



## 2016 ANNUAL REPORT



Because Justice for Some is No Justice at All

# A Message from Executive Director William R. Knight, Jr.



## A Year of Great Change

Over its 50-year history, Lakeshore has dedicated itself to providing free legal services to **Michigan's** seniors, families and victims of domestic violence so vulnerable populations have meaningful access to the legal system and can have their voices heard.

Lakeshore has evolved over its long history, and on March 1<sup>st</sup> a dramatic change occurred in our funding. After a rigorous and competitive bidding process, the Legal Services Corporation awarded Lakeshore the federal funding to provide legal assistance to the low-income people in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties. Lakeshore was honored to accept the responsibility of serving the legal needs of more than 680,000 additional people struggling to overcome poverty. To meet the new responsibilities Lakeshore hired dozens of new attorneys who are passionate about justice and opened four new offices. We are now dedicated to helping the more than 1,120,000 low income people living in the 17 counties from Wayne County in the south, up through the counties in **"thumb" and around the "bay area."**

In the late fall of 2016, Lakeshore hosted a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration and fundraising event at the Detroit Historical Museum attended by private law firms, the judiciary, program partners and other community leaders. And by the end of 2016, our attorneys had handled more than 9,400 client cases for some of the most vulnerable members of our society.

With expanded staffing and new offices in the communities we serve this is a critical, but nominal, response to the enormous need for legal help our client population requires. **The State Bar of Michigan issued a striking report in 2012, "Documenting the Gap in Justice."** The report stated that for every 285 citizens in Michigan, there is one licensed attorney. However, *there is only 1 legal aid attorney for every 13,179 Michigan residents living in poverty.*

I am proud to say Lakeshore works tirelessly to meet our clients' needs. In addition, the help and support of the communities we serve, and the members of the pro bono community who volunteer their time and expertise to help our clients, is especially important and appreciated. Together there is much that we can, and will, do to help our clients respond to the pressures that prevent them from fully participating in our justice system and society. As partners in our clients' struggles we focus on those issues where we can have the greatest impact.

Lakeshore Legal Aid thanks each of you for the unique skills, expertise and relationships that you provide, all of which make such a big difference in meeting the critical needs of our communities.

Best regards,

### Board of Directors

Tom Stotz, President  
Stotz & Quayhackx, PC

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Anita Posey  
Homeless Action Network of Detroit (HAND)

Khalilah Spencer  
Honigman Miller Schwartz & Cohn, LLP

## OUR MISSION

- Empower people to address their legal rights & concerns
- Provide access to the legal system & all available community resources
- Preserve the dignity of our clients
- Ensure our clients are safe & secure in their homes

## OUR APPROACH

- Serve clients holistically
- Offer services & referrals that are not strictly legal in nature
- Counsel domestic violence survivors in the dynamics of domestic violence & safety planning, and senior victims on senior exploitation and abuse
- Provide safety planning to domestic violence survivors
- Connect battered or homeless clients with shelters, hungry clients with food sources, & the mentally ill or fragile with counselors via the Counsel & Advocacy Law Line (CALL)
- Administer long-term care ombudsman services in nineteen counties, & lead community agencies in coordinated community response teams to address senior & domestic violence with an integrated, community-wide effort

# ECONOMIC STABILITY

## Problem:

When families lack adequate income and assets, they face hardships including:

- Hunger
- Substandard housing
- Untreated illness.

These hardships are especially harmful for children, who are more likely to experience long-lasting negative outcomes in the areas of health, social and emotional development, educational attainment and employment.

## Lakeshore's Solution:

By providing free civil legal services to vulnerable populations, Lakeshore helps lift people out of poverty or prevent them from falling into poverty.

**"For years I have been struggling with what I should do, or what my options are. My attorney totally calmed my nerves and explained things clearly and calmly."**

**-Family law client**



## Client Success Story

Lakeshore assisted Felice,\* a 68-year-old widow with an unemployment appeal.

For three years Felice had received unemployment benefits until one day she was notified by the unemployment insurance agency that she owed \$14,000 for overpayment plus penalties. Felice was also informed she was guilty of fraud for not properly reporting the overpayment. Frightened, Felice contacted Lakeshore who investigated and determined that there was an error by the agency and no overpayment, and certainly no fraud was committed by Felice. The **unemployment agency agreed, and Felice's records were soon corrected.**

However, when her former employer got notice of the fraud claim, the employer tried to challenge the original unemployment claim by filing an appeal in court in an attempt to recoup monies his company paid to Felice over the three-year period.

## The Result:

Our attorney proved to the judge that the appeal was both frivolous and untimely. The case was dismissed, and Felice was very happy to finally put the matter behind her.

\*Name and image changed to protect confidentiality.



1,108 Families Helped





# HOUSING STABILITY

## Problem:

Unstable housing leads to:

- Inability to obtain necessities, like food, clothing, and medicine
- Depression among mothers
- Learning, behavioral and mental health problems in children
- High rates of student absenteeism and low-test scores.

## Lakeshore's Solution:

Fight against unlawful eviction or foreclosure, unsafe living conditions and unfair or discriminatory housing practices.

**“My attorney really listened to me and gave me hope for the future. Thank you!!”**



## Client Success Story

Lakeshore helped Damon\* whose illegal eviction by his landlord rendered him homeless.

Damon lived in an apartment infested with bed bugs. Because his requests to the landlord to fix the problem led nowhere, Damon withheld rent monies until the landlord resolved the infestation. Then Damon became ill and was briefly hospitalized for a serious heart issue. During this time, the landlord changed the locks **on Damon's apartment**. When Damon was released from the hospital, he went home to discover he was unable to enter the apartment and soon learned all his possessions had been sold.

## The Result:

Our attorney negotiated a settlement for Damon that included \$5,000 in cash, new furniture, and the ability to live rent free for several months.

**Lakeshore's attorney brought Damon much-needed peace of mind during a very difficult time in his life.**

\*Name and image changed to protect confidentiality.



1,195 Families Helped



# FAMILY STABILITY

## Problem:

Domestic violence disrupts family stability, taking a **toll on family members' physical and mental health**. People with low or no incomes are especially vulnerable due to abuse.

## Lakeshore's Solution:

Break down barriers victims of domestic violence face when they turn to the courts for protection and support.



## Client Success Story

Our attorney assisted Evangeline,\* a 63-year-old woman who had been stabbed with a carving fork by her husband of 22 years.

Evangeline suffered physical and emotional at the hands of her husband for many years, but did not report the abuse. One day, after her husband stabbed her, she found the courage to report the abuse to hospital personnel. The police were called and arrested her husband. However, on the day her husband was released from jail on bond, he would not allow Evangeline to enter their rental home. He then filed for divorce. Evangeline found her way to a local domestic abuse shelter, who referred her to Lakeshore.

## The Result:

Working with a shelter advocate empowered Evangeline to find safe housing at a location unknown to her husband. With the legal assistance of Lakeshore during the divorce, Evangeline retrieved her car and most of the furniture. Ultimately, Evangeline was granted alimony, so she could support herself until she started collecting social security.

\*Name and image changed to protect confidentiality.

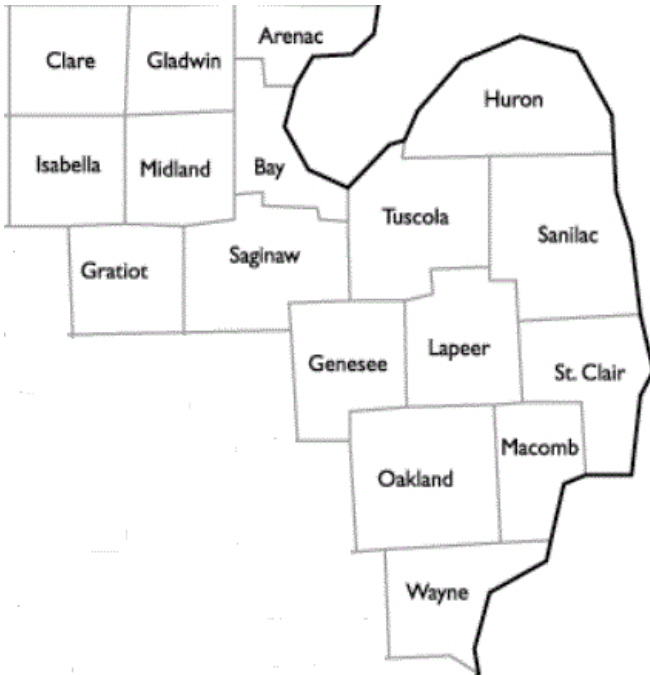
**“The Lakeshore attorney helped pinpoint what options I have and the next move to take.”**



3,110 Families Helped



## LAKESHORE SERVICE AREA



**“When my daughter was officially divorced from her husband, the process took months. It is difficult to express how deeply grateful we both are to the attorney and the various students, clerks, and paralegals under her direction who carried out the necessary procedures and paperwork. I have no idea how all this would have worked if we had not been referred to Lakeshore’s Family Law Assistance Project (FLAP). The skill, knowledge, and patience of the attorney and her staff was wonderful to behold. Thank you. Please share our gratitude with everyone who helped.”**

**- Note from the mother of a disabled client. Client survey received in 2016. Case closed 2015.**

### Service population:

- Individuals living at or below 200% of the poverty level
- Seniors in certain counties



Advised clients in over 7,023 cases, including:

- 2,790 Seniors aged 59 or above
- 1,165 survivors of domestic abuse
- 275 victims of elder abuse
- 2,366 people with disabilities

# NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN A YEAR OF GREAT CHANGE

- **Change in funding**  
Lakeshore is now funded by the Legal Services Corporation (LSC), the Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan, and the Michigan State Bar Foundation through a grant from the Bank of America

- **Opened four new offices:**



Detroit – Wayne County



Pontiac – Oakland County



Southfield – Oakland County



Warren – Macomb County

- **Increased staff**  
In January 1, 2016, Lakeshore employed 49 people. By December 2016, Lakeshore had grown to 105 employees.
- **Extended service hours for the Counsel & Advocacy Law Line (CALL)**
- **Won Corp! Magazine's 2016 Diversity Award**
- **Held a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary event and fundraiser at the Detroit Historical Museum in Wayne County**



(Left to right): Attorney Wendolyn Richards, Lakeshore Executive Director William R. Knight Jr., Judge Robert Colombo, and Lakeshore Board Member Khalilah Spencer



Rose Gleeson, Attorney Gerald Gleeson III, and Lakeshore Board Member Thomas Linn



Lakeshore CEO Ashley E. Lowe; Staff Attorney Lauren Walker, law student Ben King



Attorney Farah Hobballah & Staff Attorney Nura Lufti



Lakeshore Board Member Anita Posey and Attorney Mar Sclawy



# COUNSEL AND ADVOCACY LAW LINE (CALL)

Lakeshore provides counsel, advice and brief legal services to clients through the Counsel and Advocacy Law Line, a telephone hotline staffed entirely by attorneys well trained and experienced in poverty law.

CALL also works as a social services clearinghouse connecting:

- Battered or homeless clients with shelters
- Hungry clients with food sources
- Mentally ill or fragile clients with counselors.

Additionally, CALL provides intake and brief services to clients of other legal aid service providers in Michigan who contract with Lakeshore for this service.



## Client Success Story

Melvin,\* a disabled, homeless man contacted **CALL with questions about his father's estate.** As the attorney spoke with Melvin, the attorney discovered **Melvin's** food assistance had been terminated. When the attorney questioned Melvin further, Melvin stated he thought his food stamps had been stopped because he **was homeless and his driver's license was** from another state.

### The Result:

The attorney let the client know that neither was a reason for termination of food **assistance. Lakeshore had Melvin's food** assistance reinstated and provided answers to his estate questions. Melvin was thankful to Lakeshore for making a difference in his life.

\*Name and image changed to protect confidentiality.

**"I was given great advice  
in a very  
compassionate way."**

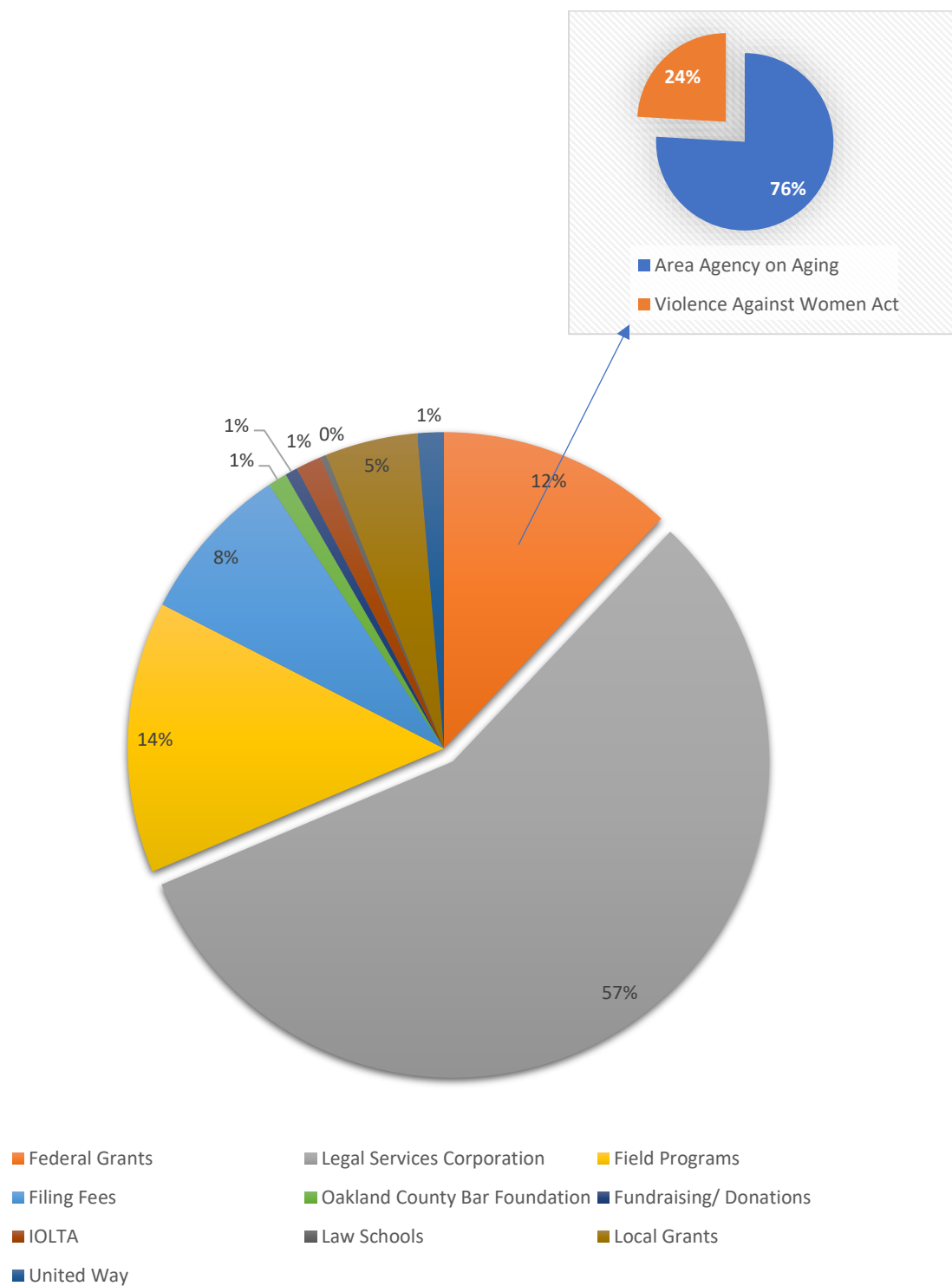


12,000 people helped

**"I am so glad  
Lakeshore is available.  
I gained useful and  
insightful information  
on my legal issue."**

# BY THE NUMBERS

## Revenue



Because Justice for Some is No Justice at All



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[www.lakeshorelegalaid.org](http://www.lakeshorelegalaid.org)

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