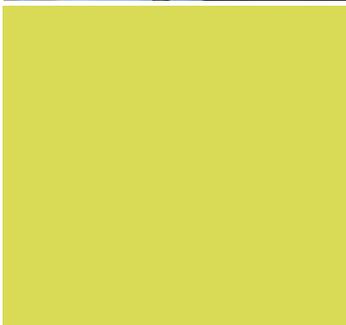


# Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services



# 2016 Annual Report

# Contents

---

Mission 02

A Letter from Our CEO 03

A Year in Review 04

Volunteer Attorney Program 05

Events 07

How to Get Involved 10

2016 Financials 14

In 2016, SMRLS closed 9,514 cases, helping **25,558** people in need.

---

This includes **1,725** seniors, **765** clients with limited English proficiency and **2,787** persons with disabilities.

# Mission

**SMRLS mission is:** To provide a full range of high quality legal services to low-income persons and eligible client groups in civil matters, in a respectful manner which enables clients to (1) enforce their legal rights; (2) obtain effective access to the courts, administrative agencies and forums which constitute our system of justice; (3) maintain freedom from hunger, homelessness, sickness and abuse; (4) empower persons and assure equal opportunity, thus, helping people to help themselves and become economically self-reliant, to the extent their individual abilities and circumstances permit.

SMRLS, through a diverse, respectful and fair working environment, and legal assistance and community education activities, promotes and respects the dignity of low-income persons and seeks new and effective solutions to the critical and common legal problems of low-income persons which arise in a broad community context.



# What you do matters.

## A letter from SMRLS CEO, Jessie R. Nicholson

It is with our heartfelt appreciation that we at Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services (SMRLS) present our 2016 Annual Report.

SMRLS had many proud accomplishments in 2016. We provided service to a greater number of clients, established vital partnerships in our communities and expanded our Volunteer Attorney Program (VAP). We also helped more than 2,100 clients achieve better positioning for maintaining or finding housing and jobs.

Our services reached an astonishing number of people in 2016. We reached 25,558 people by closing 9,514 cases. In addition, an estimated 11,283 people attended SMRLS community legal education classes and received Pro Se Assistance. We served nearly 800 people with limited English proficiency, much of which can be attributed to the rising Karen population in St. Paul and the growing number of Middle Eastern refugees in the southeast Minnesota region. Astoundingly, the approximately 208,000 low-income people living in SMRLS' service area make up 39.3% of the state's population living in poverty. As the number of disadvantaged people we serve continues to rise, it demonstrates that our services are more needed than ever.

We were excited to announce the launch of the new Lawyers Advancing Wellness (LAW) partnership at the Open Door Health Center (ODHC) in Mankato in 2016. Through this healthcare-legal partnership, a SMRLS attorney is available every day at ODHC to work with healthcare staff to help low-income ODHC patients. The attorneys tackle legal issues contributing to poor health, such as lack of access to healthcare or utility shutoffs at their residences. It's clear this partnership already has made an impact. In 2016, LAW closed 105 cases – 90 of these clients had no prior contact with SMRLS. Special thanks to the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation for making this exciting partnership possible.

Last year also was a busy time for our Volunteer Attorney Program (VAP). Our volunteer attorneys provided service to 630 clients – 100 more than the previous year. Services included extended legal representation and brief legal advice and counseling. VAP saw a noticeable increase in the number of family law and domestic abuse cases. In fact, these cases made up 87% of all cases receiving VAP representation.

We were also proud to announce an addition to the SMRLS Executive Leadership, Chuck Thomas, as the new Director of Litigation and Advocacy. Chuck has worked as an attorney at SMRLS for 40 years. Chuck is leading SMRLS' initiative to develop a more strategic approach to its litigation and advocacy initiatives.

As we approach the end of 2017, we hope to continue building on the momentum we achieved last year and extend it into 2018. Thank you for your continued support and strength of commitment to the mission of Equal Justice.

Jessie R. Nicholson, Esq.  
Chief Executive Officer

Gail Olson, Esq.  
President, Board of Directors



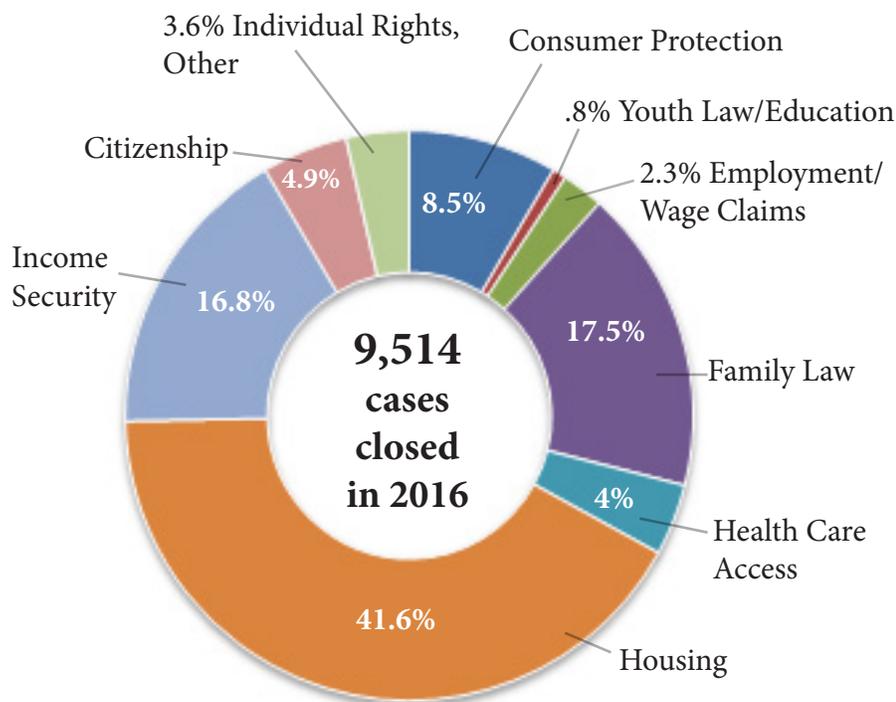
Jessie R. Nicholson, Esq., CEO



Gail Olson, Esq., Board President

# A Year in Review

## Cases Closed in 2016: A Breakdown



In 2016, SMRLS closed 9,514 cases, affecting 25,558 low-income individuals and family members with critical civil legal need in Southern Minnesota. Through outreach, Pro Se Assistance, and community education classes SMRLS reached an additional 11,283 people.

In 2016, we helped our clients protect over \$1.8 million of their critical household income and obtain an additional \$2 million in new sources of critical income.

Our 2016 Extended Representation Case Outcomes are:

- 675 cases resulted in our clients better able to pay for daily necessities
- 397 cases resulted in our clients being less likely to be harassed by creditors
- 368 cases resulted in clients being in a better position to keep or find a job
- 1199 resulted in our clients being in a better position to keep or find housing
- 486 cases resulted in improved housing conditions
- 588 cases led to clients being physically safer
- 1160 resulted in improved quality of life

## 2016 Legal Aid Return on Investment



\*Data provided by Minnesota Legal Services Coalition's *Economic Impact Measurements of Minnesota Legal Aid* report.

# Volunteer Attorney Program

## Highlights from 2016

Last year was another successful year for Volunteer Attorney Program (VAP), which closed 630 of the firm's 9,514 cases in 2016 (a 19% increase compared to 2015). The 132 attorneys involved in VAP volunteered **4,250 hours** dedicated to serving individuals and families at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines. Many volunteers provided brief legal services at clinics focused on writing wills for seniors and single parents, pursuing eviction and criminal expungements, and completing uncontested divorces.

We were excited to receive funding from UCare to support our Wills for Seniors and Single Parents clinics. We also received increased funding from the Legal Services Advisory Committee (LSAC) to hire a new staff person to focus on these brief services clinics.

**“I am so grateful for the kind, considerate, professional help. I don't know what I would have done without you.”**

Here are a few VAP highlights from the past year:

- A family law volunteer spent **52 hours** helping a client win full legal and physical custody for her client who was a former victim of human trafficking.
- A long-time volunteer attorney spent **10.5 hours** working with a client on her unemployment insurance application. By negotiating with the employer, the client got her job back and was assigned to a different shift than one that involved a hostile supervisor.
- A VAP attorney volunteered **34 hours** for a client with a wrongful termination claim, who also was denied unemployment insurance. After two unemployment compensation hearings with the client's two former employers, the Unemployment Law Judge reversed the client's ineligibility in both cases.

## Volunteer Attorney Profile

Family law attorney Kathryn Graves, Henson and Efron, P.A., has volunteered for SMRLS since 1985. Kathryn practices family law. In addition to her affiliation with SMRLS, Kathryn serves on the

Board of Managers for the Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers and participates in the Volunteer Lawyer's Networks and Hennepin County's "Limited Scope" attorney program.



*Attorney Kathryn Graves*

Kathryn's daughter, Jennifer Pusch, a tax attorney at Fredrikson & Byron, P.A., has helped three clients since she began volunteering at SMRLS in 2016. Jenny's spouse, Michael Mather, HKM Law Group, also started volunteering at SMRLS in 2016 and has worked with 7 clients. Michael takes cases involving contracts, insurance, and landlord/tenant cases.

The Graves-Pusch-Mather family is a shining example of the impact the SMRLS volunteer attorneys make in the community. We look forward to another successful year of the Volunteer Attorney Program.

**For more information on volunteering with SMRLS, please contact SMRLS' VAP Coordinators:**

**Carol Bros**  
Metro  
(651) 222-5863  
carol.bros@smrls.org

**Kelly Kinyon**  
Outstate  
(507) 387-5588  
kelly.kinyon@smrls.org

**Mary Stoos**  
Pro Se Divorce Clinics  
(507) 454-6660  
mary.stoos@smrls.org

# In Minnesota there is

**1 Legal Aid Staff Attorney** for every 2,977 eligible clients.

In order to meet the demand for legal help, SMRLS relies on private attorneys to provide free legal services to our clients.

## SMRLS 2016 VAP Statistics

**132** **Volunteer Attorneys** representing clients.

**284** **brief service clinics**

**660** **cases closed** by Volunteer Attorneys.

**4,250**

**Hours Volunteered** in 2016 by SMRLS Volunteer Attorneys.

**115** volunteers have served SMRLS clients for over 10 years.

**25** volunteers have served SMRLS clients for over 30 years.

# 2016 Events

February 8, 2016

## Lawyers on Ice

On February 8, 2016, SMRLS hosted the 14th annual Lawyers on Ice Hockey Event at the Xcel Energy Center

More than 60 lawyers and friends participated from the organizations of **Robins Kaplan, Western National, Martin & Squires, Stinson Leonard Street, Ogletree Deakins, Meagher Geer, and Larson King, Briggs & Morgan, and James Ysebaert-Merrill Lynch.**



*Champion team Ogletree Deakins/Meagher Geer*

The team comprised by **Ogletree Deakins/Meagher Geer** won the championship game 8-7 over **Robins Kaplan/Western National.**

A big thanks to the referees Dan Kovarik, Ross Gibbs, Dan Stumpf, and announcer Steve Kirsch, who donated their time; and to Susan Hubbard, Jack Larson and Travis Larson of the Minnesota Wild; St. Paul River Centre; Xcel Energy Center for allowing us to use the Xcel Energy Center; and Marnie Girard of Levy Restaurants, who provided the great food.

## Fall Appreciation Luncheon

SMRLS celebrated another year of amazing staff, volunteers and supporters at the 26th Annual Fall Appreciation Luncheon on November 22, 2016 at the St. Paul InterContinental Hotel.

Long-time SMRLS supporter, John Degan, Campaign for Legal Aid member and Briggs and Morgan attorney, was honored with the prestigious Lifetime Leadership Award. Attorneys Ray Beckel and Julia Craig were awarded with the 25 Year Staff Award for their incredible longevity of service as SMRLS attorneys. Marina Gillard, Sheryl Riemersma, and Jeannie Williams were also honored for working 25 years at SMRLS.

September 23, 2016

## Social Justice UNCORKED!™

The 9th Annual Social Justice Uncorked event held at the Loews Hotel in Minneapolis on September 23 was a great success. Thanks to more than 250 people in attendance, our corporate and firm representatives, sponsors, and SMRLS partners raised more than \$150,000 for the Campaign for Legal Aid!

Special guests were celebrated during the second annual “Toast for Justice,” and Richard Duncan from **Faegre Baker Daniels LLP**



*Steve Weinreich, Mary Giesler, Jessie Nicholson, and Karin Nelsen*

accepted the prestigious 2016 Social Justice Award for their event support over the last 5 years.

Former SMRLS client, Gabbie, and her son, Vlad, captivated the room with their story of how SMRLS’ family law unit (and Metro Family Law Lead Attorney, Valerie Snyder), changed their lives.

Special thanks to Uncorked Honorary Co-Chairs Karin Nelsen (MN Vikings), Mary Giesler (MN Twins), Steve Weinreich (MN Wild), and the 2016 Uncorked Planning Committee for their efforts in making this event possible.

Adding to the celebration, Ramsey County Bar Foundation President, Jerry Miranowski (Faegre Baker Daniels), presented SMRLS with a donation check for \$22,520.23.

Keynote Speaker, Hilarie Bass, the law firm of Greenberg Traurig’s Co-President and President-Elect of the American Bar Association (ABA), addressed the audience on issues of access to justice by explaining the role of technology, emphasizing the importance of Pro Bono work, and discussing the groundbreaking report on the ABA’s Commission on the Future of Legal Services.

# 2017 Events

September 22, 2017

## Social Justice UNCORKED!™

Honorary Chair



*Keith Ross*  
*Chief Legal Officer of the*  
*Minnesota Super Bowl*  
*Host Committee*

*Loews Hotel*  
Minneapolis, MN  
6:30PM to 9:00PM

Fabulous wine, craft brew, and non-alcoholic beverage tastings and heavy appetizers. Featuring a SMRLS superhero selfie station and a lively auction with many exciting items.

November 21, 2017

## Fall Appreciation Luncheon

Keynote Speaker



*Hon. Mark J. Kappelhoff*  
*Fourth Judicial District*

Judge Kappelhoff will discuss social justice and his Department of Justice investigations in Ferguson, Missouri.

*InterContinental Saint Paul Riverfront*  
St. Paul, MN  
11:00AM to 1:30PM

Featuring the presentation of the **Lifetime Leadership Award** and the **Charlton H. Dietz and Bruce A. Beneke Legal Services Staff Outstanding Services Award**.

# Event Sponsors

The following firms, organizations and individuals generously provided sponsorship support to one or more of the events in 2016

3M	Greenberg Traurig	Opus
Abbot Downing	Greene Espel	Paul C. Bantle
Andersen Corporation	Hegardt Foundation	PIKA Software
Aon	Harper & Peterson	Reatha Clark King
Aztek/Bieber Family Foundation	Katherine Harris	Robins Kaplan
Alliance Bank	Kelley, Wolter & Scott	Ryan Family Foundation
Barnes & Thornburg	Larson King	Schwan's
Bassford Remele	Lindquist & Vennum	Bill Sieben
Best Buy	Lommen Abdo	Sieben Polk
Blackwell Burke	Mairs and Power	Sieben Carey
Bowman and Brooke	Malkerson, Gunn & Martin	Stinson Leonard Street
Briggs and Morgan	Martin & Squires	St. Paul Foundation Match
Chestnut Cambronne	Maslon	TCF Bank
Collins, Buckley, Sauntry & Haugh	Mayo Clinic	Thomas K. Keller
Creative, Integration and Design	Meagher Geer	Thomson Reuters
Dietz Family and Friends	Medica	Justice Esther Tomljanovich
Dorsey & Whitney	Medtronic	Travelers
Dykema Gossett	Michelle Miller	Tuft, Lach, Jerabek, O'Connell
Ecolab	MN CLE	UMN Law School
ECMC, Group	MN Lawyers Mutual	UST School of Law
Eventis Telecom	MN Public Utilities Commission	United HealthGroup
Faegre Baker Daniels	MN State Bar Association	US Bank
Felhaber Larson	Mitchell Hamline	Western National
Foley Mansfield	Morrison Sund	Whitney Foundation
Fox Rothschild	MSP Commercial	Winthrop & Weinstine
Fredrikson & Byron	Murnane Brandt	Xcel Energy
Gaskins Bennett Birrell Schupp	Nilan Johnson Law Firm	James Ysebaert-Merrill Lynch
Gene Link & Ann Marie Hirsch	Ogletree Deakins	
Great River Energy	Olander Law Group	

## The following judges / courts attended the 2016 Fall Luncheon

Chief Judge Michael J. Davis and Judge Donovan W. Frank  
Judge Steven Rau and Judge Tony Leung  
Judges of the Second Judicial District  
Minnesota Office of Administrative Hearings  
Minnesota Court of Appeals  
Minnesota Supreme Court  
United States District Court

**The need for legal services remains great.** However, by working together we can inspire real change. Each and every donation has a direct, positive impact on the lives of those we serve. To learn more about making a gift that works for you, please contact Lindsay Davis, Director of Philanthropy at 651-894-6909.

### **Direct Donation:**

Your donation – of any amount – will be counted to our Annual Campaign. Funds will be used to support direct client services, providing critical legal assistance and ensuring that justice is not based on what one can afford. Gifts can be mailed to our Administrative Office (see page 13) or made online at [smrls.org/donate](http://smrls.org/donate).

### **Volunteer:**

The need for legal help is ever great. If you are an attorney looking to make a donation of time and service, please consider SMRLS and our low-income client community. More information can be found on page 5.

### **Planned Giving:**

SMRLS has been providing equal access to justice for over 100 years. To ensure that the same service is available to coming generations, please consider making a planned gift, either as part of your estate or to commemorate a cornerstone event: a birth, a graduation, a retirement, or other joyous occasion.

# **Justice Matters®**



**THANK YOU**

# 2016 SMRLS Leadership

## Board of Directors

### President

Gail M. Olson

### 1st Vice-President

Matt L. Benda

### 2nd Vice-President

Brenda Devlin

### Treasurer

Thomas B. Hatch

### Secretary

Kari L. Valley

Ali Abdullahi

Andrew M. Baese

Kathy Bartz

Hon. Timothy Connell (Ret.)

Mark W. Delehanty

Emma Hilliard

Suyapa Miranda

Sonja Miller

Terrance C. S. Newby

Brett W. Olander

Jonathan J. Oviatt

Abdi Sabrie

Brett Stand

## Campaign for Legal Aid:

### Urban Leadership Committee

#### Chair

Steve Kirsch

Stuart Alger

Thomas A. Boardman

Thomas H. Boyd

Angela B. Brandt

Stacy A. Broman

John M. Degnan

Richard A. Duncan

Bernie M. Dusich

Kevin P. Goodno

LB Guthrie

Beverly Jones Heydinger

Timothy Hughes

Ann Huntrods

Joseph T. O'Neill

Michael D. O'Neill

Joseph H. Otterstetter

Paul D. Peterson

Katie Pfeifer

Peter A. Schmit

Daniel L. Scott

Christopher M. Scotti

Jon A. Theobald

Kyle M. Thomas

William L. Tilton

Hon. Esther Tomljanovich

Terry L. Wade (Emeritus)

## Campaign for Legal Aid:

### Southwest Campaign Committee

Jill K. Baker

William S. Partridge

Steven R. Sunde

Andrew A. Willaert

Ken White

## 1909 Legacy Society

### Chair

John M. Degnan

Bruce A. Beneke

Thomas A. Boardman

Darlene M. Cobian

Kevin W. DeVore

Charlton H. Dietz

Michael J. Galvin, Jr.

Kent A. Gernander

Susan M. Holden

Hon. A. M. (Sandy) Keith (Ret.)

Joseph T. O'Neill

Jonathan J. Oviatt

William S. Partridge

Jon A. Theobald

Terry L. Wade

Perry M. Wilson, III

## **Office Locations**

### **Administrative Office**

1000 Alliance Bank Center  
55 East 5th Street  
St. Paul, MN 55101

### **Albert Lea Office**

132 North Broadway  
Albert Lea, MN 56007

### **Eastside and American Indian Office**

579 Wells Street, #100  
St. Paul, MN 55130

### **Education Law Project**

450 North Syndicate Street, Suite 285  
St. Paul, MN 55104

### **Minnesota Family Farm Law Project**

12 Civic Center Plaza, Suite 3000  
Mankato, MN 56001

### **Mankato Office**

12 Civic Center Plaza, Suite 3000  
Mankato, MN 56001

### **Refugee, Immigrant, and Migrant Services – St. Paul**

450 North Syndicate Street, Suite 285  
St. Paul, MN 55104

### **Refugee, Immigrant, and Migrant Services – Rochester**

2500 Valleyhigh Drive Northwest  
Rochester, MN 55901

### **Refugee, Immigrant, and Migrant Services - Moorhead**

1015 7th Avenue North  
Moorhead, MN 56560

### **Rochester Office**

903 West Center Street, Suite 130  
Rochester, MN 55902

### **St. Paul Central Office**

400 Alliance Bank Center  
55 East 5th Street  
St. Paul, MN 55101

### **Shakopee Office**

712 Canterbury Road South  
Shakopee, MN 55379

### **Winona Office**

66 East 3rd Street, Suite 204  
Winona, MN 55987

### **Worthington Office**

1567 North McMillan Street, Suite 6  
Worthington, MN 56187

### **Visit Us Online**

[www.smrls.org](http://www.smrls.org)  
Facebook @smrlsmn  
Twitter @smrlsmn



# 2016 Financials

SOUTHERN MINNESOTA REGIONAL LEGAL SERVICES, INC.  
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION  
December 31, 2016  
(With Comparative Totals for 2015)

	2016	2015
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,662,324	\$ 2,396,498
Certificates of deposit	2,100,000	2,100,000
Client escrow funds	1,167	1,167
Grants and contracts receivable	1,169,261	964,074
Pledges receivable	1,921,208	2,003,085
Prepaid expenses	100,307	155,497
Investments	10,248	8,661
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>6,964,515</b>	<b>7,628,982</b>
<b>PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT, at cost</b>		
Furniture, fixtures and equipment	365,371	365,371
Leasehold improvements	223,695	223,695
Law library	382,385	382,385
	971,451	971,451
Less: accumulated depreciation	(885,851)	(848,138)
<b>TOTAL PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT, net</b>	<b>85,600</b>	<b>123,313</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 7,050,115</b>	<b>\$ 7,752,295</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Accounts payable	\$ 240,513	\$ 226,784
Client trust deposits	1,157	1,167
Accrued expenses	617,378	665,163
Deferred revenue	68,615	854,162
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>927,703</b>	<b>1,747,276</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
<b>Unrestricted</b>		
Undesignated	433,880	307,261
Board designated	3,483,857	3,467,734
Temporarily restricted	2,204,655	2,230,024
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>6,122,412</b>	<b>6,005,019</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 7,050,115</b>	<b>\$ 7,752,295</b>

# 2016 Financials

**SOUTHERN MINNESOTA REGIONAL LEGAL SERVICES, INC.**  
**STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES**  
For the Year Ended December 31, 2016  
(With Comparative Totals for 2015)

	<u>Unrestricted</u>	<u>Temporarily Restricted</u>	<u>Total 2016</u>	<u>Total 2015</u>
<b>SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>				
Grants and contracts	\$ 6,038,108	\$ 2,093,831	\$ 8,131,939	\$ 8,086,566
Other support	1,124,147	-	1,124,147	1,272,656
In kind contributions	753,222	-	753,222	772,801
Program fees	30,250	-	30,250	79,000
Miscellaneous	7,155	-	7,155	7,660
Investment income	17,544	-	17,544	14,958
Net assets released from restrictions	2,119,190	(2,119,190)	-	-
<b>TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>	<u>10,089,616</u>	<u>(25,359)</u>	<u>10,064,257</u>	<u>10,233,641</u>
<b>EXPENSES</b>				
Program services	8,530,554		8,530,554	8,501,919
Supporting services				
Management and general	1,045,647	-	1,045,647	1,068,860
Fundraising	370,663	-	370,663	340,289
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<u>9,946,864</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>9,946,864</u>	<u>9,914,068</u>
<b>CHANGE IN NET ASSETS</b>	142,752	(25,359)	117,393	319,573
<b>NET ASSETS, BEGINNING</b>	<u>3,774,995</u>	<u>2,230,024</u>	<u>6,005,019</u>	<u>5,685,446</u>
<b>NET ASSETS, ENDING</b>	<u>\$ 3,917,747</u>	<u>\$ 2,204,665</u>	<u>\$ 6,122,412</u>	<u>\$ 6,005,019</u>