

# SPEAKING OF JUSTICE

NEWS FROM THE FLORIDA BAR FOUNDATION  
 Volume 12 Issue no. 3



Most legal aid program staff continue to work remotely on matters. For the safety of staff and clients, the Foundation is using stock photography to represent virtual legal aid instead of photographing lawyers and clients.

## Foundation awards \$1.45 million in coronavirus relief grants

In September, The Florida Bar Foundation awarded \$1,454,993 in grants to 24 legal aid organizations for COVID-19 relief efforts.

"There is an urgent need for legal services arising from the pandemic and the resulting economic downturn," Foundation President Stephen R. Senn said. "Many Floridians are finding themselves newly out of work or at risk of eviction, both of which lead to a host

of other legal problems. The legal services that our grantees provide are a lifeline."

In June, the Foundation's board of directors approved transferring unspent grant funds allocated for fiscal year 2019-20, about \$1.17 million, to a special fund to address COVID-19 relief efforts.

An additional \$16,995 from donor gifts and \$258,390 in remaining Bank of America settlement principal was used to fund the

grants.

In an effort to streamline the grant process so that grantees would receive funds quickly, the Foundation surveyed legal aid organizations to determine the number of full-time staff who work on housing, domestic violence and benefits matters. It then used those numbers to equitably divide the grant funds.

Sixty percent of funds were used to fund

[see COVID-19, p. 10](#)

*Florida Bar Foundation President Stephen R. Senn began his term September 16, 2020. Board certified in appellate practice, Senn is a senior shareholder with Peterson & Myers, P.A. in Lakeland, where his practice includes appeals and federal litigation, as well as employment and business disputes. Senn earned his bachelor's degree and juris doctor from Florida State University. He has served as president of the boards of Florida Rural Legal Services and Florida Equal Justice Center. Senn has been a member of the 10th Circuit Pro Bono Committee since 1999. He earned The Florida Bar President's Pro Bono Service Award in 2006, 2011 and 2018. Most recently, he was honored by the Appellate Practice Section of The Florida Bar with the John R. Hamilton Pro Bono Award.*



## Message from the President

The American legal system is one of humanity's greatest achievements. But the system can be too complicated to navigate without legal assistance. Lawyers in the private bar are too often beyond the financial reach of too many Floridians. Low-income and impoverished Floridians can sometimes obtain help from legal aid programs or pro bono attorneys, but the resources for legal aid are limited, and we never seem able to close the justice gap. And so while we'd like to have more resources, in reality we are required to prioritize the most compelling cases, knowing that many who seek an attorney to help them achieve justice in their cases will go wanting for lack of resources.

One of the things Floridians can be immensely proud of is our state's pioneering adoption of a program to collect interest on lawyer trust accounts to be used to help fund justice for low-income Floridians. Since the Supreme Court of Florida approved the IOTA program in 1981, these funds have been entrusted for administration by The Florida Bar Foundation. IOTA funds have been used, along with other funds that have been entrusted to the Foundation by the State of Florida, by the state and federal courts, and by private contributions, to provide crucial support to Florida's legal aid system.

The first IOTA grants for legal assistance to the poor were awarded in 1982. The IOTA program will soon have been in place for 40 years. During these four decades, the Foundation has used IOTA and other funds to expand and improve representation and advocacy on behalf of low-income persons in civil legal matters, to improve the fair and effective administration of justice, and to promote public service among lawyers. In 2019, the Foundation surpassed \$500 million in grants over the lifetime of our organization. The benefits to Floridians with compelling legal needs who have been helped as a result are incalculable.

We all have pledged "liberty and justice for all". While we may never fully achieve that promise, the Foundation has had a crucial role in helping ensure that the promise of equal justice under law is fulfilled for many Floridians. It has been a privilege and a joy for me to serve on the Foundation's board, and I am now greatly honored to assume the role of president of this great organization.

The mission of equal justice under law always faces challenges. Challenges in the coming years will be daunting. Because IOTA rates have been so low for so long, the Foundation would welcome and is actively engaged in developing other funding sources to advance the mission of justice. This and other challenges confront the Foundation as we continue to try to do the best we can to serve the mission with what we have to work with.

But the challenges we have can be faced with good cheer when we think of the results we achieve with what we can do. These results are immensely rewarding. Hearing the good work of the organizations we support is always the highlight of any Foundation board meeting. To those who serve on the board, and to our amazing Foundation staff, that is the reward which more than justifies the effort.

*Steve Senn*

Stephen R. Senn, President

## New members join Foundation Board of Directors

The Foundation has six designated directors who serve in their appointed positions for one year. Eighteen at-large directors serve a maximum of two three-year terms, with one-third selected by the Florida Supreme Court, one-third by The Florida Bar Board of Governors and one-third by the Foundation board.



Jody Hudgins, Designated Director, 2020-21  
Hudgins is serving as the delegate for Florida Bar Immediate Past President John Stewart. He is the senior executive vice president and chief credit officer of First Florida Integrity Bank.



Lorna Brown-Burton, Designated Director, 2020-21  
Brown-Burton is serving as the delegate for Florida Bar President-elect Michael Tanner. She is a partner with Lubell Rosen in Ft. Lauderdale and serves on The Florida Bar Board of Governors.



Brian E. Currie, Director, 2020-23  
Currie is a lawyer with Currie & Currie. He has served on the Jacksonville Bar Association Board of Governors and as the chairman of the Fourth Judicial Court Grievance Committee.



Renée Thompson, Designated Director, 2020-21  
Thompson is serving as the delegate for Florida Bar President Dori Foster-Morales. She is a mediator with Upchurch Watson White & Max in Ocala and serves on The Florida Bar Board of Governors.



J. Samantha Vacciana, Designated Director, 2020-21  
Vacciana is the president of Florida Legal Services and managing attorney of Trial Lawyers of Florida. She is an adjunct professor and former Equal Justice Works fellow.



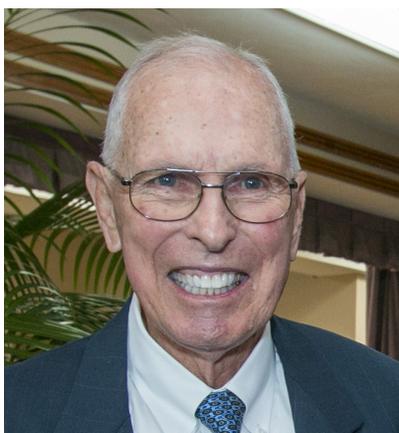
Steve Salzer, Director, 2020-23  
Salzer currently serves as senior vice president, Enterprise Risk Office, and general counsel at PSCU, a St. Petersburg, Fla.-based credit union service organization. He also serves on the board of Junior Achievement of Tampa Bay.

## Judges Fay, King receive Medal of Honor Award for a Lawyer

**T**he Honorable Peter T. Fay and the Honorable James Lawrence King have received The Florida Bar Foundation's 2020 Medal of Honor Award for a Lawyer, the Foundation's highest honor.

Fay, a senior U.S. circuit judge of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals, and King, a senior judge for the Southern District of Florida, were honored as co-recipients of this year's Medal of Honor for a Lawyer. They were selected for their extreme professionalism, dedication to the judiciary, nonstop work ethic, and devotion to justice during a combined 100 years of judicial service.

"Both judges have exemplified the highest ideals and aspirations of our profession," wrote Paul C. Huck, a district judge for the Southern District of Florida, in his joint nomination of Fay and King. "For decades, each has devoted his professional life to



Hon. Peter T. Fay

service to the public, and the law profession in particular, to improve the administration of justice, and to advance the aspirational goals of our profession. I cannot think of two human beings, not to mention judges, who are more deserving of this award."



Hon. James Lawrence King

Fay and King followed similar life paths on their way to the judiciary. After serving in the U.S. Air Force, Fay earned his juris doctorate from the University of Florida in 1956. He worked as a trial lawyer in Miami until 1970. King also graduated from the University of

see **JUDGES**, p. 5

# Attorney Kathy Para receives Jane Curran Distinguished Service Award

**K**athy Para, retired director of pro bono for Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, has won The Florida Bar Foundation's 2020 Jane Elizabeth Curran Distinguished Service Award. The award is named for the Foundation's first executive director, recognizing individuals who, over their careers, have achieved meaningful, effective and lasting increases in access to civil justice for the poor in Florida.

"Kathy has been an extraordinary force in shaping Florida's pro bono efforts," wrote James Kowalski Jr., president and CEO of Jacksonville Area Legal Aid (JALA), in his nomination of Para. "Her inspirational energy, her drive to be involved in the community, and her innovative approach to filling unmet needs forged Kathy into the right leader at the right time to expand access to civil justice in meaningful, effective and long-lasting ways for thousands of low-income and otherwise vulnerable Floridians."

Para graduated from the University of Central Florida and worked as a speech

therapist and opened the first Jazzercise studio in Jacksonville. After participating in Leadership Jacksonville, she decided to go to law school and graduated with honors from Florida Coastal School of Law in 2000. She completed more than 50 pro bono emancipation cases by 2008, earning her The Florida Bar President's Pro Bono Award. In 2009, she joined JALA as its pro bono development coordinator.

At JALA, Para oversaw an online case review system, helped start the Federal Bar clinic, and added more intake and informational clinic opportunities. Her innovative approach and incentives for pro bono lawyers increased participation; the average number of JALA's closed pro bono cases increased by 27% over ten years, and the number of lawyers participating increased by 72%. Para served as the chair of the Jacksonville Bar Association's pro bono committee for nine years and wrote a weekly column about pro bono lawyers for the Jacksonville Daily Record. She retired as JALA's pro bono director in 2019.

"Kathy Para changed the way clients with



Kathy Para

needs are connected to the help they need, locally and statewide, and these changes are lasting and substantial," wrote Circuit Judge Steven M. Fahlgren in a letter supporting the nomination. "Kathy accomplished all of her work with great charm and her positive personality that is her stock in trade."

**The Jane Curran Distinguished Service Award was sponsored by Foundation President Stephen R. Senn.**

# Goldstein - Van Nortwick Award for Excellence winners recognized

**T**he Goldstein - Van Nortwick Award, given biannually, recognizes legal aid projects of high quality and significant impact work by Foundation grantees.



This year's first place award was given to Florida Legal Services (FLS). FLS and co-counsel from Holland & Knight and Disability

Rights Florida brought a federal civil rights lawsuit in the Middle District of Florida challenging the systemic inadequacy of mental health treatment for thousands incarcerated in the Florida Department of Corrections' (FDC) inpatient prison units. The complaint, premised on the 8th Amendment and Americans with Disabilities Act, called for massive reform of the system.

After a year-long mediation, the FDC agreed to a settlement agreement including judicial oversight by the federal court and independent outside monitoring for two years. The suit exposed abysmal treatment, isolation

and neglect of people who were supposed to be receiving inpatient hospital levels of care. The required changes will cost, according to the FDC, more than \$32 million.



and neglect of people who were supposed to be receiving inpatient hospital levels of care. The required changes will cost, according to the FDC, more than \$32 million.

The first runner-up of the award was Florida Health Justice Project, which worked with Jacksonville Area Legal Aid and special counsel Disability Rights Florida. Their Medicaid Ex Parte Review Project safeguards access to critical healthcare for some of Florida's most vulnerable residents, those with complex diagnoses and disabilities, including those adopted out of foster care. Using a medical-legal partnership and a multi-prong advocacy approach which included individual administrative advocacy, records requests, and, ultimately, class action litigation, the project accomplished relief for thousands by reforming Florida's flawed Medicaid "ex parte review" process.



**FLORIDA JUSTICE INSTITUTE**

The second runner-up was Florida Justice Institute (FJI). FJI spent a year investigating lack of treatment of Hepatitis C in prisons by interviewing prisoners, reviewing medical records, doing targeted public records requests, and consulting with experts. They filed a lawsuit seeking a declaration that the practice was unconstitutional and, after more than two years of litigation, FJI secured the nation's first class-action preliminary injunction on this subject, and then a final order.

The orders require the state to identify, test, evaluate and treat the estimated 20,000 Florida prisoners with Hepatitis C. As a result, the state has invested nearly \$40 million for improvements. The case has likely prevented hundreds of deaths from liver failure and alleviated the suffering of hundreds more, all while ensuring that the disease cannot be spread when prisoners are released.

# Dr. Mimi Graham receives 2020 Medal of Honor Award for a Non-Lawyer

**D**r. Mimi Graham, director of Florida State University's Center for Prevention and Early Intervention Policy, has been honored with the 2020 Medal of Honor for a Non-Lawyer for her dedicated efforts over the course of her career researching and promoting trauma-informed court programs. Since 1993, she has worked to tackle policy solutions to social problems during the critical period from pregnancy to age three.

"For over 15 years, Dr. Graham has worked tirelessly to amplify the Florida Supreme Court's 2001 opinion to 'identify services and craft solutions that are appropriate for long-term stability and that minimize the need for subsequent court action' by infusing therapeutic jurisprudence in Florida's courts, and by educating lawyers, judges, guardians ad litem and court staff regarding the science of trauma and trauma-informed practice," wrote Paolo Annino, director of FSU's Public Interest Law Center, in his nomination.

In 2005, Graham and colleague Barbara White created the FSU Young Parents Project, an intensive program that addressed the complex trauma needs of delinquency in court-involved pregnant and parenting teens. Proven

outcomes of the program are reduced recidivism, fewer subsequent teen pregnancies and increased education. Several years later, Graham helped establish Florida's Early Childhood Courts (ECCs), which optimize child safety and well-being while expediting permanency and breaking the multigenerational cycle of child abuse by infusing early childhood science, attachment research and mental health intervention in the courts. There are now 25 ECCs across Florida.

"Decisions involving the welfare of a child are some of the most challenging and consequential decisions a court can be called upon to make," wrote Chief District Judge Mark E. Walker in a letter recommending Graham for the award. "An interaction with the justice system will have tremendous ramifications for a child throughout its life. Dr. Graham's assistance to the court system has been transformative. Dr. Graham enabled the courts to more effectively grapple with the subtleties of juvenile development, mental health and trauma. As a result of her contribution, courts are better able to intervene early and effectively to prevent, or at least mitigate, the effects of traumatic situations on children."

Graham cofounded the Florida Association



Dr. Mimi Graham

for Infant Mental Health in 2002. In 2014, she was appointed to the Florida Supreme Court Steering Committee on Families and Children in the Court, where she educated judicial leaders about the link between early trauma and court involvement. She is a Fellow of Zero to Three National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families, and she received the 2019 Voice for Children Award. She is also a recipient of the 2017 Florida TaxWatch Productivity Award for Early Childhood Court, and Legal Services of North Florida's Children's Advocate Award.

## JUDGES, from p. 3

Florida's law school and served as a Judge Advocate Officer (JAG) in the Air Force from 1953 to 1955. He then went on to work in private practice in Miami.

Judge Fay and Judge King took the Oath of Office as United States District Judges in a joint investiture ceremony on October 30, 1970.

Fay is the namesake of the Peter T. Fay Inn of Court at St. Thomas University School of Law and of the Peter T. Fay Jurist-in-Residence Program at the University of Florida, which brings judges to the law school annually for three to five days of classroom visits and informal discussions about the judicial process. He has served on the 11th Circuit Standing Education Committee as its chairman, on the Judicial Advisory Committee on the Codes of Conduct, and on multiple boards of directors

and trustees.

King was honored in 1996 when the U.S. Courthouse in Miami was renamed the James Lawrence King Federal Justice Building. He has authored more than 1,020 reported decisions and sentenced more than 6,200 individuals in criminal cases. He has served as the chairman of the Implementation Committee on Admission of Attorneys to Federal Practice, as president of the 5th Circuit Judges Association and on many other committees.

"Judge Fay and Judge King have long been among the major foundations of South Florida's legal profession," wrote Alan T. Dimond and Stephen N. Zack, past presidents of The Florida Bar, in a letter of recommendation for Fay and King. "[They] have each been, and remain, South Florida's

'gold standard of judicial excellence'. Both have handled the most difficult and sensitive cases to come before our federal courts with brilliance and elegance."

Judge Fay's honors include The Florida Bar's William M. Hoeveler Judicial Professionalism Award and the American Inns of Court Professionalism Award for the 11th Circuit. Judge King's honors include the Edward J. Devitt Distinguished Service to Justice Award and an honorary Doctor of Humanities from St. Thomas University.

The Medal of Honor Awards are sponsored by Florida Mutual Lawyers Insurance Company.



# Summer Board of Directors meeting report

The Florida Bar Foundation Board of Directors met online on June 18.

## The major actions of the board and reports received included:

### • Board approves FY 2020-21 budget that is 10.4% less than previous year

▶ The Foundation's FY 2020-21 operating budget was presented and approved by the board at \$2,883,085, which represents a 10.4% reduction from the Foundations' FY 2019-20 budget. The Foundation's operating budget has been reduced an average of 10% the past two fiscal years.

▶ The Board also voted to apply the Foundation's Spending and Reserve Policy for FY 2020-21 Grants Reserve Allocations.

### • Grants Committee

▶ The board approved a limited number of grants and two requests for carryover of unspent funds and also reserved unspent grants for COVID-19 relief efforts.

▶ Two grants from the Engle award funds provided by the Middle District of Florida were awarded to Southern Legal Counsel, Inc. and Community Law Program, Inc. These funds total \$240,564 and represent the amount of funds remaining under this program. The awards will allow these two programs to continue their existing Engle grant projects a second year.

▶ Two Limited Matching Grants awards totaling \$45,000 were approved with respect to Florida Legal Services, Inc. (FLS) and Brevard County Legal Aid (BCLA). BCLA's award is conditioned on it securing a Community Development Block Grant from the City of Palm Bay. The grant to FLS is conditioned on it securing funding under the federal Victims of Crime Act administered by the Office of the Florida Attorney General. The Foundation's Limited Matching Funds program provides periodic opportunities for grantees to obtain limited funding in support of and/or to leverage funding from other primary sources.

▶ The board also approved a request for bridge funding by the FSU College of Law Public Interest Law Center's Veterans Legal

Clinic. The \$50,000 funding will allow the Veterans Legal Clinic to continue operations, and the clinic pledged to use the funds specifically to provide individual representation to veterans directly impacted by COVID-19.

▶ Two carryover requests were approved. Community Law Program's Residential Eviction Mediation Program was allowed to carry over \$8,854 of its 2019 Community Economic Development Grant to respond to COVID-19 issues, including public education for landlord/tenant issues and increasing staff response. FLS was allowed to carry over \$119,237 of its 2019 Training Initiative award to continue work on the initiative, specifically focusing on developing trainings for all grantees related directly to COVID-19 issues.

▶ The board approved transferring all unspent grants funds allocated for FY 2019-20 to a special fund to address COVID-19 relief efforts. Approximately \$1.1 million was set aside. The Foundation will work diligently to identify ways to provide as much assistance to its grantees in responding to the widely expected increase in need for legal services and assistance arising out of the pandemic.

### • Investment Committee

▶ The Investment Committee reported significant loss in investment income directly related to COVID-19 economic fallout. The Foundation's financial advisors indicated that the United States experienced the deepest economic recession since WWII, but potentially the sharpest recovery as well. Nevertheless, the Foundation suffered approximately \$2.24 million in investment losses beginning in March 2020. Recovery of approximately \$1.2 million was realized as of May 31, but it was generally understood that the Foundation will have suffered a net loss on investments for FY 2019-20. Cautious optimism was expressed for an eventual recovery of market losses, but federal interest rates were not expected to rise until at least the end of 2021. This will have a significant impact on the amount of IOTA revenues that may be available for FY 2020-21 and thereafter.

### • IOTA Enhancement Committee

▶ Committee Chair Joseph "Jody"

Hudgins reported the committee had an initial meeting and explored potential projects that involve various business community partners that will be explored in greater depth.

Committee liaison Lushawn Phillips reported that IOTA receipts through April 30 totaled \$13,650,949, a 28% increase from the same time period last year. She stated FY 2019-20 receipts were expected to total approximately \$16.1 million, which is lower than originally projected last year but higher than expected after the economic recession in March. This was attributed to the Foundation's Community Champions program and outreach to its partner banks in an effort to delay the cuts in IOTA interest rates following the surprise cuts in federal interest rates. Further, IOTA revenues were projected at \$9.46 million for FY 2020-21 based on the assumption that the Federal Reserve will not adjust current rates until the end of 2021.

### • Technology Committee

▶ Committee Chair Murray Silverstein presented a draft long-range plan for the Foundation as it relates to the promotion, funding and development of technology and innovation for increased access to justice by self-represented individuals, civil legal aid providers, and Florida lawyers. The draft plan was presented with a recommendation for approval of first reading. A discussion ensued about technology assets currently harbored at the Foundation pending final approval of a long-range plan. The discussion centered on the objective of determining which assets add value to Florida's civil legal infrastructure and its clients. A secondary objective will be to make those assets that provide value self-supporting through either direct monetization of the asset or sponsorship funding by others. Assets determined to have little or no value will be offered to others who may want to license, purchase, or assume such assets for continuation.

**The Board's next meeting will be held via teleconference on November 6, 2020.**

## President's Award given to four judges

The Florida Bar Foundation 2020 President's Award has been given to four judges who made up a panel that presided over a case which stemmed from the Engle tobacco litigation.

United States District Judges Timothy J. Corrigan, Roy B. Dalton Jr., Marcia Morales Howard and William G. Young are the recipients of the award, chosen by 2019-20 Foundation President Hala A. Sandridge.

The panel ordered that \$3,623,987 in sanctions from the case be sent to the Foundation to promote robust, professional, ethical and competent representation of low-income Floridians through grants made to civil

legal aid organizations.

The Foundation has since awarded grants to nine legal aid programs. In Tampa, Bay Area Legal Services is using its grant for its "A Home of our Own Project", which provides eviction defense litigation and clear title actions. Jacksonville Area Legal Aid is using its grant for their Modified Civil Gideon Access Project to provide litigation for housing, consumer and immigration matters. In Southwest Florida, Legal Aid Service of Collier County's funding is being used to provide consumer litigation to seniors, veterans and vulnerable families.

Judges Corrigan and Morales Howard are in the Jacksonville division of the U.S.

District Court Middle District of Florida; Judge Dalton is in the Orlando division. Judge Young presides in the U.S. District Court, District of Massachusetts.

The President's Award was sponsored by Buchanan Ingersoll and Rooney PC.

**Buchanan  
Ingersoll  
Rooney PC**

## EJW Fellow advocates for the future of human trafficking survivors

by Deana Alegi

Victoria Sexton, a 2019-21 Equal Justice Works Fellow funded by the Foundation, provides civil legal aid and advocates for the rights of human trafficking survivors in Broward County.

Sexton's goals are to assist as many survivors as possible and raise awareness of her fellowship and the effect that civil legal aid can have on their lives.

"My project is focused on providing comprehensive and trauma-informed civil legal services to survivors of human trafficking," said Sexton. "The legal services provided vary depending on the survivor and their needs."

Hosted by Coast to Coast Legal Aid (CCLA) of South Florida, Sexton, a graduate of Georgetown University Law Center, helps survivors obtain civil injunctions, expunge their records, obtain U-Visas or T-Visas and represents them in divorce proceedings.

Prior to her work with the domestic violence unit at CCLA, Sexton was unaware of the undeniable presence of human trafficking in South Florida. There was a lack of direct legal services targeted toward survivors in the community, which sparked her passion to

advocate for the future of survivors.

Establishing the fellowship as a household name in the anti-human trafficking community has been an unexpected challenge for Sexton. It's essential for her to be known as a reliable partner in the community so that providers can refer survivors in need of legal assistance to her, reducing the times they recount their traumatic experiences to other lawyers. Sexton has undergone extensive trauma training to provide appropriate and productive legal assistance to survivors.

"I've learned to practice law through a trauma-informed lens and how important that really is to a survivor," said Sexton. "They can come to me and explain their issues and we can work together in a trauma-informed manner."

A few of Sexton's most memorable cases have included name changes and expungements. Both have provided survivors with the opportunity to pursue a new life, away from their trafficker, and to open countless doors to pursue their academic and professional goals.

"Working with survivors has awoken me to



Victoria Sexton

how strong and resilient humans can really be," said Sexton. "It makes me so proud to work directly with a survivor and see them persevere and move forward in their life."

Sexton will continue working to begin new chapters in the lives of human trafficking survivors and raise awareness of the necessity of civil legal aid in Florida through 2021, when her fellowship ends.

### Learn More

Visit our Grant Database to read about all of the EJW Fellows that we fund.

[TheFloridaBarFoundation.org](https://www.TheFloridaBarFoundation.org)

## Foundation funds six Summer Fellows across Florida

Six Florida law students had the opportunity to work in civil legal aid programs this summer through The Florida Bar Foundation's Summer Fellows Grant Program.

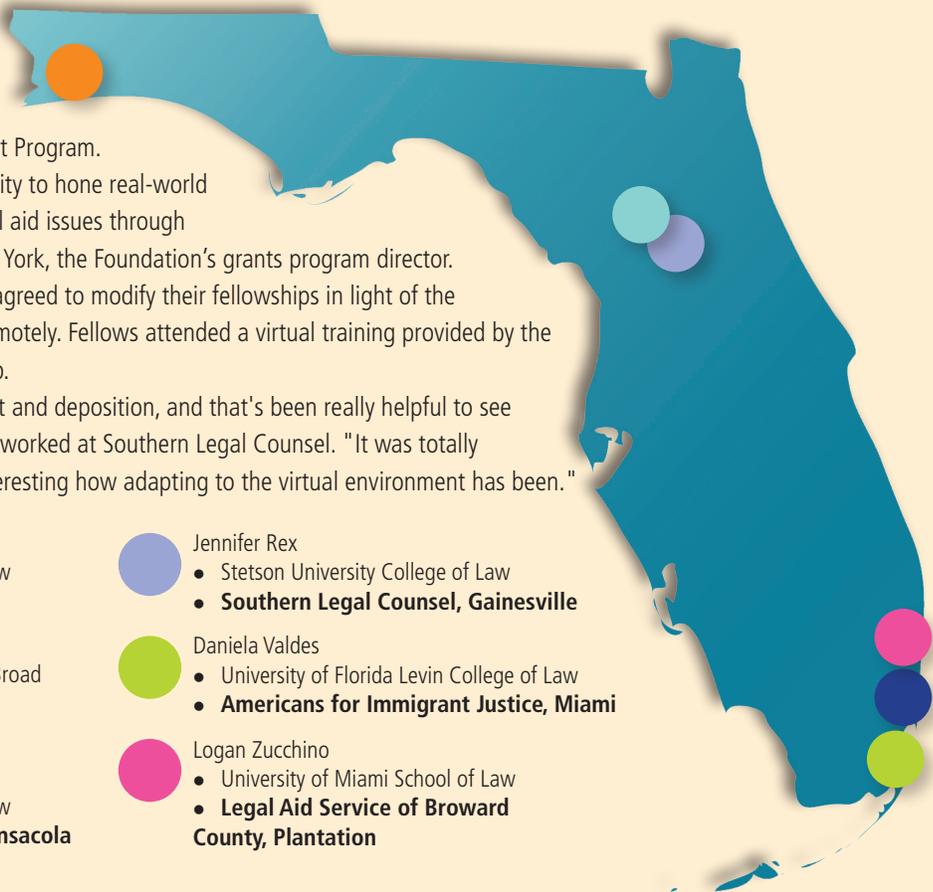
"Summer fellows have a unique opportunity to hone real-world legal skills and develop awareness of civil legal aid issues through their work with legal aid programs," said Kate York, the Foundation's grants program director.

The fellows, chosen out of 37 applicants, agreed to modify their fellowships in light of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and worked remotely. Fellows attended a virtual training provided by the Foundation prior to the start of their fellowship.

"I had the chance to view an oral argument and deposition, and that's been really helpful to see how those things happen," said Jen Rex, who worked at Southern Legal Counsel. "It was totally different than anything I expected, and it's interesting how adapting to the virtual environment has been."

-  Hanora Cassels
  - University of Florida Levin College of Law
  - **Florida Legal Services, Newberry**
-  Alejandro Magana
  - Nova Southeastern University Shepard Broad College of Law
  - **Catholic Legal Services, Miami**
-  Janielle McPhail
  - University of Florida Levin College of Law
  - **Legal Services of North Florida, Pensacola**

-  Jennifer Rex
  - Stetson University College of Law
  - **Southern Legal Counsel, Gainesville**
-  Daniela Valdes
  - University of Florida Levin College of Law
  - **Americans for Immigrant Justice, Miami**
-  Logan Zucchino
  - University of Miami School of Law
  - **Legal Aid Service of Broward County, Plantation**



## Former Summer Fellow supports Foundation through Bridge to Bronze

by Deana Alegi

As a lifelong advocate of giving back to her community and an enthusiastic volunteer, Christie Bhageloe, director of the statewide training initiative at Florida Legal Services, recently made a Bridge to Bronze commitment to The Florida Bar Foundation.

"I have always been passionate about volunteer work, and I thought getting my law degree would be a way to help those less fortunate than me," said Bhageloe. "Thanks to my experience as a Florida Bar Foundation summer fellow, I developed the skills and connections to land a legal aid job after I graduated during the recession."

Bhageloe's journey as a law student was non-traditional. She was a stay-at-home mom for four years prior to earning her juris doctor from the University of Florida Fredric G. Levin

College of Law in 2010.

Even after completing her fellowship, Bhageloe expresses continued support of the Foundation's fellowship program. She believes fellowships are essential in inspiring law students to a pursue careers in public interest law. Through her fellowship, Bhageloe was able to explore legal aid as a future career and gain practical legal experience. She emphasizes how critical it is to recruit and retain the best lawyers to serve low-income and disadvantaged clients in Florida.

Her passion for volunteering and giving back continues to fuel her work. She has represented numerous veterans who were victims of military sexual trauma or who received wrongful discharges, helping them obtain benefits that they rightfully deserved and were previously denied for years.



Christine Bhageloe

"If equal justice is important to you, you should support the Foundation," said Bhageloe. "The Florida Bar Foundation is the backbone of free legal services programs statewide. Community support would help Florida legal aid programs continue to grow and serve ever-increasing needs as we navigate recessions, racial injustice, hurricanes and pandemics."

# Miami Law wins 2020 Florida Pro Bono Law School Challenge

The University of Miami School of Law won the 2020 Florida Pro Bono Law School Challenge's top honor, the MVP Pro Bono Champion Award, for matching the most students with its own alumni.

Florida State University College of Law won for most student engagement, and, for the second year in a row, Florida A&M University College of Law won for the most alumni engagement. Stetson University College of Law won for the most law school clinic engagement.

Though the Challenge was hampered by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was still able to match 200 lawyers with law students on full representation cases from 20 civil legal aid organizations.

In addition to increasing access to legal aid, the Challenge recruits new pro bono lawyers, provides real world experience to law students and strengthens the culture of pro bono in Florida's law schools.

This is the second iteration of the Challenge, after a pilot version was launched in 2019. Using an online platform at FloridaLawSchoolChallenge.org to match students with alumni mentors, Florida's law schools competed to see which could take the most pro bono cases. Based on feedback from the pilot, the 2020 Challenge was shortened to eight weeks, and out-of-state law school alumni were able to take cases.

Students and lawyers from all of Florida's 12 law schools participated this year, as did 47 Florida lawyers who graduated from out-of-state law schools.

A core part of the Foundation's mission is to promote public service among lawyers by making it an integral part of the law school experience. By connecting students with alumni to partner on pro bono cases from legal aid organizations, the Foundation increases access to justice and promotes pro bono work.



Marni Lennon, University of Miami School of Law Assistant Dean, Public Interest & Pro Bono, and Director, HOPE Public Interest Resource Center & Lecturer in Law, accepts the top award for the Challenge.



Stetson University College of Law Dean Michèle Alexandre with the trophy for Most Law School Clinic Engagement.



Nova Southeastern University Shepard Broad College of Law was the first runner-up for student engagement. Pictured L-R: José R. (Beto) Juárez, Jr., Dean and Professor of Law; Jennifer Gordon, Director of Public Interest Programs & Interim Director of the Career & Professional Development Office; and Debra Moss Vollweiler, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Professor of Law.



Florida State University College of Law's trophy for most student engagement in front of the university's Law Rotunda.

**COVID-19, from p. 1**

housing staff, 30% on domestic violence and 10% on benefits. The funds must be used for direct legal assistance.

"Access to justice is critical during a crisis," said Monica Vignes-Pitan, president of the Florida Civil Legal Aid Association. "Our legal advocacy is ensuring access to safe and affordable housing, healthcare, education, vital government assistance, preserving income, and guaranteeing safety during these difficult times. Legal aid organizations will use these funds to serve the emerging legal needs of our client population."

As the state's eviction moratorium expires, legal aid programs expect a severe spike in eviction filings. According to the National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel, more than a million Floridians are behind in their rent. It expects to see approximately 750,000 evictions filed in Florida over the next four months.

According to the Household Pulse Survey conducted by the Census Bureau, more than 40% of Miami-Dade residents were either not able to pay their rent last month or don't expect to be able to pay this coming month. More than 32% of adults in Florida reported that they are facing housing insecurity, the second-highest rate across all 50 states.

Low-income and vulnerable Floridians are seeking legal assistance at higher rates. From March to August 2020, visits to The Florida Bar Foundation's Covid Legal Aid page on its website increased 715%. There was also a 415% increase in visits to the Foundation's list of legal aid providers.

## COVID-19 Relief Grants Awarded

Program	Areas Served	Grant
Bay Area Legal Services		\$256,015
Brevard County Legal Aid		\$11,588
CABA Pro Bono Legal Services		\$19,314
Catholic Legal Services, Archdiocese of Miami		\$10,324
Coast to Coast Legal Aid		\$87,515
Community Justice Project		\$25,176
Community Law Program		\$13,987
Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida		\$88,380
Dade Legal Aid		\$45,954
Disability Independence Group		\$2,598
Emerald Coast Legal Aid (Northwest Florida Legal Services)		\$11,389
Florida Legal Services		\$54,683
Florida Rural Legal Services		\$139,868
Gulfcoast Legal Services		\$68,601
Heart of Florida Legal Aid Society		\$3,863
Jacksonville Area Legal Aid		\$127,942
Lawyers for Children America		\$6,461
Legal Aid of Manasota		\$11,389
Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County		\$67,536
Legal Aid Society of Orange County Bar Association		\$45,555
Legal Services of Greater Miami		\$128,745
Legal Services of North Florida		\$113,955
Seminole County Bar Association Legal Aid Society		\$22,777
Three Rivers Legal Services		\$91,378
- Housing     - Domestic violence and abuse     - Benefits		<b>Total: \$1,454,993</b>

### Learn More

Visit our Grant Database to read about all of the grants that we fund.

[TheFloridaBarFoundation.org](http://TheFloridaBarFoundation.org)

## Paldino to succeed Karrat at Legal Aid Service of Broward County

Legal Aid Service of Broward County (LASBC) and its board of directors announced in September that Patrice Paldino, Esq., M.S.Ed. will be the organization's next executive director, effective January 1, 2021. LASBC, a Foundation grantee, provides free civil legal advice, representation and education to vulnerable residents of Broward County.

Paldino will succeed Executive Director

Anthony J. Karrat, Esq., who will retire at the end of December 2020 after more than four decades of service to the community.

Paldino will continue to hold her current position as executive director of Coast to Coast Legal Aid of South Florida, the organization's sister not-for-profit firm, until 2021, when she will assume the new position. Prior to this role, Paldino worked as Director of Housing Rights Programs at LASBC for more than ten years.



Patrice Paldino

## Giving round-up

The Florida Bar Foundation has been fortunate in the past several months to be supported with charitable gifts by various organizations and individuals.

The Family Law Section of The Florida Bar made its annual donation of \$50,000 in support of the Children's Legal Services grant program. The Family Law Section has given more to the Foundation than any other section, with \$425,000 in cumulative lifetime gifts.

Over the summer, more than 86 individuals and organizations donated \$17,120 to the Foundation's COVID-19 relief fund. These

donations were used to fund COVID-19 grants (see page 10).

A \$1,500 donation from the Tampa Bay Bankruptcy Bar Association and a \$2,500 donation from The Business Law Section of The Florida Bar were given in support of pro bono services.

Finally, the Young Lawyers Sections of the Orange County Bar Association and the Brevard County Bar Association cancelled their spring charity event and instead hosted a virtual happy hour, raising \$750 for the Foundation.



BUSINESS LAW SECTION  
OF THE FLORIDA BAR



### Take Action

Pledge to volunteer as a pro bono lawyer to serve vulnerable Floridians in need due to the COVID-19 pandemic:



Donate to the Foundation's COVID-19 Relief Fund:



*How to use a QR code:  
On your smart phone, open the camera and point it at the code. Your phone will prompt you to open a link.*

[TheFloridaBarFoundation.org](https://TheFloridaBarFoundation.org)

## Donation spurs improvements, additions to Turning18.org

A \$16,000 donation from the BMC Charitable Foundation to improve the lives of foster children in Florida will allow the Foundation to add a new functionality to Turning18.org, a website funded by the Foundation to help children with disabilities prepare for becoming legal adults.

"We are honored to be chosen by the BMC Charitable Foundation to carry out their goal of improving services for foster children," said Foundation President Stephen R. Senn.

The website, which helps parents of children with disabilities make important life decisions, will be expanded to help children aging out of foster care make similar decisions. About 58,000 Florida children with

developmental disabilities turn 18 each year; close to 1,000 Florida children age out of foster care.

With the BMC Charitable Foundation's approval, articles on topics of interest to foster teens will be added to the site. The Foundation may also provide a stipend to Disability Rights Florida to create a supported decision making document to be used in lieu of guardianship.

The Foundation will also consider using a portion of the donation to promote the site



online through advertising and social media. Approximately 335 users visit the site a month, and the Foundation has a goal of increasing that by 50% over the next six months.

Now

- **Learn more**  
[TheFloridaBarFoundation.org](http://TheFloridaBarFoundation.org)
- **Take a case**  
View available pro bono cases throughout Florida on [FloridaProBonoMatters.org](http://FloridaProBonoMatters.org)
- **Make a difference**  
Donate online at [TheFloridaBarFoundation.org/donate](http://TheFloridaBarFoundation.org/donate)

**Learn. Engage. Act.**

Get social with us.



**We are The Florida Bar Foundation,**  
and we believe the justice system works best when it works for everyone.

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