

The Commons

Law Center

2018

ANNUAL REPORT



810 NW Marshall St. #300, Portland, Oregon 97209

www.TheCommonsLawCenter.org



Amanda Caffall,
Executive Director

What a tremendous two years it has been. Thank you for your interest in our work. We hope to earn and keep your support by delivering impactful programs and experimenting with transformative ideas. We're glad you're along for the ride.

Our Mission is to revolutionize access to and delivery of basic legal services, information, and support for underserved people, businesses, and nonprofits. We provide sliding-scale legal services to income-qualified clients and free community education. The service model leverages commitments from new lawyers in need of practical training, volunteer lawyer-supervisors, and technology to serve low- and modest-income Oregonians.

Our second full year of operations was busy. In 2018 we:

- Served **67** modest means Oregonians with legal problems and delivered over **2500** hours of reduced-rate legal services.
- Reached **650+** people across our programs. That's more than double the 298 we served in 2017. In 2019, our goal is to reach **1200**.
- Invested **50+** hours of work with the Multnomah Law Library to launch a pilot Lawyer in the Library Clinic, focused on housing and family law.
- Made great strides in our new lawyer education program by hiring our **1st** new lawyer fellow, Michaela Gore. She will train with us for three years, learn our model for legal service delivery, and help expand access to justice in Oregon.
- Welcomed **6** law student clerks, **4** new lawyer volunteers, and **20** pro bono partners to the team.
- Brought on Michael Levelle, an attorney with over **25** years of legal experience, onto the team. Michael is growing our outreach efforts within the legal and business communities and our community education programs and community partnerships.
- Thanked local nonprofit Visible Resistance again and again for the pro bono branding services.
- Congratulated our executive director on winning the Oregon New Lawyer Division's **Public Service Award** for her work with The Commons.

Our programs are reaching the people who need them most. Our **39** family law clients are made up of **26** women, **10** people of color, **14** survivors of domestic violence, and **9** for whom English is a second language.

Financials are healthy. We saw earned revenue of more than **\$140,000**, up **82%** from 2017 numbers. Our rapidly growing legal service program did not leave much time for fundraising and, while we are extremely grateful to our donors, we saw just \$15,000 in philanthropic revenue for the year. **Raising philanthropic support is a big goal for 2019.**

Within a year of its launch, our family law program became **financially self-sufficient**. Its growth allowed us to hire our first new-lawyer fellow and will help us expand our fundraising and community connections.

THE COMMONS' 2019 GOALS ARE JUST AS AMBITIOUS.

- For our legal programs, we intend to develop an unbundled, or “limited-scope,” family law service program. Limited scope legal services were endorsed by the Oregon State Bar in just the last decade, making it a recent development in law practice. This project would create discreet, fixed-fee packages of defined family law services as a step between full legal representation and no legal representation.
- There is a large, unmet need for tenant-side housing law in the Portland Metropolitan area, as well as Spanish-speaking family law services. We are keen to pitch in and respond to those needs and will launch responsive new programs as funding allows.
- For our organization, we are adding staff capacity to help spread awareness of our work, build community relationships, secure philanthropic investment to build financially self-sufficient legal service programs, and expand our education and outreach programs.
- By 2020, we hope our team includes an executive director/staff attorney, general counsel, 2-4 new lawyer fellows, 3 law clerks each semester, three-dozen pro bono partners, and an expanded board of directors and advisory board.

“Amanda & The Commons Law Center helped us immeasurably. Through the CLC, we solved our legal issue, connected to another lawyer, helped us with the paperwork, and answered all of our questions. Plus, they worked with us to find a payment level and structure that we could afford. Professional, friendly, and affordable legal help from local people who care.”

CLIENT REVIEWS

“Fantastic working with Amanda and her team at The Commons Law Center. They helped the organization that I've been serving to prepare and file important transition paperwork from a 501c6 to a 501c3. We are a very small organization and could not have completed, much less afforded, this important step without Amanda and the pro-bono attorneys available to her at The Commons. Would definitely recommend them to others with limited financial means.”

With Gratitude!

Three cheers for the individuals, businesses, and volunteers, without whose support this work would be impossible.

MAJOR FINANCIAL DONORS

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- **Frank Dane**, B2B CFO volunteers as Finance Chair for the Board of Directors (non-voting)

2018 Law Clerks

- **Andrew Linden**, Lewis & Clark Law, 2019
- **Zach Santos**, Lewis & Clark Law, 2018
- **Natasha Collins**, Lewis & Clark Law, 2019
- **Scarlet Scanlan**, Lewis & Clark Law, 2020
- **Cyd Maurer**, Lewis & Clark Law, 2020

2018 New-Lawyer Volunteers

- **Liz Hohn**, JD 2017
- **Jessie Brockway**, JD 2017

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The Commons Law Center Team

- **Amanda Caffall, JD**, Executive Director
- **Michael Levelle, JD**, General Counsel
- **Michaela Gore, JD**, New-Lawyer Fellow

Thank you to the entire team at
Catalyst Law

With Gratitude!

Pro Bono Partners

- **Barbara Aaby**, Aaby Family Law
- **Elaine Albrich**, Davis Wright Tremaine
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- **Will Jones**, Landerholm Law LLC
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- **Kate Kilberg**, Catalyst Law
- **Lewis Landerholm**, Landerholm Law LLC
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- **Julie Nimnicht**, Law Offices of Geoff Bernhardt
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- **Randall Poff**, Mediator & Collaborative Attorney
- **Kimberly Pray**, Catalyst Law
- **Richard B. Schneider**, Schneider Rasche LLC
- **Sharon Lee Schwartz**, Attorney & Mediator
- **Caitlin Upshaw**, Portland Center Stage
- **Vanessa Usui**, Duffy Kekel LLP
- **Zachary Walters**, Kell Alterman Runstein LLP
- **Joshua Williams**, Law Office of Joshua Williams
- **Terry Wright**, Willamette University College of Law

Technology & Business Partners

- **Free Geek**
- **Harvest**
- **Kanbanize**
- **Google for Nonprofits**
- **Beneficial State Bank**
- **The Oregon State Bar**
- **LawPay**
- **The Label Collective**

“ I highly recommend any law student apply to work here as an extern. It is a fast-paced environment, with ample opportunity to learn about a variety of practice areas. I am truly grateful for the experience.”

—Scarlett Scanlan

We Need Your Help!

Although we've come a long way in just two years, we're only just getting started. The legal needs of modest means Oregonians are vast, but we are proving that we can help close the access to justice gap through our unique combination of:

- Reduced fee, sliding scale legal services for Oregonians who earn too much to qualify for legal aid but not enough to afford full-fee representation.
- Innovative, technology-driven business practices that allow us to deliver high-quality work while maintaining lean operations.
- New lawyer fellows, recent law school graduate volunteers, and student law clerks who gain important experience while serving their community.
- Pro-bono partners who scale their expertise by providing case assessment and quality control across a variety of matters while leaving the heavy-lifting to our new-lawyer team.
- Business and technology partners who provide important tools and services for free or at reduced rates.
- Community and outreach partners who amplify our message and help us connect with Oregonians in need of legal help.

You Support Our Work When You:

- **Make a financial donation.** Your gifts help us stand-up new service offerings and expand our community and educational outreach.
- **Volunteer as a Pro Bono Partner** if you are an experienced attorney, or as a **Law Clerk** or **Lawyer Volunteer** to gain valuable insight.
- **Refer clients to us.** Inform your intake team that we are ready and willing to help potential clients who may not be able to afford your fees.

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