

# MJF ANNUAL REPORT 2015



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# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



To all MJF's friends,

Thank you for your support of MJF's mission to increase access to justice by providing law students with public interest and pro bono opportunities. Since the market crash of 2008, the world of legal practice and legal education has been undergoing dramatic changes—the impacts of which are being felt in our local legal community. As lucrative careers in the law became less certain, applications to law schools dropped dramatically. From its high point of almost 3,000 students in the 2011-2012 school year, overall law school enrollment in Minnesota had dropped 22 percent for the 2014-2015 school year. More significantly, 2015 1L enrollment dropped 35 percent from 2011, portending even smaller student bodies in years to come. The declining enrollment has been accompanied by a change in law students' preferences for volunteering, including shorter hours and more flexible placements.

In the 2014-15 school year, law students filled 1,350 volunteer placements, providing nearly 40,000 hours of volunteer service to over 14,000 clients. Students volunteered at legal aid

and public defender offices, and at a multitude of other nonprofit organizations working on behalf of youth, seniors, the disabled, the homeless, veterans, new Americans, Native Americans, and others who are underrepresented in the justice system. Our 18 summer clerks provided 10 weeks of full-time assistance at legal aid programs across the state from Duluth to Alexandria to Mankato and the Twin Cities. These agencies were able to significantly increase their client services in the summer of 2015 thanks to the efforts of our summer clerks. Last fall we learned through a survey of North Star Lawyers—each of whom provided at least 50 hours of pro bono legal services—that 75% of them provided volunteer legal services while they were still in law school. This affirms the ongoing importance of MJF's Law School Public Service Program. We are proud of our accomplishments and thankful for your ongoing support.

As the world of legal education continues to evolve we will work closely with our stakeholders and supporters to continue to find ways to increase access to justice. We look forward to a bright future of service to the community.

Sincerely,

Janine Laird  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Justice Foundation





### 2015 PILF Recipients

- Amanda Brodhag, *Monterey County PD*
- Ngawang Dolker, *MMLA Immigration Project*
- Katherine Grohs, *Fraser*
- Teri Guhl, *International Justice Mission in Uganda*
- Alicia Norby, *Minnesota Adult and Teen Challenge*
- Eric Penniston, *Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women*
- Ashley Steinberg, *SMRLS Mankato*
- Shantel Thompson, *ACLU of Nebraska*
- Mark Zimmerman, *Advocates for Human Rights*

## PUBLIC INTEREST LAW FELLOWSHIPS

Each year, MJF Student Chapters at each of the Minnesota law schools raise funds for student fellowships. These grants are intended to allow students to fund their summer of work at public interest organizations that could not otherwise afford to hire them. The student chapters do this by putting on a variety of fundraising events, such as silent auctions, talent shows, tournaments and chili cook-offs. In 2015, our student chapters raised enough money to fund eight full-time summer clerkships and one part-time clerkship, and supported the work of organizations such as Advocates for Human Rights and Minnesota Adult and Teen Challenge. These experiences give students the opportunity and the knowledge to consider public interest law as a career, or to commit to pro bono advocacy as a private attorney. In return they provide the organizations intensive help with casework, research and legal writing.





# PRE-ORIENTATION SERVICES PROJECTS

For incoming first-year law students, MJF offers the opportunity to participate in law-related public service projects prior to the start of school through our Pre-Orientation Service Projects (POSP). Participants are assigned to volunteer at various sites in the metro area and in Greater Minnesota, allowing them to contribute to the community while gaining exposure to some of the practical aspects of legal work. It is also a fun way to get to know classmates before law school begins. Projects range from one day to four days, depending on the needs of the agency.

MJF also hosts several sessions of Navigating Public Interest (NPI), one to kick off each week of POSP. NPI is a half-day orientation that covers information related to the public interest law community in Minnesota, tips for volunteering, and ways to get involved with MJF.

In Summer 2015, students volunteered with the following POSP projects:

- Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services (SMRLS)
- Pro Se Dissolution Clinic in St. Paul
- Pro Se Dissolution Clinic in Winona
- Pro Se Dissolution Clinic in Owatonna
- Pro Se Dissolution Clinic in Hutchinson
- Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV)
- StandDown events in International Falls and Duluth
- Legal Clinic in Anoka
- Battered Women's Legal Advocacy Project (BWLAP)
- Legal Services State Support
- Tabling at the Minnesota State Fair with the Minnesota Secretary of State's Council
- Children's Law Center of Minnesota
- LegalCORPS
- William Mitchell Self Help Clinic





# ATTRACTIVE NUISANCE TOUR

## Attractive Nuisance:

[A] person who has an instrumentality, agency, or condition upon his own premises, or who creates such a condition on the premises of another, or in a public place, which may reasonably be apprehended to be a source of danger to children, is under a duty to take such precautions as a reasonably prudent man would take to prevent injury to children of tender years whom he knows to be accustomed to resort there, or who may, by reason of something there which may be expected to attract them, come there to play. (Black's Law Dictionary, 3d ed.)

On Friday, May 15, 2015, in partnership with the Minnesota Music Coalition, MJF hosted our annual Attractive Nuisance Tour concert at the Crooked Pint in Minneapolis. Minneapolis mayor Betsy Hodges, former MJF Development Director, was the emcee for the evening.

Each of the four bands who performed featured members of the Minnesota legal community: the Original Abdomen and the Perpetuities (from Lommen Abdo), Noisy Withdrawal (from Fredrikson and Byron), the Mediocritones (from Stinson Leonard Street), and D.C. Higgs & Blue Volcano, a blues band featuring David Higgs. MJF-themed cocktails were served, and Lommen Abdo sponsored glasses of Nordic Blonde Bent Brewstillery craft beer.

Please join us at the Crooked Pint again this year! **The 2016 Attractive Nuisance Tour** will be held on **Friday, May 13**. For more information, please visit [attractivenuisancetour.com](http://attractivenuisancetour.com).



# ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONY

On Wednesday, November 11, 2015, the Minnesota Justice Foundation hosted its Annual Awards Celebration at International Market Square in Minneapolis. The event was co-hosted by the Minnesota Hispanic Bar Association and the Minnesota Asian Pacific American Bar Association.

Our keynote speaker was the Honorable Jimmie V. Reyna, a Circuit Judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit. Judge Reyna spoke on the subject of “Justice as a Constant Companion.”

The event was held also to honor Minnesota legal professionals for their exemplary service to low-income clients. MJF presented the following awards:



*Judge Reyna holding his birthday treat during his speech at the Awards Celebration. Photos by George Byron Griffiths*



DISTINGUISHED SERVICE: Mark Privratsky (Lindquist & Vennum, LLP)

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PRIVATE PRACTICE: Ivan Fong (3M Company)

Four law students, one from each Minnesota law school, also received awards: David Nelson (Hamline University School of Law), James Robbins (University of St. Thomas School of Law), Rosie Derrett (University of Minnesota Law School) and Jennifer Thompson (William Mitchell College of Law).

The Annual Awards Celebration was attended by over 250 people, representing over twenty Minnesota law firms, and raised over \$65,000 for MJF's work serving low-income populations.



# MJF AT MITCHELL HAMLINE SCHOOL OF LAW

The combination of William Mitchell College of Law and Hamline University School of Law was finalized on December 9, 2015. Governor Dayton proclaimed January 20, 2016 Mitchell Hamline School of Law Day. Leading Mitchell Hamline School of Law is President and Dean Mark Gordon. Dean Gordon had been President of Defiance College, a private Ohio liberal-arts college for the past six years. For seven years prior to that he had been Dean of the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law. At both Defiance and Detroit Mercy he expanded students' opportunities for public service and experiential learning. MJF is excited to partner with Dean Gordon and the Mitchell Hamline students to create a culture of public service within the law school and throughout the state.

Mitchell Hamline now offers four courses of study: full-time, part-time evening, part-time weekend, and the hybrid program of both online and classroom learning. MJF staff attorneys are working to ensure that students in all these programs have access to volunteer opportunities.

The Hamline and Mitchell MJF student chapters began working together during fall semester, and are now moving forward as the Mitchell Hamline MJF student chapter on their fundraising efforts for the Public Interest Law Fellowship (PILF) program, through which they hope to fund fellowships for at least two students to work at public interest law offices in Summer 2016. MJF is proud to continue our relationship with Mitchell Hamline School of Law.



"I think especially with the combination we are going to create the 21st century model of legal education and we're going to play on a national level in a way that neither one of the institutions could have done separately."

*Mark Gordon, President and Dean of Mitchell Hamline School of Law*

<http://minnlawyer.com/2015/07/30/we-are-going-to-create-the-21st-century-model-of-legal-education/>



# MJF GOING FORWARD

MJF is honored to continue our partnership with the Minnesota law schools and legal service providers during this time of change. Looking ahead to 2016, we welcome the opportunity to find new ways to engage law students in the public interest community and to create flexible volunteer opportunities that fit well within their shifting and rigorous schedules.

Already we have been able to find quality placements for Mitchell Hamline's new hybrid students, who live throughout the United States and spend a significant amount of their time in law school working remotely. The traditional JD students have responded well to short-term opportunities, which allow them to balance volunteering with their academic responsibilities. Meanwhile, MJF's established programming continues to prove popular with volunteers—such as Street Law, in which law students teach legal rights and responsibilities to middle school and high school students.

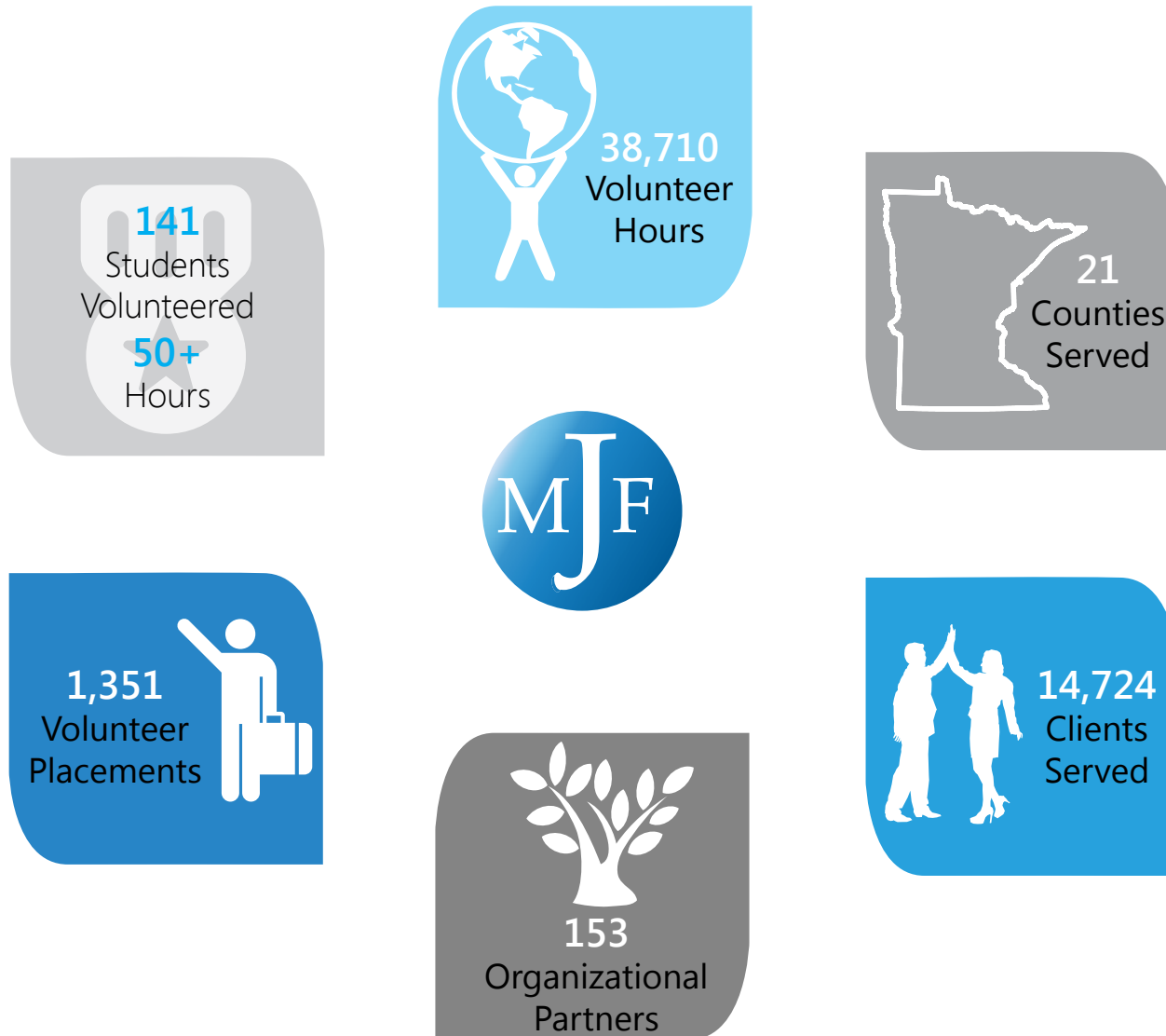
Going forward, 2016 offers exciting prospects as we pilot and expand our programming: placing undergraduate students at legal service agencies; building a robust alumni network that connects past summer clerks and volunteers to the greater public interest community through networking, mentoring and educational opportunities; and deepening our connections with greater Minnesota agencies who are striving to shrink the gap between the need for affordable legal services and the number of attorneys available to help.

We are excited to see what the future holds for legal education in Minnesota, and we look forward to partnering with law schools and legal services providers to meet the challenges ahead.



# VOLUNTEER STATISTICS

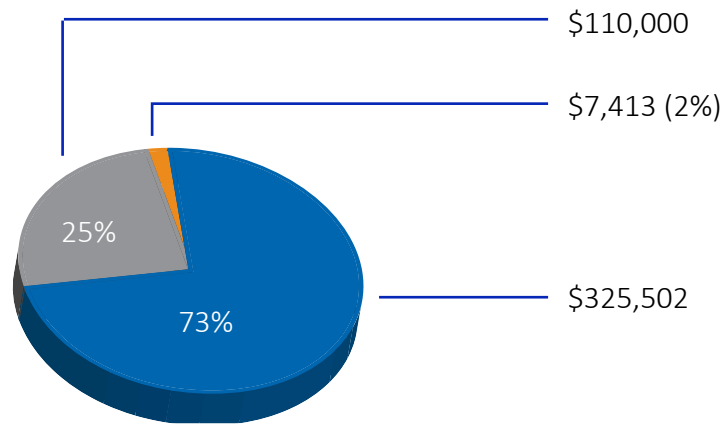
\*Updated 03/15/2016





# OPERATING RATIOS

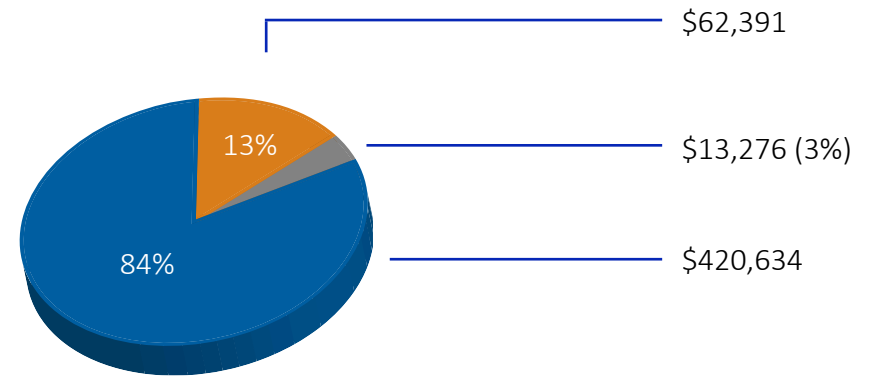
FY 2015 OPERATING INCOME



**Total = \$442,915**

- Contributions from the Public
- Government Grants
- Other Income

FY 2015 OPERATING EXPENSES



**Total = \$496,301**

- Program Expenses
- Fundraising Expenses
- Mgmt. & General Expenses



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Photos by George Byron Griffiths



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