Can you imagine facing a stressful, potentially devastating situation requiring legal assistance? Do you know anyone who has ever experienced the struggles of divorce, child custody/support, or adoption? Or anyone who needed help with a landlord, writing a simple will, or filing for bankruptcy? These are issues where – without legal help – people are powerless to stand up for themselves. Now, imagine being in that situation while also living near or below the poverty level and having no, or very little, knowledge of how to access justice.

The Legal Aid Foundation (LAF) was founded in 1968 by the Tallahassee Bar to help connect those in need with viable options for legal aid and services. After 45 years of serving our community, the Legal Aid Foundation is facing numerous funding cuts while needs continue to grow. As a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization, LAF offers multiple ways for you to demonstrate your commitment of support to free or low-cost civil legal aid for our most vulnerable neighbors.

Supporting Access to Civil Justice

Leon County Courthouse
301 S. Monroe St. • Suite 108 • (850)702-5010
LegalAidTallahassee.org

‘Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.
Our Community's Need for Access to Justice

Since the Legal Aid Foundation was founded over 45 years ago, the community’s need for access to justice has grown exponentially. In 2014:

- LAF assisted nearly 8,000 visitors and callers with legal issues (an increase of 21% over 2013), serving them through LAF programs, or referring them to Legal Services of North Florida, the Public Defender and other legal/human service resources.
- LAF assisted 385 clients/households with civil legal issues threatening home, family and livelihood.
- 85% of LAF’s clients requested help in family law, and experienced the longest wait for a volunteer attorney.
- Nearly one in 10 local attorneys donated a total of 3,700 hours of volunteer services, valued at $832,950.

The 2014 inaugural class of Thunderdome Tallahassee included 21 attorneys representing 18 firms and state agencies. Additionally, 14 attorneys and one judge volunteered to serve as mentors for the nine-month long program.

How the Legal Aid Foundation Meets the Need

The Legal Aid Foundation offers free or low-cost civil legal representation and assistance, through volunteer lawyers and supporters participating in the organization’s programs and services:

- **Pro Bono** program provides free legal assistance to low-income citizens who fall at or below 125% of the federal poverty level (in 2015, $14,588 for an individual; $29,813 for a family of four). Volunteer lawyers assist in family law, bankruptcy, employment issues, landlord/tenant issues, property disputes, wills and other civil legal issues.
- **Pro Se Legal Forms Assistance** and Legal Guardian Ad Litem programs for low-to moderate-income families.
- **Thunderdome Tallahassee**, a new and unique hands-on educational, leadership development and service program. Each year, a cadre of volunteer lawyers – mentored by experienced attorneys – provide family law assistance to low-income children and families.

Providing the Support for Access to Justice

We seek donors and advocates to partner with us, ensuring that people facing desperate circumstances only a legal solution will help can find assistance through the Legal Aid Foundation. Your financial support translates to safety, stability, and even food, shelter, and medicine for those in legal crisis.

We invite you to commit your financial support to the Legal Aid Foundation today, by contributing to the Access to Justice Campaign.

The Access to Justice Campaign will fund:

- Service improvements to assist more than 8,000 local citizens and families needing legal help each year.
- Hiring one staff lawyer, which will double our pro bono program capacity, and offer every qualified client immediate access to brief counsel. At a minimal increase to our cost per client, a lawyer on staff increases LAF access to fellowships, grants and law student internships.
- Training and resources for Thunderdome Tallahassee, a hands-on educational and mentoring program in family law, historically our clients’ greatest unmet need. Over time, Thunderdome alumni will provide a strong network of experienced, enthusiastic volunteer lawyers.
- An increase in our endowment through the Community Foundation of North Florida, supporting our impact in and around Tallahassee for years to come.

The Access to Justice Campaign has a three-year goal of $370,000 in major gifts. With your commitment, we will reach this milestone.

Protect Access to Justice in Our Community

“Civil legal aid seems so distant. But when you set a fair child support amount, a child has food on the table, a decent roof over their head, school clothes . . . you name it, these basic needs are what is at stake in a family law case.”

- Karen Walker, executive partner, Holland & Knight and a Legal Aid Foundation volunteer

Become a lawyer/mentor volunteer, sponsor Thunderdome Tallahassee or support the Legal Aid Foundation’s new Access to Justice Campaign. To learn more, contact LAF Executive Director Anne Munson at 850-702-3010, annemunson@tallahasseebar.org, or visit LegalAidTallahassee.org

“Grandparents raising grandchildren – it can happen to anyone. Skin color, socioeconomic status, education level, and all the other ‘demographic points’ don’t matter because death, mental illness and drugs are blind to them all. At 59 and still working full time, I am now raising my 4 ½ year old grand-daughter. I am grateful to be able to take care of my grandchild and truly appreciate the wonderful help I received from the Legal Aid Foundation’s Pro Se program.”

- Audrey R., Grandmother and guardian of Baby Rose

“According to Florida TaxWatch, the total economic impact of civil legal assistance on the Florida economy is significant. A 2010 TaxWatch report, based on the work of Florida legal aid programs in 2008, noted that $4.78 of economic impact was generated for every $1 spent on legal aid by federal, state and local governments. The Florida Bar Foundation, grants from community foundations and charitable donations.”

— Florida Bar Foundation, February 2010

Karen Walker
Executive Partner
Holland & Knight

Audrey R.
Grandmother and guardian of Baby Rose

Thunderdome Tallahassee

Pro Se Legal Forms Assistance

Legal Guardian Ad Litem

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Executive Director

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