteers, who take on cases from domestic violence to unpaid wages to landlord/tenant issues, are often taking cases that are outside their area of expertise. AVL F staff must recruit, train, and mentor volunteer attorneys in order to serve our clients—and this has a cost.

More than 75% of AVL F's budget pays for personnel salaries and benefits. Our remarkable staff members also speak with, counsel, advocate for, and otherwise support thousands of Atlantans who call but cannot qualify for services from AVL F's pro bono attorneys.

80% of AVL F staff directly interact with volunteer attorneys and clients. Our development and communications staff are here to ensure that we raise enough money to save lives, expand our services, keep the lights on—and ethically and accurately keep track of it all.

The remaining budget pays for rent for the AVL F office, general office-related expenses, and for the costs associated with our five annual fund-and friend-raisers. Our policy is never to spend more than 10% of an event's gross on expenses.

In 2017, revenue to AVL F came from three sources:



## ► Remembering Liz Whipple .....



## ► Remembering Liz Whipple

Elizabeth Ann Whipple, known to her family as Liz Ann and to AVLF as simply Liz, was the director of our Domestic Violence Project from 2011 to 2015.

Liz left AVLF to accept a two-year teaching fellowship as the Interim Director of the Domestic Violence Law Clinic at the University of Alabama School of Law – the same clinic she attended as a law student. Liz was planning to return to Atlanta early summer 2017, having accepted a position at the family law firm Warner Bates.

Many of you knew Liz to be wonderfully irreverent, and creatively playful in a way few are. But occasionally lost in the pleasure of thinking about her quirky, life-affirming insistence on making every day an adventure was the fact that she was an outstanding and fierce advocate for abused women. She was simply unwilling to allow domestic violence victims to stand alone, and with her help, our clients could know freedom from the fear of further abuse, and real dignity in their lives.

**Liz was an excellent model for how to offer legal services to women facing stalking and abuse.** She knew the law, she advocated with passion, she gained the full trust of her clients, and she made people who had never experienced the legal system believe that justice was possible. She created strong bonds with the clerks and judges and sheriffs in the Fulton County Courthouse and the police throughout the city. Liz was a leader of the community of those who work to curb violence.

She was also an exceptional teacher of her craft. **There has been a stunning outpouring of love for Liz, much of it in the form of e-mails and texts and cards we received at AVLF from all over the country, and by far the largest single theme was “Liz taught me.”** Judge Jane Barwick told us that Liz taught

her everything she knows about the law and psychology of domestic violence; in fact, she says that Liz taught her how to be a Judge. Dozens of lawyers have told me that Liz pushed them out of the nest, or that Liz was by their side when they tried their first case, or that the work that they did with and for Liz informed their decisions about where and how they wanted to practice law.

**Liz made professionalism contagious by inspiring others to provide pro bono service.** So many people have told us that they, or lawyers that they worked with, first started taking on pro bono matters because of Liz. They attended one of her training sessions that, despite covering a very serious topic, was somehow fun and entertaining. Liz not only dedicated her whole career to providing legal services to those who would have otherwise gone without representation, she also drew in scores of lawyers from the private bar to work with her. **Using a term we have heard often about Liz’s power of pro bono persuasion, Cheryl Naja described Liz’s ability to bring in volunteers as “miraculous.”**

Jamie Perez—who succeeded Liz as the Director of our domestic violence program—and her Safe Families Office colleagues carry on the fundamental traditions and core values that Liz lived: civility, professionalism, integrity and personal dignity, which are indispensable to building respect for the rule of law. **Liz believed, and we will always believe, that there is no real justice unless everyone has access to it.**

We were lucky to work with Liz: the entire legal community was as fortunate to have her lead our fight against domestic abuse.

## ► Remembering Liz Whipple

The following donors made a generous contribution to AVLF in honor of our dear friend:

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## ► Sustaining AVLF


Now that you have read about our programs—about the remarkable growth of the SWON program, the new horizons of the Safe Families Office, and so much more—we invite you to step into our movement.


### 1. Stay Connected

To keep in touch, sign up for our newsletter and like us on social media. You'll be the first to hear about events, programs, and how you can get involved.

 **Twitter:** @supportavlf

 **Facebook:** @supportAVLF

 **Instagram:** @supportavlf

 **LinkedIn:** Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation

Sign up for our monthly newsletter at: [avlf.org/subscription](http://avlf.org/subscription).

### 2. Volunteer With Us

Each year, through AVLF alone, **lawyers give thousands of Atlantans entry to an otherwise inaccessible legal system.** Attorneys stand up for survivors of domestic violence. They protect tenants from landlords who refuse to honor their contracts and housing codes. They fight for denied wages. **Attorneys fight for justice—and they change Atlanta for the better.**

Atlanta is not just a series of streets we navigate to get to our work or our homes. This is our community. We have a responsibility to help this community flourish—and we can only do so with willing, enthusiastic volunteers. We invite you to stand with us.

Volunteer now at: [avlf.org/volunteer-opportunities](http://avlf.org/volunteer-opportunities).

### 3. Attend Our Events

As an organization, we host fundraising events that allow attorneys and friends in our community to **socialize, network, and raise money for our programs.** Our events are very fun—ask our volunteers!

You can support us by sponsoring our events or purchasing tickets.

Learn more about our events at: [avlf.org/events](http://avlf.org/events).

### 4. Become A Supporter

While we rely on the generosity of volunteer lawyers to represent our clients, the work of connecting clients and attorneys is in constant acceleration, and as a nonprofit, **we rely on your financial support to keep us running.** Your gift creates opportunities for us to reach more clients, fight harder for equal justice, and bring more comprehensive, holistic services to Atlantans in need.

You can make a monthly recurring gift of any size at: [avlf.org/product/recurring-monthly-donation](http://avlf.org/product/recurring-monthly-donation).

Visit [avlf.org](http://avlf.org) and click **Donate**, or send a check to: Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation, 235 Peachtree Street NE, Suite 1750, Atlanta, GA 30303

Learn more about our 2018 Annual Campaign at [safeandstable.org](http://safeandstable.org).

## ► Sustaining AVLF .....

Next year, we will be recognizing your yearly cumulative gifts in the 2018 Annual Report! Donate \$350 and above over the course of 2018—whether in event sponsorships, tickets, or annual campaign gifts—and see your name listed in next year's report.



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