



Christian Legal Aid

Of Pittsburgh

OUR MISSION

“He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you? But to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”

MICAH 6:8



HOW MANY CLIENTS HAVE WE SERVED?

285 families
in 2018 and
243 families
year to date 2019

We are on track to meet with more clients in 2019 than in 2018!

WE'RE CELEBRATING



Get to Know Us

For more than 15 years, Christian Legal Aid of Pittsburgh (CLA) has been providing free legal aid to low-income individuals in the Pittsburgh region. From our clinic located on East Ohio Street on the North Side of Pittsburgh, CLA volunteer attorneys provide much-needed legal counsel, guidance and prayer to our neighbors in need whose income is at or below 250% of the federal poverty guidelines.

At CLA, we address legal issues critical to the well-being of our clients, including family law matters such as child support and custody, housing problems such as foreclosure and eviction, and public benefits issues such as disability and unemployment compensation. This list is not exhaustive as we can address any civil legal matter.

CLA opened its doors in January 2004 with only four volunteer attorneys serving clients on a monthly basis. Currently, CLA is led by our second Executive Director, Lauren Darbouze. It is under her guidance that CLA has continued to grow and expand. Our clinic is now open every Monday evening and is consistently busy.

CLA is entirely operated, staffed and funded locally, but we are part of a national network of over 60 legal aid clinics across the country through our affiliation with Christian Legal Society.

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CLIENT STORIES

By Mariah Mandy- Student Board Member

Lynn's Story

"Lynn" was a former Christian Legal Aid client who attended our clinic years ago regarding an estate issue. In the summer of 2019, Lynn returned to CLA and requested the clinic's assistance in a custody matter. Lynn is the paternal grandmother of three minor children. Lynn and her son have a strained relationship, and he was not allowing her to see her grandchildren. By the time Lynn came to Christian Legal Aid, she had not seen her grandchildren in several months.

Lynn had attempted to file for partial grandparent's custody in the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas, Family Division. After a hearing, however, the custody hearing officer recommended that Lynn receive no custody time whatsoever with her grandchildren.

Lynn filed exceptions (an appeal to the Judge) to the hearing officer's decision herself, but realized she also had to file a brief in support of her exceptions. Lynn knew she needed help drafting the brief.

Lynn met with Attorney Megan DeVecchio, who listened to her story and was able to analyze her case. Attorney DeVecchio supervised Duquesne law student, Mariah Mandy who drafted the brief for Lynn. Attorney DeVecchio was also able to counsel Lynn on the exceptions process, including how to behave and what to argue when she got before the Judge.

Following the exceptions argument on July 29, 2019, the Judge vacated the hearing officer's order. Lynn was granted one weekend of custody each month to spend with her grandchildren.

Lynn's case is an excellent example of how attorneys and law students at CLA are able to work together to serve our clients.

"Ashley's" Story

"Ashley" is a very recent client at CLA. Ashley is an immigrant from Europe who repeatedly tried to come to America when she was younger, but her home country would not allow her family to leave. Finally, Ashley was given permission to come to the United States. At the time, all Ellis Island workers were on strike, and she entered through the immigration port in Nova Scotia, Canada. Shortly thereafter, Ashley was able to bring her family, parents included, to the United States.

Ashley's time in America, however, has been tainted by her neighbor's persistent harassment. The harassment has included eggs thrown at her house, damaged caused to her property, and verbal abuse. Ashley has begged her neighbor to stop, and even filed a police report, but the harassment has been incessant. Due to the neighbor's behavior, Ashley has wanted to move for quite some time. Her father, however, was too sick to survive the move. Ashley came to Christian Legal Aid seeking relief in the interim.

Ashley met with Attorney Jordan Berty, who listened to her story, explained her legal rights and provided her with a few options as to how she might move forward. Attorney Berty recommended presenting the neighbors with a cease and desist letter or moving to file a complaint with the local magistrate. Ashley, along with the help of her daughter, is now gathering the necessary information in order for CLA to prepare the cease and desist letter.

After meeting with Attorney Berty, Ashley told the CLA clinic moderator that she "could finally breathe a sigh of relief" and that she is "so grateful for the good-hearted Christian Legal Aid volunteers." Ashley's story is proof that CLA attorney volunteers can change client's lives just by writing a simple letter.



Mariah Mandy, Student Board Member, speaking at the Fall Kick Off Training on September 5, 2019.



FALL KICK OFF TRAINING

*By Lauren Darbouze
Executive Director*

On September 5, 2019, Christian Legal Aid hosted its Annual Fall Kickoff in order to welcome new volunteers to the organization. Numerous attorneys and law students gathered at the Fall Kickoff to pursue a common goal: provide legal assistance to Pittsburgh's impoverished residents.

As the new volunteers underwent training, it became increasingly evident that each volunteer shared a contagious vigor and excitement for pro bono work. Indeed, the 2019 Fall Kickoff brought an unprecedented number of law students from both the University of Pittsburgh and Duquesne University, and, without these volunteers, Christian Legal Aid could not make such a critical difference in the community.

I would like to extend a sincere "thank you" to all the prospective volunteers who attended the kickoff, our veteran volunteers who commandeered the training process, and all other Christian Legal Aid volunteers who made the kickoff a success!

ATTORNEY VOLUNTEER TESTIMONIAL

Christian Legal Aid of Pittsburgh (CLA) is meeting a critical need in our community every Monday night from our pro bono legal clinic on the North Side of Pittsburgh. I have been involved as a volunteer attorney with CLA for more than 10 years, and the clinic has grown significantly during that time as government funding for other pro bono legal programs has been significantly reduced and the options available to the less fortunate in the Pittsburgh region have become fewer and fewer.

In the midst of this challenge, I believe that God has grown and sustained CLA so that we can provide legal advice, hope and dignity to our neighbors in need. In 2018, CLA provided pro bono legal service to 285 clients from our clinic on the North Side. These are real people facing significant life issues, such as the custody of their children or the potential loss of their home. Without CLA, they would be left to navigate an often-confusing legal system on their own.

The Bible speaks over and over about God's command to do justice and to care for the widow and orphan among us. This command is being carried out every week at our legal aid clinic. Thank you sincerely for your support of CLA. We could not do any of this important work without the help of donors like you, whose gifts make up the great majority of our modest annual budget.

Even if you are not in a position to give, please pray for CLA as we seek to show the love of Jesus to every person who walks through our door.



*By Nick Oliver
Board Member and Attorney
Volunteer*

GIVE

We continue to see a growing need for legal aid services in the Pittsburgh region. We are passionately serving as many clients as we can, but we are constrained by space and resources. While we are blessed with a faithful group of volunteer attorneys and law students, it is our desire to grow our capacity to serve the underprivileged in our community. Over the past few years, we have been able to do many exciting things and expand our reach to help even more people in our community, thanks to the generous financial support of our donors. Can we count on you this year?

We are a registered 501(c)(3) corporation that operates through the generosity of individual donors and foundation support. You can make a tax-deductible donation to Christian Legal Aid of Pittsburgh in one of three ways:

(1) Credit Card: You can make one-time or monthly donations through the Network for Good website. The link is on our website under “Donate”:

www.clapittsburgh.org

(2) Check: If you would like to donate by check, you can mail a check to:

Christian Legal Aid c/o ACAC
801 Union Place
Pittsburgh, PA 15212^[L]_[SEP]

(3) Payroll Deduction through United Way: If your employer participates in the United Way program, you can contribute to Christian Legal Aid of Pittsburgh through that program by signing up through your employer’s annual fundraising drive and selecting “CLA Pittsburgh” as the recipient organization for your donation. Our United Way identification number is **1455117**.



I look forward to seeing how God uses your generous support to bless the clinic in 2020.

Lauren Darbouze
Executive Director



Please consider Christian Legal Aid in your year end giving. Thank you for your continued support and prayers.

Tom Smith
Board President

VOLUNTEER

CLA is staffed entirely by volunteer attorneys from the Pittsburgh area, and we are always in need of attorneys who are willing to volunteer a few hours of their time to serve the underprivileged in our community. Our volunteers come from a wide range of backgrounds and have varying levels of experience.

Requirements for Attorney Volunteers

- 1 You must be licensed to practice law in Pennsylvania
- 2 You must sign our required Statement of Faith

In addition to attorney volunteers, we need law students, paralegals, and other community volunteers to assist us with the clinic.

If you have a heart for justice and would be willing to serve in this ministry in any capacity, please contact us by email at info@clapittsburgh.org.

CHRISTIAN LEGAL AID OF PITTSBURGH
*Seeking **Justice** with the **Love** of God*

