



ALLEGHENY COUNTY  
BAR FOUNDATION

*The heart of Pittsburgh's Legal Community*

2023-2024

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**GRATITUDE REPORT**

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**EMPOWERING JUSTICE**

# WHAT DOES EMPOWERING JUSTICE MEAN TO YOU?

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To me, it means embracing every person who has and is helping to make the Foundation what it is today – an incredible group of volunteers, donors, and dedicated staff who care about making an impact in our community. In order to run this foundation, a combination of all of these participants is necessary.

**WE COULD NOT HAVE EXPANDED OUR REACH AND CREATED PROGRAMS THAT HAVE BECOME THE FABRIC OF OUR QUEST FOR EQUAL JUSTICE WITHOUT YOU.**

This means that we not only provide and facilitate lawyers and legal aid organizations to increase pro bono services – we also support our profession with law student scholarships, Summer Fellowship programs, and education.

It does not stop there. Our volunteers are incredible! Under our Pro Bono Center, we provide CLE trainings, malpractice insurance, and more importantly, opportunities. We make sure our volunteers are well-versed and confident in representing clients in areas of poverty law that they do not practice on a daily basis. Our staff provides mentoring and even shadowing to make sure everyone is fully armed to do the best volunteer work possible.

Our board and committee volunteers help to make these programs all work. You are a valued member of our team! Each committee, from Attorneys Against Hunger to Fellows GIVE and Loans and Scholarships, are made up of volunteers who are not afraid to do the work to make each program a success each year!

Our donors make it all happen! Our Leadership Circle members are the best of the best firms in our area and provide much-needed operational support. Our impact in the fight against hunger has increased and gained momentum every year! Financial support for our pro bono work has helped to increase the services we are able to provide. Every donation is essential in helping to continue this great work!

Finally, we have a great staff! Barbara Griffin and I have over 36 years of combined dedicated service to the Foundation. We both care deeply about our mission and that makes our job all the easier to do. Our staff is amazing. They, too, are dedicated to our work and are an integral part of our team. We all support each other and work together seamlessly.

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I am thankful every day for being given the opportunity and the trust to be a part of the growth of this foundation. I am proud of all of you for helping in every way that you can to support our vision and make our community better!



Lorrie K. Albert, Esq.  
Assistant Executive Director

## WHO WE ARE

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The Allegheny County Bar Foundation, known as the Heart of the Pittsburgh Legal Community, promotes justice for all through public service law-related programs. The Foundation raises, manages, and distributes funds, encourages and assists lawyers to provide pro bono legal services, and develops and supports public information initiatives.

## WHAT WE DO

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**\$55,000**

Awarded to  
Loans &  
Scholarships

**\$128,120**

Raised for  
Attorneys Against  
Hunger

**\$60,000**

Fellows GIVE  
Grants  
Awarded

**32**

Law Firm  
Leadership Circle  
Firms

**6,700**

Juvenile Court  
Project  
Hearings

**1,722**

Pro Bono  
Clients  
Served

**18**

Summer  
Fellows  
Students

Volunteers are at the heart of the Pro Bono Center's work, allowing us to reach many more people than our small staff could do on its own. A new legal clinic in Carnegie Borough takes attorneys to where the clients are, eliminating the need for community members to spend time and money making a trip to Downtown Pittsburgh. The generous and experienced volunteers give advice on issues from family law to estate planning to public benefits.



## LIFE CHANGING SERVICES

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The Pro Bono Center is sometimes the first stop – and the last resort – for people seeking help that is not available anywhere else.

“Joe” was homeless and had been denied Social Security benefits because the name he had used his entire life – and which was on his Social Security card – did not match the name on his official birth certificate. He needed a court-ordered name change, and he had absolutely no ability to pay for an attorney. His issue did not fall within the scope of any other legal aid

organization or pro bono program, so he turned to the Pro Bono Center as his last hope.

We took the case, obtained a fee waiver for court costs, and secured a final name change order. After presenting the order to the Social Security Administration, Joe was awarded ongoing benefits plus a retroactive lump sum. He used the money to pay the deposit and first month's rent on an apartment, and his new monthly benefits will allow him to remain housed. This was a simple case for the Pro Bono Center, but life changing for our client, who could not have done it on his own.





## **PARDONS PROJECT SEEING SUCCESSES**

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The Pardons Project launched in 2020 in response to the need of individuals with old criminal records re-entering the job force as COVID shutdowns began to ebb. The process for pardoning criminal offenses in Pennsylvania is long – sometimes taking 3 to 4 years from application to decision. So cases that were filed in 2020 have only just begun showing results – including clearing the record of a client whose possession of marijuana conviction from over 30 years ago was still holding her back from better job opportunities.

**“I put this off for years because I didn’t know where to start and I didn’t have money to pay a lawyer. I’m so happy that this is finally behind me and I can live the life I know I’m capable of. Thank you.”**

The Pro Bono Center thanks the generous foundations, corporations, law firms, and individual donors who make our work possible.

## **THANK YOU**

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Thank you to the Pro Bono Center’s four major funders:



SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA  
Pennsylvania Interest on  
Lawyer Trust Accounts Board





## HELPING CLIENTS IN NEED

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In Fiscal Year 2023-24 the Juvenile Court Project (JCP) represented nearly 1,000 clients and participated in nearly 6,700 hearings concerning our clients' 2,300 court active children. Additionally, the JCP support staff received over 2,000 referrals and assisted clients with finding housing, finding community resources, developing family finding ecomaps, attending court hearings, and retrieving records (medical, treatment, education, visitation, etc.). The JCP support staff attended over 700 Family Conferencing and Teaming meetings, as well as other case planning and child educational meetings. The support staff conducted over 2,000 check-in calls with clients. The JCP paralegal team contributed support by drafting motions, acquiring transcripts, issuing subpoenas, drafting appellate pleadings, conducting intake, and legal research.

The JCP finished work with a software consulting firm to create a Client Database report writing tool and worked with a website developer to redesign the JCP website. The JCP continues to zealously pursue appellate advocacy for our clients and works collaboratively with other child welfare attorneys in appellate practice by seeking out amicus supports and opportunities.



# WHO WE SERVE | ATTORNEYS AGAINST HUNGER



Through the Attorneys Against Hunger (AAH) campaign, the Allegheny County Bar Foundation is helping address the complex challenges faced by our neighbors in need of assistance. Some individuals, including those who've fled domestic abuse or lost their homes, are now living in their cars and seeking food that doesn't require a kitchen. With the support of Attorneys Against Hunger, Jewish Family and Community Services has been able to offer specialized food bags containing shelf-stable and ready-to-eat items like peanut butter, canned tuna, and fresh fruit – items that are not typically available.

This targeted approach, made possible by Attorneys Against Hunger funds, ensures that even people without access to a kitchen receive nutritious, ready-to-eat meals. By tailoring food distribution to meet the unique needs of those living without stable housing, the program is empowered to fill a gap that many pantries often struggle to address.

## STRIKE OUT HUNGER

The ACBA's Young Lawyers Division (YLD) sponsored Strike Out Hunger, a fundraiser supporting Attorneys Against Hunger. The event was held at Shorty's Pins x Pints on the North Shore on April 30, 2024 where participants enjoyed duck pin bowling, arcade games, and a shuffleboard tournament. The event raised nearly \$7,000 of crucial support to the AAH campaign. Thank you to all the YLD members and attendees who helped to make the event so successful!



*Strike Out Hunger co-chairs Rachel Pressdee and McCall Chafin.*





## HELPING THOSE IN NEED

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The “new home essentials kits” were a highly needed tangible that Allies for Health + Wellbeing was able to provide thanks to the ACBF Grant, and they benefited people who would otherwise have no options to cook or eat. It has provided nutrition and sustenance to people and allowed those who needed food to take their medications to be able to continue taking them. Many people have expressed being deeply grateful.

“The fact that all of my providers, social workers, admin staff, food pantry [staff] listen to me and the needs I have makes my care just that much more personally tailored to fit me. For that, I am grateful.”

## OUR FOOD ORGANIZATIONS

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Allies for Health + Wellbeing | Casa San Jose | East End Cooperative Ministry | First English Evangelical Lutheran Church | First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh | Focus on Renewal | Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank | The Intersection, Inc. | Jubilee Kitchen | Just Harvest | North Hills Community Outreach | Rainbow Kitchen | Smithfield United Church of Christ | South Hills Interfaith Ministries | Squirrel Hill Community Food Pantry | St. Mary of Mercy Church | Trinity Cathedral | Urban League of Pittsburgh Hunger Services



# WHAT WE DO | FELLOWS GIVE



*Nicky Ripley and Sarah Rosso of the Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation pitched their project during the Fellows GIVE Pitch event.*

In 2022, we launched the new, improved, and revamped Fellows GIVE which directly connects you to the programs that make a difference. Our distinguished Fellows GIVE attorneys are dedicated to improving the community and profession. Active Fellows GIVE members vote on programs and empower the organizations to do more by providing grants.

On October 25, 2023, active Fellows GIVE members came together to hear pitches from ten eligible legal aid organizations. Attending Fellows members then voted on which ones they would like to receive one of six \$10,000 grants.

Through the Fellows GIVE Program, the ACBF supports organizations in Allegheny County that are working to close the justice gap through innovative programs and projects.

## FELLOWS GIVE GRANTS

In FY 2023-24, \$60,000 in grants were awarded to the following six legal aid programs of varying focus, including immigration services, support for survivors of intimate partner violence, access to education, tenants' rights, and more that are meeting the crucial and urgent needs in our community.







Community Justice Project (CJP) has worked with tenants at a subsidized housing community in McKeesport, PA known as Hi View Gardens, to form a tenants' association. The property was failing HUD's housing standards, had several pending code violation citations, and numerous Health Department complaints. Issues ranged from no heat during the winter, trash collecting in the hallways, leaking roofs, and pest infestations. With CJP's help, the property owner replaced the management company, improved security, and invested in repairs/maintenance.

## FELLOWS GIVE GRANTS | SUCCESS STORIES

During the Grant year, Ansar of Pittsburgh was able to offer 30 Ukraine clients and 10 Kazakhstan clients with immigration services for free. These services included application for Work Authorizations, TPS, and Asylum.







## **FELLOWS GIVE GRANTS**

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### **SUCCESS STORIES**

“Nonnie” is a Section 8 voucher renter. A little over two years ago, her rent portion was adjusted without notice from the Housing Authority from \$126 to \$355. Nonnie continued to pay \$126 for over two years with no objection from the landlord. The landlord finally internally audited their properties, noticed that they had been missing \$229 every month for over two years, and filed an eviction action against Nonnie which included a \$6,481 claim for the accumulated balance. At trial, both parties testified that they never received a notice from Section 8. Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS) attorneys successfully argued that the onus to catch Section 8’s mistake was on the landlord, and that they should not be able to spring such a cumbersome debt on a fault-free client after two years of sitting on their hands.



The ACBF offers funded fellowships every summer made possible by members of the legal community. We aim to promote the path of public interest as a viable career opportunity and level the playing field by offering resources and professional development to students.

## LAWYERS' FUND SUMMER FELLOWSHIP STUDENTS

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This year, we were able to award 10 additional Student Fellowships through an anonymous donation.

### UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH SCHOOL OF LAW

Sarah Ferguson, KidsVoice

Kevin Hills, Office of Conflict Counsel

Chance Robinson, DA's Office

Max Snowden, Disability Rights Network

Avery Graham, Juvenile Court Project

Tina Kooser, Women's Center & Shelter

T.J. Rodman, DA's Office

### THOMAS R. KLINE SCHOOL OF LAW OF DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

Jocelyn Brooks-Ezelle, Women's Center & Shelter

Michael Duran, Allegheny County Law Department

Brooke McCaffrey, Education Law Center

M.K. Swartsfager, Office of Conflict Counsel

Lillian Dearing, Community Justice Project

Samantha James, Public Defender's Office

Katarina Montoro, Public Defender's Office

Madison Williams, Allegheny County Law Department

### CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Grace Haddad, Christian Legal Aid

## GISMONDI CERTIFIED LAW STUDENT SUMMER FELLOWSHIP STUDENTS

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### UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH SCHOOL OF LAW

Julianne Toto, Neighborhood Legal Services

Spencer Vinroe, Neighborhood Legal Services



## SUMMER FELLOWSHIP SPOTLIGHTS

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“This summer, I interned at Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS) in the Housing division. As a certified intern, I was assigned my own clients in landlord-tenant matters, and I was able to get the full experience of client representation. I conducted the initial client intakes, researched the issue in question, and consulted one of my supervising attorneys to determine the best action plan for the client. For some of my clients, I was able to represent them in Magistrate Court hearings and Common Pleas Court arbitrations.

I cannot overstate how much I enjoyed working at NLS this summer. Not only did I learn the substantive law very well, but the practical experience of working with clients and litigating inside of a courtroom was incredible. Also, the mentorship that you receive at NLS is truly unique and exceptional. My main supervising attorney, Danielle Harrington, was always available to answer questions and guide me when needed. In addition to this, I had six other Housing attorneys available to me who I would go to regularly for advice and guidance and who always made themselves available to me. I highly recommend this internship for any student who is craving that practical lawyering experience that we often feel like we’re missing out on when sitting in a classroom.

Lastly, and most importantly, this experience was only possible because of the Gismondi Fellowship. I am financially supporting myself through law school with loans and waitressing, so this fellowship was the only way I was able to have this incredible experience. I am extremely grateful to have been chosen, and it’s fellowships like this one that enables the proliferation of public interest law and public service in Pittsburgh. I look forward to passing on all the skills and knowledge that I acquired this summer to future law students when I become a mentor myself.”

– JULIANNE TOTO, GISMONDI SUMMER FELLOWSHIP STUDENT

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“I attend law school with the intention to build a career in the public trust. The Allegheny County Bar Foundation has gone above and beyond in making that dream a reality. Through the Summer Fellowship, I gained valuable experience working with juvenile delinquency clients as a certified legal intern with Allegheny County Office of Conflict Counsel. Thanks to the fellowship grant, I spent my summer in court representing clients alongside experienced practitioners, not stressing about making ends meet. The Bar Foundation has set me up for success in a new position with Jewish Community and Family Services. The Summer Fellowship is much more than an investment in Fellow’s careers; it pays exponential dividends for the public good.”



– M.K. SWARTFAGER, LAWYERS’ FUND SUMMER FELLOWSHIP STUDENT



*Judge Nicola Henry-Taylor spoke to students on her average day being a judge in the family division on June 2024 during the Fellowship Program Lunch with the Judges event.*



## **LOANS AND SCHOLARSHIPS**

The ACBF awarded \$55,000 in scholarships to the following students:

### F.C. GROTE FUND



David  
Alligood



Katherine  
Cassidy



Bailey  
Glasscock



Fizza  
Imam



Cole  
Parker



Alecia  
Petrikis



Rukayat  
Sulaiman

### JAMES SMITH NOTRE DAME LAW SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP



Jordan Farrell

### THE HONORABLE CAROL LOS MANSMANN SCHOLARSHIP



Madison Ervin



# HOW WE CELEBRATE |

## ACCOLADES, AWARDS & APPLAUSE

The ACBF honored outstanding volunteers at our Fall Foundation Reception held on September 20, 2023.



The following volunteers were honored for their steadfast commitment to Pro Bono Services: **Meghan Tighe, Esq.**, Lorraine M. Bittner Public Interest Attorney Award; **Michael J. DiSantis, Esq.** and **Christina E. McKaveney-Malkin, Esq.**, Jane F. Hepting Individual Attorney Awards; **Nicklaus Oliver, Esq.**, Kathryn M. Kenyon Leadership Award; **Community Justice Project**, Public Interest Special Achievement Award; **Neighborhood Legal Services and The University of Pittsburgh School of Law Rural Legal Clinic**, Special Service Award for the Rural Legal Clinic in Lawrence County in January 2023.



President Daniel Sinclair presented the Presidential Merit Award to **Carol Mills McCarthy** for her longstanding dedication to pro bono services. She has provided countless hours of her professional time and family law expertise to low-income clients and survivors of domestic violence through her pro bono work. She also served as a Trustee of the Allegheny County Bar Foundation from July 1, 2014, to June 30, 2018. During that time she helped the Foundation make significant accomplishments in expanding its pro bono efforts.



The Edward G. O'Connor award was presented to **Eileen Yacknin** in honor of her passionate work and tireless dedication and commitment to equal justice and providing legal services to those who otherwise would go unrepresented.



The ACBA's 29<sup>th</sup> Golf & 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Bocce Tournament took place at the Diamond Run Golf Club on July 24, 2023. The event was once again a success, generating funds for both the Allegheny County Bar Foundation and Neighborhood Legal Services.



*Bocce players Lisa Manzonelli and Melissa Krawczynski throw their shots in the tournament.*

## 29<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL GOLF & 9<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL BOCCE TOURNAMENT



*Kevin McCarthy, Jeff Pollock, Suzanne Filiaggi, and Brian Knavish pose for a photo after winning the bocce tournament.*





Law Firm  
**LEADERSHIP  
CIRCLE**

## **LAW FIRM LEADERSHIP CIRCLE**

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Leadership Circle law firms stepped-up once again to show strong financial support for our Foundation's work. Created in 2012, the Law Firm Leadership Circle is composed of a distinguished group of law firms whose outstanding generosity demonstrates a commitment to joining the Bar Foundation's efforts to increase the legal profession's impact in the community. Each firm has made a financial commitment to the Foundation by pledging to donate to the Leadership Circle campaign over three years to secure the administration of the Foundation's outstanding pro bono, community, and professional programs.

These FY 2020-23 firms have made an unwavering commitment to improve equal justice in our community:

Babst Calland  
Bernstein-Burkley  
Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC  
Burns White LLC  
Campbell Durrant Beatty Palombo & Miller, PC  
Clark Hill PLC  
Dentons Cohen & Grigsby, PC  
Dickie, McCamey & Chilcote, PC  
Duane Morris LLP  
Eckert Seamans Cherin & Mellot, LLC  
Fox Rothschild LLP  
Frank, Gale, Bails, Murcko & Pocrass, PC  
Gismondi & Associates  
Goehring Rutter & Boehm  
Jones Day  
K&L Gates LLP

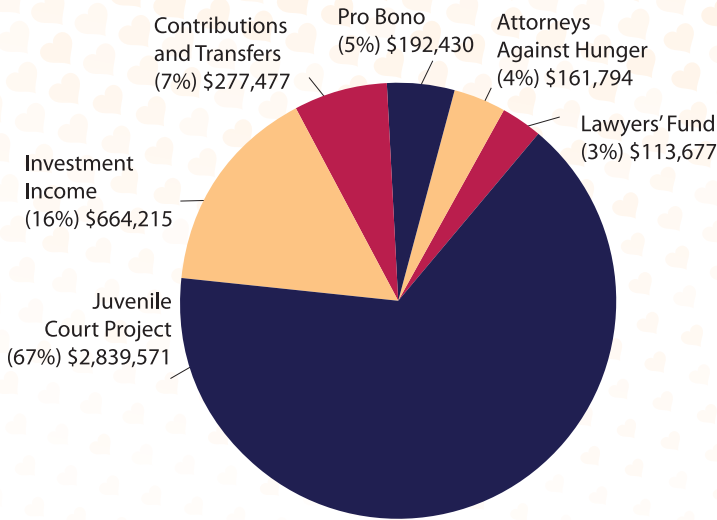
Marshall Dennehey  
McCarthy McEnroe Rosinski & Joy  
Meyer Darragh Buckler Bebenek & Eck, PLLC  
Meyer Unkovic & Scott LLP  
Pollock Begg  
Raphael, Ramsden & Behers, PC  
Reed Smith LLP  
Schnader Harrison Segal & Lewis LLP  
Sherrard, German & Kelly, PC  
Strassburger McKenna Gutnick & Gefsky  
Thomas, Thomas & Hafer LLP  
Troutman Pepper Hamilton LLP  
Tucker Arensberg, PC  
Vuono & Gray, LLC  
The Webb Law Firm, PC  
Zimmer Kunz, PLLC

If you would like to learn more about the Law Firm Leadership Circle, please contact Lorrie Albert at [lalbert@acba.org](mailto:lalbert@acba.org) or 412-402-6640.

# FINANCIALS AT A GLANCE

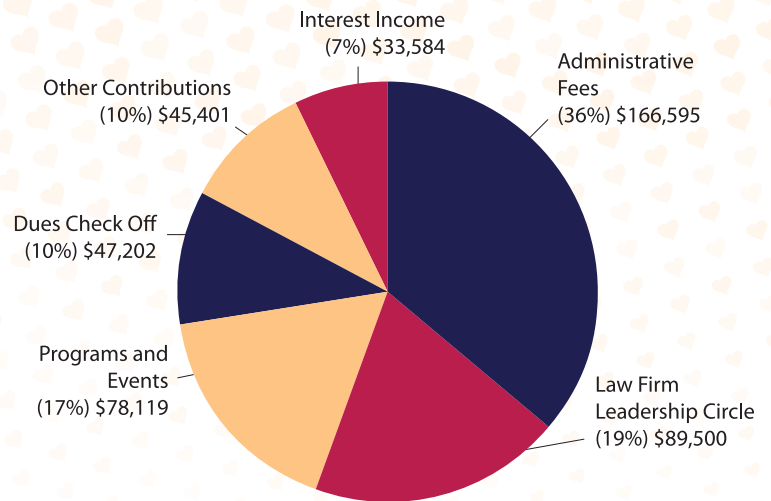
Audited financials for July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024. Please visit [www.acbf.org](http://www.acbf.org) to view a complete copy of the ACBF audited financial statement.

## RESTRICTED

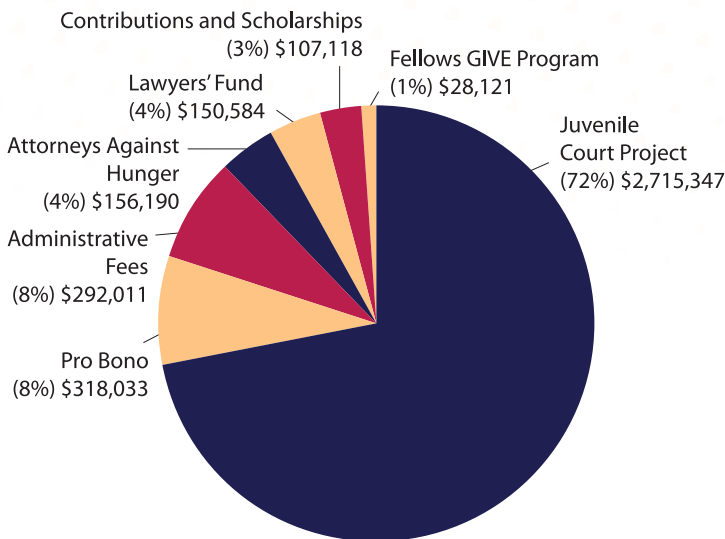


Total Revenue \$4,249,164

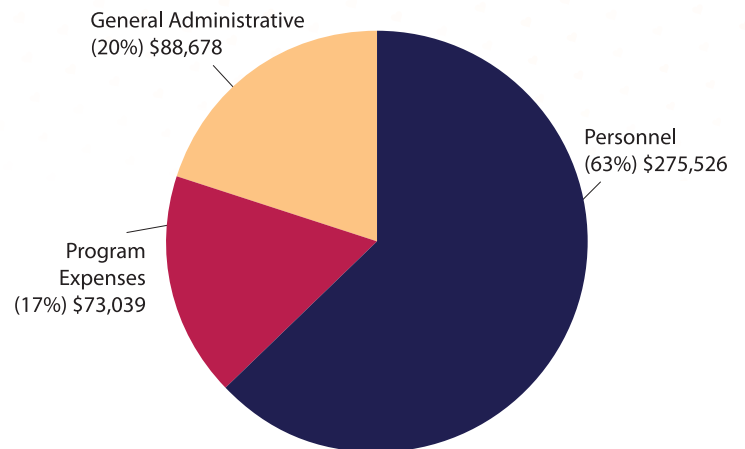
## UNRESTRICTED



Total Revenue \$460,401



Total Expenses \$3,767,404



Total Expenses \$437,243



## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Daniel J. Sinclair, President  
Bryan S. Neft, Vice President  
Margaret W. Prescott, Secretary  
Robert S. Bernstein, Treasurer  
Keith E. Whitson, Immediate Past-President

One Year:

Ronald J. Brown  
Lacey C. Ecker  
Thomas R. Moore  
Brian C. Vertz

Two Year:

Frederick N. Frank  
Sunu M. Pillai

Three Year:

Gilda M. Arroyo  
Christopher R. Brennan  
Edward J. Donnelly, III, MD  
Andrew K. Fletcher  
Mary Lou McLaughlin  
Crystal McCormick Ware

Young Lawyers Division:

Connor P. Sease

## STAFF

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David A. Blaner, Executive Director  
Thomas C. Petropoulos, Assistant Executive Director  
Lorrie K. Albert, Associate Executive Director  
Barbara Griffin, Pro Bono Center Director  
Ron Slavonic, Director of Finance  
Catherine Volponi, Juvenile Court Project Director  
Stephanie Selya, Programs and Project Manager  
Mya Ras, Development Assistant  
Patricia O. Jones, Pro Bono Staff Attorney  
Olivia P. Hilborn, Pro Bono Staff Attorney



*ACBF Board members pose for a photo.*



*Stephanie Selya, Olivia Hilborn, Patricia Jones, Lorrie Albert, Mya Ras, and Barbara Griffin.*



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BAR FOUNDATION

*The heart of Pittsburgh's Legal Community*

400 Koppers Building  
436 Seventh Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

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

The Allegheny County Bar Foundation is a 501(c) (3) charitable organization and is classified by the IRS as a "public charity". A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling toll free within PA, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.