

Serving Those in Need

in the Toughest of Times



2020 Annual Report



**Georgia
Legal
Services
Program**

Letter from the Executive Director



Rick Rufolo
Executive Director

Dear Friends,

On Wednesday, March 11, 2020, I was driving from South Georgia to Atlanta, returning home from a visit with GLSP colleagues in Savannah and Brunswick. I could not stop thinking about the uncertainty of the global pandemic and its impact on my family, friends, colleagues and communities. Yet, despite a year of uncertainty, the GLSP Team has weathered this storm.

Throughout the pandemic, our lawyers, paralegals, and client advocates served as essential workers, providing critical legal assistance to ensure health, safety and financial stability of those living in poverty. Their efforts prevented homelessness, stabilized families, stopped abuse and protected children. For example, our housing advocates closed 2,724 housing cases and prevented 1,549 evictions. As COVID-19 forced more domestic violence victims to remain at home with their abusers, we assisted 2,844 clients and 1,310 children. And we provided more than \$23.4 million in financial benefits to our clients. Heroes work at GLSP!

COVID-19 was only one pandemic that impacted Georgians with low incomes. Poverty is often the result of discrimination, most often based on race. Despite GLSP's history of challenging discrimination, bigotry and racism are too prevalent in Georgia. In 2020, we adopted the Georgia Legal Services Program Statement on Racial Justice to unite and make our voice heard on all forms of discrimination. In 2021, we will develop plans to strengthen our commitment to a culture of race equity.

Sadly, we lost two members of the GLSP family in 2020. In April, Rowena Daniels, an attorney in our Albany office passed away. Her patience and overall spirit allowed her to assist clients in a variety of legal issues. Rowena was a quiet, sweet, and loving colleague. Through this quietness, she had a wonderful sense of humor, and saw the good in everything. Senior citizen clients held a special place in her heart. Rowena was a joy to have around and loved by everyone she encountered.

In August, Patrick Flinn, a partner at Alston & Bird and long serving member of the GLSP Board of Directors passed away. His love for the practice of law was equaled by his passion for GLSP and our clients. In Pat's words, "serving on the GLSP Board has been one of the great privileges of my life." Pat was a dedicated supporter of GLSP's clients and mission to provide civil legal services for persons with low incomes, creating equal access to justice and opportunities out of poverty. We will miss Pat deeply.

Despite the myriad challenges we faced in 2020, we were fortunate to have the support of so many friends. Your continued commitment to our mission powers the GLSP Team. 2021 marks the 50th anniversary of Georgia Legal Services. We have two important events planned to celebrate this milestone- the Rural Georgia Justice and Poverty Summit on Friday, September 17, 2021 and our 50th Anniversary Gala on Saturday, April 30, 2022. Please mark your calendars to attend both and take a minute to learn more about both events at glsp.org/50years. We look forward to celebrating this momentous occasion with you all!

Many Thanks

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rick Rufolo". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Rick Rufolo

GLSP History & Mission

Georgia Legal Services Program® is a nonprofit corporation whose mission is to provide civil legal services for person with low incomes, creating equal access to justice and opportunities out of poverty.

Clients must have monthly incomes of up to 200% of the federal poverty level, which in 2020 was \$4,367 monthly for a family of four and \$2,127 for an individual. The majority of our clients have incomes that are far below those levels.

The formation of Georgia Legal Services Program began in 1968 against a backdrop of a tumultuous social and racial unrest in our country. After civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was assassinated in Memphis, a few younger lawyers from the State Bar of Georgia began studying the "disproportion between the need for legal services by those who cannot afford them and the present supply of legal services available to them." They found that lawyers tend to concentrate in urban areas, whereas many of Georgia's poor lived in rural areas where legal help was less available. At the August 23, 1968 meeting of the Board of Governors (BOG) of the State Bar of Georgia, the Younger Lawyers Section obtained permission to prepare an application for funding of a legal services program to assist the 1.8+ million Georgians living in rural areas. In 1971, the Younger Lawyers Section incorporated the Georgia Legal Services Program "to provide legal services to indigent persons to the fullest extent possible." For 50 years, GLSP has offered free legal services to thousands of low-income Georgians who reside outside metro Atlanta in 154 of the state's 159 counties.

State Bar of Georgia Young Lawyers Who Were Instrumental in the Creation of Georgia Legal Services Program, Inc.

Hulett H. "Bucky" Askew

Leah F. Chanin

Hon. H. Sol Clark *

A. Gus Cleveland *

A. James Elliott

David Gambrell

Phil Heiner *

R. William Ide III

Frank Jones*

Bettye H. Kehrer

L. Martelle Layfield *

Elizabeth E. Neely *

Matthew Patton

Alan F. Rothschild *

J. Ben Shapiro Jr.

Robert L. Steed *

Hon. Irwin W. Stolz Jr.

Robert H. Walling *

Lloyd Whitaker

* Deceased

GLSP 2020 Highlights

77,453 Calls

Getting help from GLSP all starts with a phone call to our Statewide Intake and Client Access Unit. GLSP agents handled **77,453** calls, slightly down from 2019 due to staffing capacity as a result of COVID-19. Our intake specialists and receptionists at our 10 regional offices qualify callers to see if they are eligible for services based on if they reside in our service area and meet our income thresholds. If they are, their legal problem must fall within our priorities of:

- maintaining economic stability
- achieving access to health care
- preserving the home
- supporting families, and
- serving populations with special vulnerabilities.

Completed intakes are referred to the appropriate GLSP office for case acceptance. Other callers who do not meet our eligibility requirements, or who do not reside in GLSP's service region are referred to other resources for help, including social services organizations, or pro bono attorneys. A minority of calls turn into cases, but the vast majority of people receive help in some way.

9,054 Cases Closed

60% of our cases were either **Family or Housing related**.

154 Counties

GLSP served clients in **154 counties** in Georgia. The top three counties were Chatham, Richmond and Bibb.

\$23.4 Million in Financial Benefits

GLSP provided more than **\$23.4 million in financial benefits** to our clients in 2020. Services included helping to obtain wills, bankruptcy protection, government benefits such as Medicaid and food stamps, resolve homeownership issues and much more.

Domestic Violence Was on the Rise

GLSP had more domestic violence inquiries and cases due to pandemic related causes such as more time at home with abusers and increased financial stress due to job loss. We assisted **2,844 clients** and **1,310 children** with the majority of the cases being for protective orders, stalking protective orders, custody, visitation, and child support. We secured more than **\$645,310 in financial benefits for survivors** in Family Violence cases, including child support, healthcare, property settlements, spousal support, and housing security.

\$3,601,457

GLSP's Benefits Hotline secured in Medicaid, MSP, SNAP, and Prescription (LIS) coverage for **696 Senior and Disabled Georgians**.

Who We Serve

\$889 provides a **low-income Georgian access to GLSP legal assistance.**

COVID 19 caused enormous barriers for GLSP. Government offices were closed which meant all benefits assistance had to be done electronically, a challenge for clients who often don't have scanners or internet access. Outreach to Seniors for assistance in educating and enrolling in government sponsored programs is typically done by visiting community and senior centers. Since that was impossible, **GLSP sent 1,000's of hand sanitizer sprays, bags, magnets, and flyers, as well as trained more than 200 community partners** and neighborhood leaders.

274 Caregivers GLSP's Kinship Care helped **274 caregivers obtain legal custody** of their children or grandchildren to ensure that their homes remain safe, stable and sustainable.

12 Languages. GLSP served clients that spoke **12 different languages.**

Housing Cases increased by 7%.

We closed **2,724 housing cases** and **prevented 1,549 evictions.** Confusion about how the CARES Act affected housing and potential evictions was a common concern.

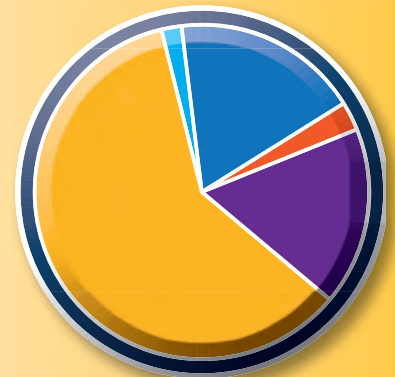
Cases by Gender

22% Male
78% Female



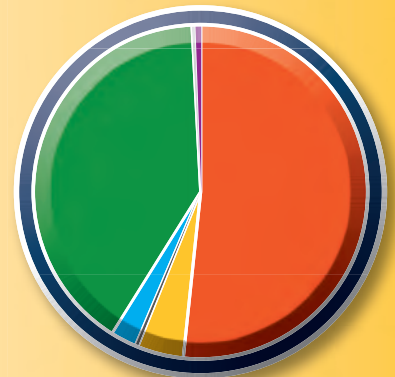
Cases by Annual Household Income

60% \$10,000-\$49,999
2% \$50,000+
18% 0-\$999
3% \$1,000-\$4,999
17% \$5,000-\$9,999



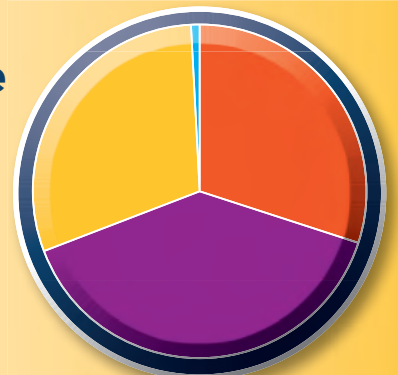
Cases by Race

0.2% Unknown
0.4% Asian
51.7% Black - Not Hispanic
4.4% Hispanic
2.4% Other Ethnic Group
0.4% Native American
40.4% White - Not Hispanic



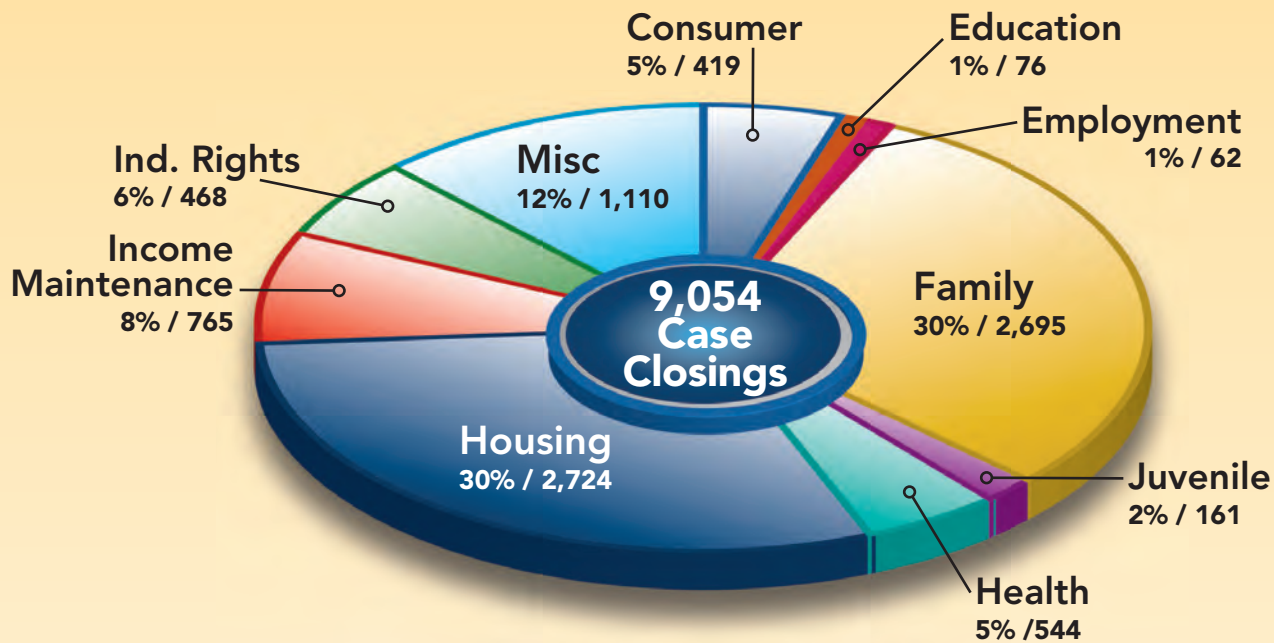
Cases by Age

1% Under 18
30% 18-35
39% 36-59
30% 60 and Over



GLSP Case Closings 2020

by **Problem Category**



by **GLSP Regional Offices**

GLSP Regional Offices	7,439
Counsel & Advice Client Calls	1,108
Private Attorney Involvement	449
Farmworker Rights Division	58
GRAND TOTAL	9,054

REGIONAL OFFICE	COUNTIES	CASE CLOSINGS
Albany	26	478
Augusta	13	887
Brunswick	17	688
Columbus	15	432
Dalton	6	525
Gainesville	27	977
Macon	24	1,028
Piedmont	15	1,061
Savannah	11	1,359
TOTALS	154	7,439

Donor Spotlight

Damon Elmore



Damon Elmore

Damon, who has been practicing law since 1996, felt that he had a responsibility to help vulnerable and impoverished communities and neighbors right from the start. He started his career with the City of Atlanta Department of Law and early on he saw that some people didn't have the same chances for justice as others.

He was made even more aware of this when he became a board member of GLSP in 2013. It was then that he saw the wide breadth of issues that GLSP attorneys addressed, such as domestic violence and other life changing concerns. He was inspired to do more, including fundraising for GLSP, when he was Board President. Damon biked through all 159 counties in Georgia to raise awareness and funds for GLSP and the thousands of Georgians who don't have access to legal help due to personal lack of funding and lack of attorneys in rural communities. He more than exceeded his goal of \$100 per county by raising \$16,100.

Damon recently began serving as the Executive Director of the State Bar of Georgia. He is responsible for leading, managing, and executing the affairs of the Bar for its 51,000+ members. Since 1987, the State Bar of Georgia has given its members the option of donating to GLSP on their membership renewal form. These funds have become an important part of GLSP's funding, raising \$865,000+ in 2020. Damon is pleased that his new position allows him to encourage members to donate and be a part of his continuing commitment to work to protect the public through use of the justice system.

"It is no secret that I am a fan of the work that GLSP and other legal aid organizations do. They provide an easy opportunity for lawyers to give back to vulnerable communities by taking on pro bono cases or sharing resources for improving programs, allowing dedicated staff members to do their work."

– **Damon Elmore**, GLSP Donor and Former Board Member

Client Stories

Each year our 10 offices throughout Georgia assist low-income clients that need legal services or access to benefits. Our cases are varied – from housing to consumer, to education rights. We help seniors, veterans, and farmworkers. We use the law to protect children and adults. We help Georgians access millions of dollars of benefits to provide them healthcare, food and more.

The following stories are just a sampling of what GLSP does every day through the hard work of our attorneys, paralegals and pro bono attorney volunteers. **All made possible thanks to the help of donors like you.** We share these client success stories to educate our audiences about our clients' hardships; their critical needs for legal services; and to showcase the difference our supporters make in fighting for justice, fairness, and opportunities out of poverty for not just these clients, but thousands more throughout Georgia.



Client Success Story

Tamika Gaines*, a 28-year-old physically disabled woman with a three-year-old son, turned to GLSP Attorney Whitney Knox Lee in the Piedmont office when she was served a lease termination (eviction) notice from the management of her public housing. Management believed that Ms. Gaines' boyfriend threatened neighbors with a gun, an act in violation of her lease agreement.

It all started several months earlier when Ms. Gaines asked her neighbors to help her by purchasing her groceries with her SNAP food stamp card since getting to the store with her disability was a challenge. Although at first it was helpful, she soon realized that her neighbors were using her benefits to purchase their own groceries instead of hers. When she set boundaries with the women, they retaliated by threatening her with physical harm. Soon after, a man came to the complex and fired shots into the sky. When police responded, the women told the police that the perpetrator was the client's boyfriend. In actuality, this person was an associate of one of the women.

Attorney Lee was able to arrange a grievance hearing for Ms. Gaines where she was able to share the police report documenting the abuse suffered at the hands of her neighbors, and the theft of her food stamps. The Housing Authority not only rescinded her lease termination, but they also allowed Ms. Gaines to **terminate her lease without penalty so that she could move to new housing in order to be in a safer environment.**

Housing

In 2020, **30%** of GLSP's clients had a housing related legal case—**2,724** total. In this year of COVID-19, housing has been critical for our clients and keeping Georgians from becoming homeless has been a priority for GLSP. GLSP represented clients in:

- Evictions
- Public housing
- Foreclosures and predatory lending
- Discrimination in housing
- Information for homeowners
- Education to the general public about tenants' rights, particularly relating to added protections under the CARES Act and CDC Eviction Moratorium

"Thanks to Whitney and GLSP, I was able to get a housing voucher which allowed me to move into a gated community about 5 minutes away from my sister. I am very thankful for the help. I feel safer now and no longer have to always be looking over my shoulder."

— Tamika Gaines*

*Names are changed and photo is not of actual client to protect the anonymity of clients.

Family Law

In 2020, **30%** of GLSP's clients – **2,694** total – had a family law related case.

Georgia Legal Services attorneys in our 10 offices across Georgia help families to get the legal representation they need to provide safe and financially independent futures for themselves and their children. GLSP's family law attorneys handle:

- Family Violence Temporary Protective Orders
- Child custody and visitation
- Child support and alimony
- Guardianship and alternatives
- Adoption
- Birth certificates and name changes
- Financial support cases, healthcare, and benefits cases to keep families financially independent



Sarah Reynolds and her two sons

Family Violence

In 2020, GLSP assisted **3,349** victims of family violence in family, housing, benefits, healthcare, consumer, and unemployment cases to help survivors end the violence in their homes. During 2020, while we were all quarantined in our homes, domestic violence skyrocketed as crisis calls increased 46% to the statewide Domestic Violence Hotline. Studies show that Protective Orders are one of the most effective ways of ending violence for survivors.

Client Success Story

Sarah Reynolds, a 23-year-old woman, began her new life with her husband with the hopes of all newlyweds. But shortly after the birth of her two sons, her life turned into a nightmare. Ms. Reynolds' husband started hitting, kicking, and verbally abusing her. She asked her in-laws for help, but the abuse escalated to include financial abuse and threats to take away the children. To protect herself and her children, Ms. Reynolds called the police. While the police did not arrest or remove the abuser, they referred her to the domestic violence agency and the agency referred Ms. Reynolds to GLSP for help.

Gina Holt, GLSP attorney in the Dalton office filed for a temporary protective order (TPO) which requires the abuser to stay away from the victim, the home, and her workplace. The TPO also prohibited him from contacting the victim. Attorney Holt was able to get Ms. Reynolds **the TPO, full custody of her children, child support, her home and car, and supervised visitation for the children.** Shortly after the court order, Mr. Rainey violated the no contact portion of the TPO which led the court to enter a permanent protective order.

Thankfully, Ms. Reynolds has her life back. Her boys, age 4 and 5, are not only safe, they are thriving. She is appreciative of the work that GLSP did on behalf of her family, and she is looking forward to happy days ahead with her sons.



Photo from adoption day. Shown left to right: Judge Gregory Voyles, Dondi (child who was adopted), Mrs. Jackson, Mr. Jackson, Katie Woei-A-Sack (GLSP attorney), and Armani (Dondi's nephew)

Kinship Care

GLSP, in partnership with Atlanta Legal Aid, hosts a Kinship Care Program which helps caregivers across Georgia when they need help creating a legal relationship for children in their care. GLSP handles kinship cases in Georgia counties outside the five metro Atlanta counties. Our attorneys most frequently help with temporary guardianship, custody, adoption, education, healthcare coverage, and financial benefits cases for kinship care families.

Client Success Story

Roberta Jackson*, a 64-year-old woman from Valdosta, called in early 2020 to get help adopting Dondi, her 11-year-old grandson. Because she lives on a fixed income, hiring an attorney was not financially possible for her family. Attorney Katie Woei-A-Sack in the GLSP Central office was able to help.

Because Dondi's father and mother died, Mr. and Ms. Jackson were caring for Dondi full time in their home since 2019. Attorney Woei-A-Sack was able to help the Jackson's file for adoption of Dondi in the Lowndes County Superior Court in Valdosta. The adoption brought stability to Dondi and the rest of the family and allowed the Jacksons to receive higher Social Security benefits through Mr. Jackson's benefits, rather than Dondi's mother. What a joyful day for the Jacksons! It was her birthday as well, so Dondi and his family will have another reason to celebrate this special day.

The legal adoption also allows the Jackson's to have full legal rights **for Dondi including making medical decisions, enrolling him in school and getting financial help** – things that are difficult without legal guardianship, custody, or adoption. GLSP's Kinship Care attorneys, are grateful that they can help families across Georgia to have both family and financial stability for their children.

"The Jackson family would like to say thank you for all you've done for us. The road wasn't easy, but you and your colleagues took great care of us and made it a little smoother progress.

You went above and beyond. You helped Dondi get every service he was qualified to receive. Dondi is doing very well, and my husband and I couldn't be happier. As for retirement, maybe after 18 more years. Right now, our focus is on Dondi and the rest of my family."

- Ms. Jackson (grandmother/adopted mother of grandson Dondi)

*Names are changed to protect the anonymity of clients.

Income Maintenance

In 2020, **8%** of GLSP's clients – **765** total – had an income maintenance related case. Georgia Legal Services attorneys and paralegals in our 10 offices helped Georgians to access benefits to support themselves and their families. Our Benefits Hotline, which serves Medicare recipients, filed **1,438** benefit applications, and secured **\$3,601,457** of federal benefits to assist **696** senior and disabled Georgians. GLSP's attorneys and paralegals help citizens with:

- Medicaid
- MSP (Medicare Savings Plan)
- SNAP (food stamps)
- LIS (prescription coverage)
- Others benefits such as TANF, child care, Peachcare, unemployment, LIHEAP (low income energy assistance) referrals, Medicare information, and more.

Georgians faced enormous barriers to obtain benefits during the pandemic, including that every Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) office has been closed for more than a year. Because DFCS offices were closed, people often could not get paper applications, renewals, or verification forms from or to DFCS. Many in rural Georgia do not have a computer or have limited internet connectivity. Most of the time, it is impossible to get through to DFCS by phone.

A snapshot of Benefits Hotline Clients:

- 97% had less than \$30,000 in annual income; 35% had less than \$15,000.
- 65% were women, 35% men.
- 43% were African American, Asian, or Hispanic.
- 58% were in poor to fair health.
- More than 75% were over the age of 65.
- The Hotline helped clients in more than 75 counties across rural Georgia.

Client Success Story



Nettie Johnson*, an 80+-year-old woman from South Georgia, met GLSP Attorney Christine Green at an outreach event at a local senior center nearly 10 years ago. Since that time, this retired grocery store worker has turned to Attorney Green for legal guidance. When she sees her in the community, she introduces her to anyone she runs into as “the greatest attorney”. Ms. Johnson has a limited income from her retirement pension and depends on her monthly SNAP (food stamp) benefits to help make ends meet. While she typically visits DFCS in person to renew her benefits annually, the office was closed due to COVID-19, so in-person visits were not possible. But Ms. Johnson had Attorney Green! She was able to reach her via phone and they set up a time to meet in person (socially distanced and masked) so Attorney Green could help Ms. Johnson renew her SNAP benefits. Together, they were able to file an online application to **get Ms. Johnson's food stamps renewed without interruption**. Another success story for the Brunswick office!

To spread the word about how GLSP can help people needing benefit assistance (pre-COVID 19), our offices do extensive outreach, including visiting senior centers, nursing homes, libraries, and other public places. During the pandemic, our GLSP staff were creative with their outreach, which included sending hand sanitizer sprays, bags, magnets, and flyers to senior centers across Georgia. We also sent thousands of emails and social media stories to clients and the public. In addition, to maximize our impact, GLSP trained more than 200 community partners and neighborhood leaders on “Benefits and How to Help Get Benefits for Georgians”.

**Names are changed and photo is not of actual client to protect anonymity of clients.*

Seniors

Client Success Story



John Anderson*, an 86-year-old man in Hawkinsville, was sent to a long-term care facility after the hospital determined he could not live on his own. Lisa Dibble, GLSP Senior Paralegal in Macon, was contacted by a staff member at the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman program, which works to improve the quality of life for residents of long-term care facilities. The Ombudsman requested that GLSP help when

Mr. Anderson was being discharged from his nursing home due to nonpayment because of a failed Medicaid application.

Paralegal Dibble filed an appeal to stop the discharge. The nursing home had attempted to work with Mr. Anderson's agent under his power of attorney, a daughter in New Jersey, to help with the Medicaid application. The daughter was unable to help and had asked a niece who lives locally to help Mr. Anderson. The nursing home not only couldn't get a response from the niece which caused the missed deadline and eventual denial of the Medicaid application, but they also suspected that she was using Mr. Anderson's debit card for personal use. They contacted the local sheriff's office which investigated and determined that the niece was misusing Mr. Anderson's funds.

In addition to the financial exploitation issue, Mr. Anderson was deemed ineligible for Medicaid because he owned two mobile homes in addition to his homeplace. Paralegal Dibble was able to obtain two valuations from two licensed realtors that determined the two mobile homes held no fair market value because of their condition. These valuations brought Mr. Anderson under the asset limit for Medicaid. Paralegal Dibble was able to get a Medicaid supervisor to reopen the case and Mr. Anderson was **approved for nursing home Medicaid** except for one month due to excess resources. Mr. Anderson owed \$6,500, which local family members were not willing to help pay. Fortunately, Paralegal Dibble was able to convince the nursing home to apply Mr. Anderson's personal needs allowance of \$70.00 a month to the outstanding bill. In March 2020, the nursing home discharge was rescinded, and the case was dismissed.

In 2020, GLSP had nearly **100** cases representing farm workers in Georgia. GLSP staff goes out to meet Farmworkers in the fields during farm season. They visit the farms and provide education to workers about their rights by providing pamphlets and answering questions. GLSP attorneys advocate for farm workers' rights in cases that include:

- Unpaid wages
- Violations of the H-2A Guest Worker Protections
- Human trafficking
- Breaches of employment contracts or other job terms and conditions
- Complaints of substandard housing
- Employment discrimination
- Complaints regarding safety and health at the jobsite
- Complaints of illegal retaliation

GLSP has represented farmworkers in human trafficking cases. Farmworkers have needed help to get passports returned to workers, in illegal "loans" cases where they are required to pay the expenses to get to the US, and when farmworkers are physically locked into their housing.

**Names are changed and photo is not of actual client to protect anonymity of clients.*

Education

In 2020, GLSP handled **76** education related cases. Georgia Legal Services attorneys in our 10 offices across Georgia help children stay in school and to enforce their rights to special education services and in school discipline cases.

Client Success Story



Lillian Hawkins *, a 60-year-old woman from middle Georgia contacted GLSP about her 12-year-old adopted grandson David's* treatment at his school. David has significant behavioral and psychological disabilities. From kindergarten on, his schools were not responsive to his needs, causing him to fall further and further behind his peers. In 6th grade, he was suspended from his school and sent to an alternative school which was entirely online with no live teacher, an environment which would not work for this child with disabilities. In 8th grade, he was returned to regular school, but shortly thereafter he was charged with an off-campus infraction and expelled. In addition, the school showed racial prejudices towards David because he was a person of color, saying he was in a gang and used drugs, despite there being no proof of either claim. His teacher also said his issues were not due to his disability, but instead "cultural differences" and his economic status.

GLSP attorneys Eugene Choi and Taylor Loynd appealed the expulsion and filed a separate action based on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA is a law that requires a free appropriate public education to children with disabilities and ensures special education and related services. The GLSP attorneys appealed the expulsion and had the decision reversed. In the IDEA case, **the school system was required to place the child back in school and provide him educational services appropriate for his disability.** They also had to fund private services to compensate him for the years of past failures. Ms. Hawkins appreciated GLSP's legal expertise helping her grandson get the appropriate education he is entitled to receive.

**Names are changed and photo is not of actual client to protect anonymity of clients.*

Client Success Story



GLSP represented 18 men, ages 20-40, from Mexico that were in the United States to do farm work under a H-2A visa. Most farmworker contracts last 3-10 months and since most come from poor villages, they send back the majority of their earnings to their families still in Mexico.

The farm workers had a complaint against a Florida-based farm labor contractor and his business entity who had recruited the workers from Mexico to come to work in Georgia under the H-2A agricultural visa program. Farm labor contractors find the workers to come to the US and provide not only the visas but also a contract that specifies the job requirements including type of farm, type of work and pay, typically either per hour or per piece, whichever is greater.

After the workers arrived in Georgia, the employer refused to pay them the promised wages, made improper wage deductions from their paychecks, housed them in overcrowded living arrangements, and did not reimburse them for travel and subsistence costs as required by law. After investigating their claims, GLSP's Attorney Soli Mercado-Spencer filed a lawsuit in federal court on behalf of the eighteen farm workers, alleging Fair Labor Standards Act violations and breach of the workers' H-2A contract. At the beginning of the discovery stage of litigation, Attorney Mercado-Spencer traveled to Florida to take the Defendant's deposition. The contents of that deposition testimony were instrumental to getting the employer to the negotiating table. After the deposition, settlement negotiations began in earnest, and a settlement was reached. The Court approved the settlement agreement in the Spring of 2020. Under the settlement, the Defendants would **pay over \$85,000 to the 18 Plaintiffs**. The total amount of the settlement included \$64,000 to our clients, which covered 100% of the minimum wages sought, plus an additional amount in liquidated and contract damages and over \$21,000 in attorney's fees and costs for GLSP.

Farm Workers Rights

In 2020, GLSP had nearly **100** cases representing farm workers in Georgia. GLSP staff goes out to meet Farmworkers in the fields during farm season. They visit the farms and provide education to workers about their rights by providing pamphlets and answering questions. GLSP attorneys advocate for farm workers' rights in cases that include:

- Unpaid wages
- Violations of the H-2A Guest Worker Protections
- Human trafficking
- Breaches of employment contracts or other job terms and conditions
- Complaints of substandard housing
- Employment discrimination
- Complaints regarding safety and health at the jobsite
- Complaints of illegal retaliation Unemployment, etc.

**Photo is not of the actual clients to provide anonymity.*

Consumer

In 2020, **5%** of GLSP's clients had a consumer related legal case – **419** total. Georgia Legal Services attorneys in our 10 offices across Georgia help people with consumer issues such as:

- Debt collection and debt lawsuits
- Credit reporting loans, and banking
- Mortgage servicing and foreclosures
- Credit discrimination
- Financial exploitation of the elderly or disabled
- Frauds, scams, and unfair sales
- Contracts and warranties
- Repossessions
- Public utilities
- Student loans

Client Success Story



Enrique Lopez *, a 72-year-old man in South Georgia, was served with a lawsuit brought by a local credit union based on the default on a car loan, although he had not purchased the car nor entered into the loan agreement for its purchase. GLSP Attorney Matthew Brigman in the Savannah office, was contacted about the case in early March and he immediately got to work on Mr. Lopez' behalf.

Mr. Lopez had co-signed a used car loan for his stepson who was going through a divorce, unemployed, and without transportation. Several months later, the stepson got a job at a car dealership and traded in the used car for a new one. At that time, he forged his stepfather's signature on the loan paperwork as the owner, eliminating himself as co-signer. Attorney Brigman represented Mr. Lopez in State Court in Chatham County and countersued under the Fair Business Practices Act which disallows unfair and deceptive practices, in this case the forgery of Mr. Lopez' signature. After negotiations, the dealership and credit union agreed to **settle the case and dismiss all claims without Mr. Lopez paying anything. Attorney Brigman also worked diligently to get the credit union to restore Mr. Lopez' credit score** to what it was prior to the incident by removing the loan default from his record. Mr. Lopez was thrilled that not only was he released from the lawsuit, but his credit score was restored as well.

**Names are changed and photo is not of actual client to protect the anonymity of clients.*

Donor Spotlight

Nancy Terrill



Nancy Terrill

"GLSP has evolved from a small, scrappy group of lawyers and paralegals, labeled in Macon as "Commie pinkos, scalawags and outside agitators" to a large, nationally respected law firm committed to providing equal access to justice. I am grateful to VISTA for placing me with Georgia Legal Services and to Georgia Legal Services for making such a difference in my life."

Nancy Terrill

Macon, past GLSP VISTA Volunteer, GLSP Attorney, Board Member, Donor and Fundraiser

To say that Nancy has been a dedicated supporter of GLSP for a long time is an understatement. It all began when she was placed in the Macon GLSP office in 1972 as a VISTA – Volunteers in Service to America, now known as the AmeriCorps VISTA program, a national service program designed specifically to fight poverty.

Nancy will tell you that GLSP changed her life.

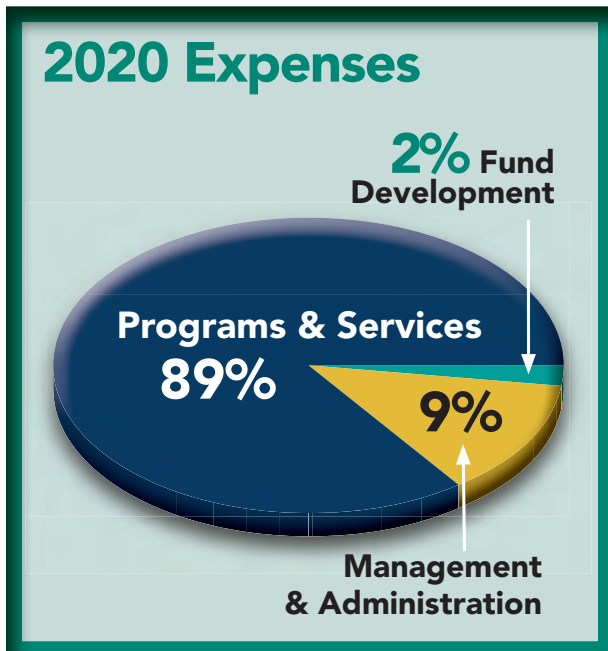
On her first day as a VISTA, Nancy saw Macon neighborhoods she hadn't seen before. She saw the rows of dilapidated shotgun houses, inhabited by black people, on the streets behind the big stately homes on the main streets, owned by white people.

She was taken to a number of black neighborhoods where the streets remained unpaved (full of dust in the summer and rivers of mud in the rainy seasons) because the landowners in those neighborhoods refused to help pay for them to be paved leaving 92 miles of streets within the city limits unpaved until 1980. She saw that a third of the city's housing stock was substandard, public housing neighborhoods were segregated, predatory lending was widespread, and except for a few wonderful private attorneys, poor people had no access to legal representation and equal justice.

She was shocked and horrified. A naive, idealistic daughter of a Navy officer, she had little idea of how cynically and cruelly people could intentionally, or through willful ignorance, treat other human beings.

GLSP attorneys challenged these conditions and much more and as a result changed countless lives. She witnessed how the law used to oppress and suppress could be changed through the courts when smart, dedicated lawyers chose to challenge the status quo. Because she worked with a number of these attorneys, she was inspired to go to law school. She eventually became a GLSP attorney, but prior to that served as a law clerk, and paralegal for Macon's GLSP office. The clients she met, the cases they handled, the changes they secured and the people she worked with informed and enriched her life. And since those days, she continues to serve GLSP by both donating as well as organizing an annual fundraiser in Macon that continues to raise funds and awareness for those that need it.

GLSP Financial Overview



2020 REVENUES

Federal Grants

Legal Services Corporation	\$	7,826,856
SBA - Payroll Protection Program	\$	1,950,000
Older Americans Act Contracts	\$	1,401,101
Department of Justice - Rural	\$	287,098
Other Federal Grants	\$	660,384

State & Local Grants

State Domestic Violence	\$	965,530
Kinship Care	\$	260,292

Foundation Grants

Georgia Bar - IOLTA	\$	1,040,000
Georgia Bar - Eviction Prevention Project	\$	936,417
EJW - Georgia Housing Corp	\$	59,129
Other Foundations	\$	494,484

State Bar of Georgia - Pro Bono

\$ 212,216

State Bar of Georgia - Campaigns

\$ 862,484

Other Revenue Sources

\$ 529,252

Total Revenues

\$ 17,485,243

2020 EXPENSES

Program Services - Legal Services \$ 14,746,833

Supporting Services

Management and General \$ 1,453,622

Fundraising \$ 389,870

Total Supporting Services \$ 1,843,492

Total Expenses

\$ 16,590,325

Changes in Net Assets

\$ 894,918

Net Assets, beginning of year

\$ 4,366,093

Net Assets, End of year

\$ 5,216,016

Donor Spotlight

Sam Nicholson



Sam Nicholson

Sam is no stranger to volunteering. His bio on the Nicholson Revell website where he serves as Partner has a long list of organizations he has served. Many of the organizations are within the legal world, but nearly as many are outside his work as an attorney. He has been chairman of the board for several of them.

Sam wanted to do more though. After seeing other prominent attorneys such as Roy Barnes and John Barrow volunteer with legal organizations, Sam decided to join them. He began volunteering one Wednesday afternoon per month at GLSP's Augusta office. He focuses on helping clients that have consumer cases, such as problems with contracts, property, mortgages, etc.

Sam enjoys meeting and working with GLSP clients. He is glad that when people are going through hard times and being treated unjustly that GLSP is there to help. Just like the work he has done at his own law firm in Augusta for over 40 years, he strives to achieve the best results for GLSP's clients and is eager to help them resolve their issues. Sam believes in the work of GLSP so much that he joined the Board of Directors in 2020.

Sam's father practiced law in Augusta for over 40 years beginning in 1932 and Sam carries on that tradition today. In fact, his son is part of his practice as well. You could say lawyering was a Nicholson tradition. That is a certain win for both GLSP and its Augusta area clients.

"In my 40 plus years of practicing law I have always been motivated by helping people who have been done wrong or taken advantage of due to no fault of their own. It has always given me great satisfaction to hold the wrongdoers accountable for their actions. What I admire about our legal and court system is that when the parties come into court they are on equal footing. The contingent fee system gives the little man the opportunity to right the wrong of the biggest corporation. I'm so glad that GLSP exists to help people in need navigate the system on their behalf."

Sam G. Nicholson

Partner, Nicholson Revell LLC, Augusta
GLSP Volunteer and Board Member

GLSP 2020 Honor Roll

“And Justice for All” State Bar Campaign for the Georgia Legal Services Program, Inc.®

A Salute to our Donors! Thank you for your generous contributions of \$150 or more to the “And Justice for All” State Bar Campaign for the Georgia Legal Services Program from 04/01/20 – 03/31/21. **Thank you for your generosity!**

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Donor Spotlight

Ben Garren



Ben Garren

Ben recently retired from The Coca-Cola Company where he held key positions in the organization's legal departments for 24 years. While there, he was asked to join the GLSP board and served several terms including as President. He currently serves on the GLS Foundation Board.

Ben is honored to be associated with the remarkable work of GLSP. He is particularly impressed with how, year after year, GLSP is able to stretch its relatively modest resources to provide critical help to so many low-income Georgians in 154 counties. In addition to ethical principles that oblige lawyers to support civil legal aid and pro bono legal services, Ben firmly believes that it was simply part of the DNA of the The Coca-Cola Company to support our communities in this way. With Ben as a link between the two organizations, Coca-Cola's Global Legal function has for many years supported the activities of GLSP with funding, in kind donations and volunteer hours.

"I support GLSP because, without its dedicated staff of professionals, thousands of rural Georgians in some of the poorest counties in the US would be denied meaningful access to our justice system, a foundational principle of our democracy. And we know that many of our counties have only a few or, in some cases, zero practicing lawyers, so, without GLSP, I fear that those who need help the most would have nowhere else to turn."

– Ben Garren

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GLSP



Georgia Legal Services Program is proud to celebrate 50 years of service with two exciting events.

**Mark your calendars to attend these important events
to both raise funds and awareness for GLSP.**

• Rural Georgia Justice and Poverty Summit •

Friday, September 17, 2021

Virtual

This special event will provide an opportunity to bring together researchers, state agencies, the philanthropic community, policy makers, and legal advocates to better understand complex problems facing low-income rural communities and marginalized populations as related to access to justice and opportunities out of poverty. We will raise awareness of emerging civil legal issues that impact the well-being and protections of impoverished rural communities and showcase emerging research and advocacy focused on the needs of impoverished rural communities and marginalized populations, while providing continuing education opportunities for attorneys across the state.

Sponsorships start at \$2,500.

Contact Amy Crowell at acrowell@glsp.org or (770) 609-7188

• GLSP 50th Anniversary Gala •

Saturday, April 30, 2022

Ventanas – Downtown Atlanta

To culminate our 50th anniversary, GLSP will host an award and fundraising gala. This inaugural event of 200+ guests will honor and highlight 50 years of achievement on behalf of protecting low-income Georgians.

We hope you will join us for both the learning and celebration of 50 years of accomplishments on behalf of our community friends and neighbors. It has been an honor to provide them the help they need with dignity.

Sponsorships start at \$3,500.

Contact Amy Crowell at acrowell@glsp.org or (770) 609-7188.

To learn more about both events, visit GLSP.org/50years.



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