

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

YOUR 2022 MJC TEAM



Mary Ferwerda Executive Director



Kyla Motz Legal Director



Natalie Lewandowski Senior Clinic Supervisor



Marisa Zane Clinic Supervisor-Mobile Legal Clinic



Meagan Winn Eviction Diversion Court Coordinator



Joshua Butz Legal Assistant



Sherry Jackson Paralegal



DMariGiszel Belmontes Clerical Specialist



Marycruz Sanchez AmeriCorps Public Ally (Jan-July)



Dakota Loos-Wallace AmeriCorps Public Ally (Sept-Dec)

DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

Hello, Friends of the MJC,

2022 was a year of change and growth for the MJC. We welcomed several new staff members, "re-started" some clinic services, adjusted current services as changes happened throughout the Courthouse, and finally welcomed you all back for the 11th Annual Run for Justice.

In the following pages, you will meet the new staff including the new clinic supervisors for the Mobile Legal Clinic and Expungement/ Pardon clinic, the new AmeriCorps Public Ally, and staff in two new positions for the MJC: Eviction Diversion Court Coordinator and Family Law Paralegal.

You will learn about the 2022 Jon Allen Pace Setter Volunteers of the Year, who received their awards at the Run for Justice. You will read about the return of the in-community Mobile Legal Clinic and see the new vehicle. And, you will get an update on how current services adjusted to client needs and volunteer demand.



The MJC continues to thrive because of those who gave their time and their resources to support our work. We depend upon the generosity of the hundreds of volunteers and donors named toward the end of this report. We are humbled to be recipients of your generous gifts.

To each of you—donor, volunteer, MJC Partner, and MJC staff—I thank you for your contributions toward increasing access to justice for our Milwaukee neighbors and your support throughout the last several years of incredible change. We cannot do what we do without each one of you!

Mary L. Ferwerda, M.S., J.D. Executive Director

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BY THE NUMBERS

358 Volunteers shared over **9000 hours** of pro bono service for a total of **\$1.35 million** in **free legal services** provided to our community.

PEOPLE WE SERVE

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Gender

Male	37%
Female	50 %
Did not reply	12%
Prefer not to answer	1%

Race

Am.Indian/Alaska Native0.5%
Asian1.5%
Black or African American54%
Latino/a14%
Middle Eastern/N.African0.5%
Mixed2%
Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific
Islander>0.1%
White or Caucasian7%
Did not reply20%
Prefer not to answer1.5%

Veteran	
Yes	2%
No	98%
A	
Age	
20-29	12%
30-39	44%
40-49	22%
50-59	7%
60-69	5%
70+	2%
Did not reply	8%

Monthly Household Income

\$0	.6%
\$1 - \$500	3%
\$501 - \$1000	9%
\$1001 - \$1500	9%
\$1501 - \$2000	9%
\$2001 - \$2500	8%

\$2501 - \$3000	.5%
\$3001 - \$3500	.6%
\$3501 - \$4000	.6%
\$4000+	.9%
Did not reply	30 %

Number of Minors in

Household

0	45%
1	17%
2	
3	9%
4	5%
5+	3%
Did not reply	4%

Currently Employed

Yes	
No	24%
Did not reply	27%

SERVICES WE PROVIDED

Total Services

Family Forms	3460
Adult Guardianship Forms	99
MVLC at MJC	1460
Expungement / Pardon	164
Mobile Legal Clinic	60
Parenting Conferences	19

Helpline

Requests	12322
Live Calls Answered	1495
Appointments Scheduled	895

Legal Issues

Family	
Small Claims	
Landlord / Tenant	3%
Eviction	7%
Debt / Bankruptcy	
Real Estate & Deeds	2%
Probate	4%
Wills / POA	2%
Expungement / Pardo	n19%
Adult Guardianship	7%
Other Issues	8%



WELCOME NEW EMPLOYEES

Marisa Zane, Mobile Legal Clinic

Marisa Zane started in her role as the Mobile Legal Clinic director in April 2022. She is a compassionate attorney dedicated to public interest legal service, most recently serving as director of the Marquette Volunteer Legal Clinics Estate Planning Clinic as a member of the Marquette Law School Office of Public Service from 2018 to 2022. The Estate Planning Clinic prepared basic wills, powers of attorney, and health care directives for hundreds of low- to moderate-income clients with the help of volunteer lawyers and law students. Marisa expanded the program to provide services in Spanish and to serve clients at new in-person sites and remotely.



While with Marquette, Marisa developed the Adult Guardianship Forms Clinic, first remotely, then in-person at the Milwaukee Justice Center, to assist families with the forms needed to become the guardian for an adult who needs a court-appointed decision maker. This service continues at the Milwaukee Justice Center under Marisa's leadership.

She graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh with a bachelor's degree in Journalism. She is a 2011 graduate of Marquette University Law School, where she earned a pro bono service honor cord. Marisa is excited to work with other team members to reimagine and fine-tune the Mobile Legal Clinic service model.

In her free time, Marisa enjoys reading, home improvement projects, and exploring with her preschooler.

Josh Butz, Front Desk Coordinator/Legal Assistant

Joshua (Josh) Butz joined the Milwaukee Justice Center in April 2022. Josh is actually returning to the MJC as he was a forms intern in 2017 and is very happy to be back! Prior to his current role with the MJC, Josh worked with the Milwaukee County Clerk of Courts office for 4 years, in the Family Court Commissioners office and as a Deputy Court Clerk of the Civil Division where he gained valuable experience working in family, large claims, small claims, probate, and injunction court. During the entirety of the pandemic Josh worked in small claims court, which has been referred to as the busiest courtroom in the state of Wisconsin. Through this experience, Josh was able



to gain insight to the extremely high volume of cases that come through Milwaukee County and was able to identify the need for assistance that exists with pro se litigants. This experience inspired him to join the MJC team where he could put his skills to use helping increase access to justice within the Milwaukee community.

WELCOME NEW EMPLOYEES

Josh graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee with a bachelor's degree in Political Science and a minor in Economics. He is currently back in school at UWM finishing his Master's degree in Public Administration with an expected graduation date of spring 2023. He is excited to use the learned skills from his Master's degree to continue working as a public servant and help promote the mission of the MJC.

In his free time, Josh enjoys being in the outdoors. He is an avid camper, hiker, and backpacker. He can also be found kayaking, jeeping, cycling or walking with his Siberian husky, Balto.

Sherry Jackson, Paralegal

Sherry completed her associates degree at Stratton College in Fashion Merchandising and Marketing and gave birth to her son–who changed her world for the better–ten days after graduation. She worked in retail management for four years and, seeking better work/family balance, enrolled in the paralegal studies program at Alverno College after a conversation with a friend who was following a similar educational path. During her program, Sherry completed an internship with The Family Law Center and she joined that firm full-time upon graduation.



In 1997, after 7 years at the firm, Sherry was hired for a new courts position

as a Paralegal to the Family Court Commissioner, a role she excelled in for 26 years. This fall, the position was transferred to the Milwaukee Justice Center so that the paralegal could better serve self-represented people and support the MJC clinics by being located inside the MJC space. The transition has been smooth with some duties remaining the same, while some have become more specialized in helping self represented litigants with family law matters.

Outside of the Courthouse, Sherry enjoys her special "side gigs" of bartending at The Rave, Summerfest, or Bastille Days, even recruiting other co-workers to join her. In her spare time, she enjoys making jewelry, watching Reality TV, and making craft cocktails.

Sherry and her husband, Jim, enjoy traveling, checking out what is going on in MKE, and getting together with family and friends. They are the happy grandparents of four who keep them busy with many activities!

WELCOME NEW EMPLOYEES

Dakota Loos-Wallace, AmeriCorps Public Ally

Dakota Loos-Wallace, whose pronouns are He/Him/His, currently serves as the AmeriCorps Public Allies member at the Milwaukee Justice Center. His role is to help capacity building for the Mobile Legal Clinic so more members of the community can regain an access to justice.

Dakota's goal in life is to improve the working and living conditions of those around him no matter the job, hobby, or passion project he is involved with. Dakota spent the last decade- plus on management teams within the food service and theater industries, including at a Milwaukee favorite– Beans and Barley. He is looking to improve network and hiring connections, empha-

sizing employee rights and enjoyment in an industry that rarely cares for either, and creating cheap and local meals for those in the community.

Dakota has also worked on the Board of Directors for his hometown theater group in this time, working to establish a program for middle and high school students to learn more about acting and the arts in general in an after-school setting. Dakota also attended the Second City Conservatory in Chicago for a brief time after graduating high school while also doing work with Second City's Main Stage and Etc. crews.

Meagan Winn, Eviction Diversion Court Coordinator

Meagan Winn started her role as the Eviction Diversion Court Coordinator for Milwaukee County in October 2022. She is working to implement a problem-solving approach to eviction cases by connecting people to resources to navigate the court process and promote housing stability. Meagan understands that stable housing is essential to community health and she believes all individuals should have equal access to justice through the courts.

Before starting this position, Meagan worked as a policy specialist providing training and technical assistance to jurisdictions implementing data-driven criminal justice reform policies. She has previously worked in shelters for

single women and families, and has over 15 years of experience working with individuals involved in the court system in pretrial diversion programs, adult drug treatment court, alternative to incarceration programs. Meagan holds a Master of Arts in Public Service from Marquette University.

Meagan enjoys hiking, reading, playing games with her children, and walking her rambunctious Labrador retriever.





2022 SUMMER FELLOWS

The MJC welcomed three summer fellows from Marquette University Law School in 2022.

Morgan Kaplan (MULS)

Morgan is a 2L with an interest in public interest law. She is co-president of the Public Interest Law Society and a member of the Social Benefits and Welfare Law Review. In her fellowship, she worked primarily with the Mobile Legal Clinic and also served as a clinic host in remote clinics. She was grateful to help support unrepresented litigants and to learn more about how the Milwaukee County Court system.





Candice Sobczak (MULS)

Candice is currently a second-year law student at Marquette University Law School. She is interested in pursuing a career in Public Interest Law, specifically in criminal defense or family law. In her fellowship she worked with the Family Forms Legal Clinic as well as reintroducing the Parenting Conferences program, which had been on hiatus since March 2020. She is thankful she was able to help clients with their various needs in the Family Forms clinic. Candice continues to help run the Parenting Conferences Clinic at the MJC.

Zach Semancik

Zach is a 2L and has an interest in criminal law and public interest law as a whole. In his fellowship, he worked primarily with the expungement and pardon clinic, helping those who were eligible for pardons and expungements fill out their applications. His favorite things about working with the clinic were seeing people's faces light up as they went through the applications, and seeing how grateful and happy people were as we helped them in the clinic.

FAMILY FORMS CLINIC

Kyla Motz, Legal Director

The Family Forms Clinic, 2022 has been notable for its lack of news – which is a good thing! As one of the MJC's flagship programs, the Forms Clinic is at its best when it provides a stable and consistent core around which the other projects can build and bloom.

After two years of remote and hybrid services, this year the *Forms Clinic returned to its pre-pandemic service model*, prioritizing holding as many in-person, walk-in clinics as possible and providing ample "Part 2" divorce appointments. As a result, the remote clinics gradually tapered from seven clinics per week down to one clinic per week. These changes were fueled, primarily, by the clients' needs. As pandemic restrictions have decreased, the *demand for in-person services has skyrocketed* while the demand for remote services has dropped significantly. This imbalance made it difficult to justify having so many of the less efficient and more labor intensive remote clinics at the expense of the in-person sessions.

The return of the traditional model has paid dividends so far. *This year the forms clinic helped just under 3500 people – a 48% increase over 2021!* Looking toward 2023, the forms clinic will continue to adjust services to meet the needs of clients, but believe its current schedule of services will be the new post-pandemic normal.

CIVIL LEGAL HELPLINE

Joshua Butz, Front Desk Coordinator & DMariGizsel Belmontes, Information Desk Staff

The Civil Legal Helpline started in 2020 as a response to the pandemic to help people connect with MJC services and other referrals. The helpline continued to be a popular service in 2022 and, in May, the MJC restructured its format to support increased caller demand. Now, during specified hours, the helpline is operational 5 days a week with a live answer format. Since this transition, *the helpline has responded to almost 1,500 live calls for an average of 188 calls per month*. Of these calls, more than 60% of callers are connected to services provided by the MJC or MVLC. The remaining 40% of callers are either provided with simple answers to their questions or referred to another community resource.

Because the request for assistance continues to be very high (over 12,000 contacts via phone or email on an annual basis), *the helpline now utilizes more volunteers offering valuable experience for students*. Through the nature of inquiries and the structure of the training, students are able to develop an understanding of local government and the court process. Furthermore, the helpline has helped reduce traffic at the MJC front desk, allowing staff to better focus on in-person services and clients. Importantly, the helpline also saves people from making a trip to the busy courthouse and alleviates transportation costs, finding childcare, or taking time off work. *Although the helpline was a response to the pandemic, it is important for this program to continue offering options for people to connect with the MJC*.

MOBILE LEGAL CLINIC

Marisa Zane, Clinic Supervisor--Mobile Legal Clinic



The Mobile Legal Clinic "rolled" along through summer 2022 providing remote services and slowly returning to in-person services with legal clinics at Mitchell Street Library and the Benedict Center.

A new vehicle was purchased in August 2022, with the help of generous founding supporters Frank Daily

and Julie Ebert, to fulfill the desire to be back on the road and in the community. The new Mobile Legal Clinic is a Ford Transit Van with room for 11 passengers and cargo space to transport laptops, printers and other supplies to host sites as part of our new service model. The previous vehicle served the community well for 9 years, but with so many people in need of access to legal services



and the importance of social distancing even now, a new service model was needed. Now, *clinics are held year-round* at host site indoor spaces where the program can serve more clients in a shorter period of time. In fall 2022, monthly legal clinics were offered at the Benedict Center, Mitchell Street Library, and the Next Door foundation, with additional estate planning clinics developed in partnership with Southeastern Oneida Tribal Services and the Milwaukee County Veterans' Service Office.

The Mobile Legal Clinic has continued its long-time relationship with the Wisconsin Public Allies program and *welcomed Dakota Loos-Wallace to the team as the 2022-23 AmeriCorps Public Ally*. Dakota is working with existing Mobile Legal Clinic partners and potential new host sites to develop relationships and a more robust legal clinic schedule for 2023.

The Mobile Legal Clinic team is thrilled to return to trusted community spaces bringing legal help to those in need of access to justice.

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EXPUNGEMENT/ PARDON

Natalie Lewandowski, Sr. Clinic Supervisor

In 2022, the Expungement and Pardon Clinic updated its structure to streamline the services provided to the community. While the team attends some in-person events in the community with the Mobile Legal Clinic, *most of Expungement and Pardon Clinic's services are held remotely on Zoom* and are now offered in two different parts. In "Part A": Volunteers assist clients to determine eligibility for a pardon or expungement (or other forms of post-conviction relief). If eligible, volunteers answer general questions, explain the process and next steps, and if applicable, set an appointment for further assistance. In "Part B", clients eligible for a pardon work with volunteers to complete the extensive pardon application, prepare documents for submission, and review what can happen in a pardon board hearing.

The *demand for services has increased significantly since late 2021*, when Governor Evers signed Executive Order #130 broadening the qualifications for a pardon and, thus, increasing the number of people who would be eligible. In 2022, the clinic *completed almost 200 eligibility assessments*, *assisted close to 100 people with the pardon application*, and returned to some in-person events at the Mitchell Street Library, the 2022 Milwaukee Fatherhood Summit, the Home-to-Stay Reentry Resource Fair, and an event with Legal Action of Wisconsin at the Urban League in Madison.

The clinic has continued to receive *glowing feedback* from its volunteers and clients. Volunteers state that their work in the clinic is the most rewarding and valuable pro bono experience they've had. Clients say they would not have been able to do the process on their own without the clinic's help.

Since Executive Order #130, the MLC has seen an increase in the number of people who are now eligible and seeking help. And, though there have been challenges stemming from a lack of funding, volunteers, and staff, there has been much success in the past year.

- At least **30 pardon applicants** who have come through the Expungement/Pardon Clinic since 2019 have successfully received pardons from Governor Evers. 26 of those applicants have worked with our clinic extensively on the pardon application materials.
 - 24 of those people are residents of Milwaukee County.
 - At least 15 of those people were under age 25 at the time they became felons.
 - At least 5 of those people had applications deemed appropriate for expedited review (they were older and low-level/nonviolent crimes such that they could be forwarded

directly to the Governor without the applicant having to appear in front of the Pardon Advisory Board for a formal hearing).

In 2022, the MLC's Expungement/ Pardon Clinic has provided over **100 clients free services** related to their options for post-conviction criminal record relief.

In 2022, clinic has provided over **60 pardon-eligible clients** with **extensive assistance** on the pardon application process. That likely means a **significant portion of the pardon applicant pool in Wisconsin is coming from the Mobile Legal Clinic's Expungement and Pardon Clinic.**

RUN FOR JUSTICE 2022

The Milwaukee Justice Center's 11th annual Run for Justice occurred on Wednesday, June 15th in Veterans' Park at the Milwaukee Lakefront – the first since 2019 to be held in person! Despite the high temps and the threatening forecast, the event "ran" without a problem with an impressive amount of runners and walkers who came out to beat the heat and the threatening storms –in addition to their run times. After, people gathered to enjoy refreshments, socialize, and listen to live music from the Mission River Band. Runners, volunteers, and staff all made it home safely before a single drop of rain fell at the park.

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The 2022 Run for Justice had a total 325 registrants and more than 25 sponsors and partnerships; including tremendous support from our *Platinum Sponsors: Foley & Lardner, Hupy and Abraham, Meissner Tierney Fisher Nichols, and Quarles & Brady.* The event raised over \$34,000 to support the work of the MJC!

The MJC would also like to extend a *special thank you to the members of the Clerk of Courts staff that volunteered* alongside MJC staff and volunteers to help make the event possible. It was an awesome opportunity for members of the Milwaukee legal community to interact and contribute to a common

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It was great to be back live and in person in 2022. *Let's do it again in 2023!* Save the date for Wednesday, June 14th, 2023 – the day before the State Bar of Wisconsin's Annual Meeting in Milwaukee!

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RUN FOR JUSTICE 2022

The MJC Team also recognized the annual Jon Allen "Pace Setter" Volunteers of the Year:

Attorney of the Year Ann Bowe: Ann has been volunteering with the MJC almost weekly sincerely before the pandemic. She attends both in person and by Zoom, picking up open shifts and saying 'yes' anytime we need her expertise.

Mobile Legal Clinic Attorney of the Year Annette "Nettie" Rauch, Hartley & Pecora: Nettie filled a huge gap for the MJC creating and presenting training for volunteers and staff on expungements and pardons. Her fantastic teaching style and continued commitment to the pardon clinic has been key to the success of this ongoing program.

Community Member Monica Meagher, Ignatian Volunteer Corps: Monica is the director of the Milwaukee area chapter of the Ignatian Volunteer Corps, an organization who has sponsored one of our volunteers at the MJC–and prior Jon Allen honoree–Mont Martin. Monica's commitment to social justice and connecting communities is an important part of the program's success.

Law Student Maeve O'Malley (MULS, 2L): Maeve has been a part of MJC services throughout the pandemic. In the last year, she took on a leadership role with the family forms clinic as it transitioned back to in-person services. Maeve has been a great role model and trainer for new students joining the clinic.

Intern Max Pickart (Marquette University): Max joined the MJC family forms clinic as a first-year student at Marquette and continued his commitment into his senior year. Max also took a leadership role, assisting new students and clinic supervisors with a number of things during clinic at the MJC. The MJC is grateful for his many semesters of service.



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