



ANNUAL REPORT

PHILADELPHIA VIP | 2022

DEAR FRIENDS:

We are proud to present Philadelphia VIP's 2022 Annual Report.

It is no secret that volunteerism, like so much else in our civic life, suffered major downturns in the past three years. In light of that, 2022 heralded a kind of return to normal. We at VIP were relieved to begin supporting our volunteers face-to-face after many months apart, and we believe our successes last year reflect a legal community that is rediscovering its commitment to pro bono service.

But for VIP's client community, the low-income Philadelphians whom we are privileged to serve, not all of last year's changes were welcome ones. Rampant inflation squeezed our neighbors' already limited budgets, and pandemic-related benefits like emergency rental assistance dried up. These economic pressures amplified the evergreen challenges of living in poverty.

Philadelphia VIP stood by our clients throughout last year's difficulties. We continued to serve as a gathering space for attorneys seeking to help their neighbors and upheld our mission of providing quality pro bono legal assistance to low-income individuals, families, and entrepreneurs. We forged partnerships with dedicated attorneys, law firms and corporate legal departments, and supporters like you, who have helped our clients stay in their homes, protect their incomes, build thriving small businesses, and so much more.

Please read on to learn about some of VIP's accomplishments in 2022, including:

- Celebrating our history and mission at our Fortieth Anniversary Gala in May;
- Winning the CPBO Pro Bono Partner Award and the GSK IMPACT Award for innovation in pro bono service; and
- Referring hundreds of estate planning, homeownership, and courtroom matters to volunteer attorneys.

We hope you will find in this report proof of the power of pro bono and encouragement for your own community service. Your continued support, whether through volunteer work, financial contributions, or spreading awareness about VIP, is vital to our success. We invite you to be as proud of the results in these pages as we are, because we could not have accomplished them without you – thank you.



Rida F. Haq

Executive Director

A stylized, handwritten signature of Rida F. Haq in dark ink.



Megan Watson

Board President
BKW Family Law LLC
Partner

A stylized, handwritten signature of Megan Watson in dark ink.

PHILADELPHIA VIP

Philadelphia VIP trains legal volunteers to represent low-income Philadelphians who face critical civil legal issues but cannot afford to hire a lawyer.

VIP is the only organization that relies entirely on legal volunteers to expand access to justice to our Philadelphia neighbors – one in four of whom live in poverty, making Philly the country's poorest large city. Too often, a person's ability to resolve a legal matter depends not on the merits of their case, but on the depth of their pockets; as a result, countless Philadelphians seeking legal help face a civil justice gap that is impossible to traverse without help.

VIP exists to remedy this injustice. Created within the Philadelphia Bar Association in 1981, VIP has earned a reputation as the city's hub of pro bono. Each year, VIP recruits hundreds of attorneys, paralegals, and others to provide pro bono representation to low-income Philadelphians. VIP volunteers focus their efforts on four legal priorities, each outlined in this report: Preventing Homelessness; Supporting Family Stability; Preserving Income; and Promoting Community Economic Development.

In the four decades since its founding, VIP has matched over 20,000 Philadelphia residents, small businesses, and nonprofits with volunteer attorneys. Read on to learn how our model works and how you can get involved.

OUR MISSION

Philadelphia VIP leverages the powerful resources of the community to provide quality volunteer legal services and ensure access to justice for low-income Philadelphians.



2022 IN PICTURES





Opposite page (counterclockwise from top right):

- Two VIP volunteers discuss a case
- VIP staff pose in their new office
- Attorneys watch a VIP presentation at their firm
- A volunteer notary assists at our estate planning clinic
- Guests enjoy VIP's 40th Anniversary Gala



This page (counterclockwise from top right):

- A VIP nonprofit client shows off his organization's space
- Board President Lee Zimmerman speaks at the Gala
- A VIP client shares her story
- VIP clients pose for photos at the Gala

2022 AT A GLANCE



VIP matched **796 new cases** with volunteer attorneys and supported clients and volunteers in **1,984 total referred cases**.



We're grateful to the **1,415 volunteers**, including **183 new volunteers**, who said "yes!" to a case.



VIP volunteers donated a total of **16,454 hours** in pro bono services, worth over **\$6.3 million** of attorneys' fees.

VIP's Award-Winning Program

In 2022, VIP won CPBO's **Pro Bono Partner Award** with Chubb's legal department. This award recognizes innovative pro bono collaborations of in-house legal departments with law firms and public interest organizations.

VIP also received the Philadelphia Foundation's **GSK IMPACT Award**. The GSK IMPACT Award for Greater Philadelphia annually honors up to ten local nonprofit organizations in recognition of their contributions to a healthier Greater Philadelphia.

Program Highlights in 2022

Estate Planning:
169 matters referred
Up **59%** from 2021



Homeownership:
158 matters referred
Up **42%** from 2021



Collections, Torts,
Auto Accidents:
100 matters referred
Up **22%** from 2021



40TH ANNIVERSARY GALA



Our supporters enjoyed an exciting evening of dancing to Ballard Spahr Galactica, competing at our raffle and silent auction, and connecting with other Philadelphians committed to VIP's mission.

Clients Robert Blanton and Alonzo Shands spoke at the Gala about their experience with VIP. We were also honored to hear from former volunteer Congresswoman Mary Gay Scanlon, and from The Hon. Sheila Woods-Skipper and The Hon. Ourania Papademetriou, who presented our Anniversary Awards.



40th Anniversary Award Winners



Luz Denise Negron-Bennett

Fight 4 Families Law

Supporting Family Stability Award
(Accepted by Sarah Katz, pictured)



Steve Heimann

Verizon (Retired)

Preventing Homelessness Award



Bethany R. Nikitenko

Feldman Shepherd Wohlgernter
Tanner Weinstock Dodig LLP

Preserving Income Award



Steve T. Park

Partner at Ballard Spahr LLP

Promoting Community
Economic Development Award

OUR PRIORITIES



**Preventing
Homelessness**



**Preserving
Income**

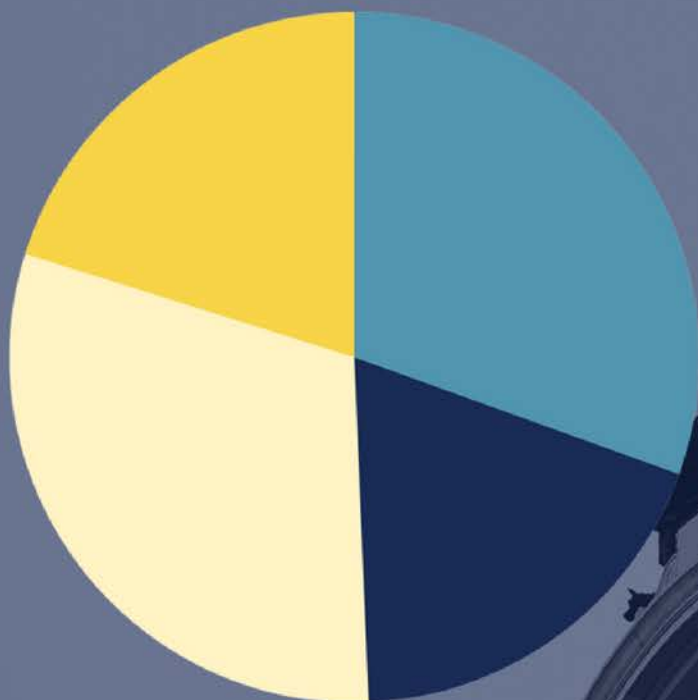


**Promoting
Community
Economic
Development**



**Promoting
Family Stability**

Philadelphia VIP supported **1,984 total cases,
both new and ongoing:**



Promoting Community
Economic Development
374 cases supported

Promoting Family Stability
400 cases supported

Preserving Income
605 cases supported

Preventing Homelessness
605 cases supported

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS



Expanded Homeownership and Housing Team

In 2022, VIP added four new team members to the homeownership and housing team.

These new positions focus on simplifying complex tangled title matters, administering the Tangled Title Fund, and providing extended services to homeownership clients. Additionally, VIP has extended our usual mode of service by providing shadowing opportunities in landlord/tenant court.

- Homeownership Staff Attorney
- Homeownership Project Administrator
- Homeownership Pro Bono Case Manager
- Landlord/Tenant Staff Attorney

Preventing Homelessness cases focus on helping Philadelphians stay in and keep their homes by resolving tangled titles and by defending tenants in eviction court.

Homeownership Referrals:

Total cases:	158
Mortgage Foreclosure:	3
Quiet Title:	19
Deed Transfer:	82
Probate:	54



VIP's Impact: Lenore Rogers

Lenore Rogers (left) was left to care for her childhood home when her mother died. She spent over 5 years trying to take title but was unable on her own. She reached out to VIP and within a few months, she owned her home.

"We need services like VIP. Without organizations like you that do these services for free, I wouldn't **have my house in my own name**. I wouldn't be able to stay in the house and community I grew up in."



Neighborhood Preservation Initiative

The City of Philadelphia announced **\$8 million** of funding over four years to address Philly's tangled titles. These **Neighborhood Preservation Initiative** funds are distributed to four agencies, including VIP, to support legal remedies to tangled title.

VIP homeownership client Robert Blanton (left) spoke about the impact of this work at the funding announcement in September.

Eviction Defense

VIP, in collaboration with other agencies throughout Philadelphia, helps provide legal counsel to low-income tenants facing eviction in Municipal Court.

In 2022, VIP matched 77 landlord/tenant clients with attorneys. Despite steps toward expanded access to justice, the need persists: half of our landlord/tenant clients did not get volunteer lawyers.

Philadelphia is one of the most-evicting cities in the United States.

Alongside recent advances in tenant protections, like the Eviction Diversion Program and right to counsel, volunteers are essential to closing the civil justice gap. VIP continues to focus on landlord/tenant volunteer recruitment to serve our clients who are facing eviction.



80% of landlords have legal counsel



less than 10% of tenants are represented



PRESERVING
INCOME

VIP's Impact: Sandra Cooper

Over one quarter of VIP's clients are disabled and rely on Social Security Disability Insurance or Supplemental Security Income to support themselves. For such clients, paying for an attorney is out of reach.

Sandra Cooper (below) is disabled and was accruing medical expenses. Debt collectors sued her for **more than \$20,000**, and because she relied on benefits, the debt collectors went after her home.

VIP matched Sandra with a team of volunteer attorneys. The volunteers negotiated with the debt collectors to have the cases against her withdrawn.

"It's a big relief that they can't come in and take my house," Sandra said. "I can never say how **thankful I am** for my attorneys and VIP, helping low- or no-income individuals who have nowhere else to turn."



VIP's Preserving Income priority area helps Philadelphians avoid the loss of their assets through estate planning services, name changes to secure benefits, defense counsel in debt collection and tort cases, and more.

VIP referred more Preserving Income cases in 2022 than in years past:

Case Trends:	2021	2022
Collections:	57	↑ 74
Torts/Auto Accidents:	25	↑ 26
Name Change:	21	↑ 28
Estate Planning:	111	↑ 169

VIP relies on a diverse group of professionals, from trusts and estates attorneys to trial lawyers, to represent these clients.

Expanded Neighborhood Preservation Initiative (NPI) funding to support estate planning outreach, as well as the dedication of our corps of volunteer litigators, helped us to exceed expectations in this area.

VIP's Impact: Nefertiti Carney

Nefertiti Carney (right) is one of the 169 Philadelphians who worked with VIP volunteers to make an estate plan in 2022.

"I grew up in this neighborhood and house with my siblings. I wanted to take care of this house and ensure that everyone in the family would have a **roof over their heads** if needed. Thanks to my new deed and will, it's taken care of."



VIP's Estate Planning Volunteers

Estate planning is essential in stopping the proliferation of tangled titles. If a homeowner dies with a will, their intended beneficiary can more easily take title to the home. In this way, wills help preserve intergenerational wealth and keep family homes in the family. Other documents like healthcare powers of attorney help clients prepare for their futures.

Estate planning cases are **accessible to everyone**, from law students to paralegals to seasoned attorneys, making them ideal for pro bono no matter who the volunteer is.

VIP collaborated with partners like Green Street Friends Meeting and Habitat for Humanity Philadelphia to expand our volunteer estate planning services to even more clients in 2022.



SUPPORTING
FAMILY
STABILITY

VIP's Supporting Family Stability priority helps ensure that families have access to justice in stable and nurturing homes by assisting with divorce, child custody, guardianship, and other sensitive matters.

FAMILY LAW CASES

Divorce 19

Guardianship 27

Custody 66

Guardianship

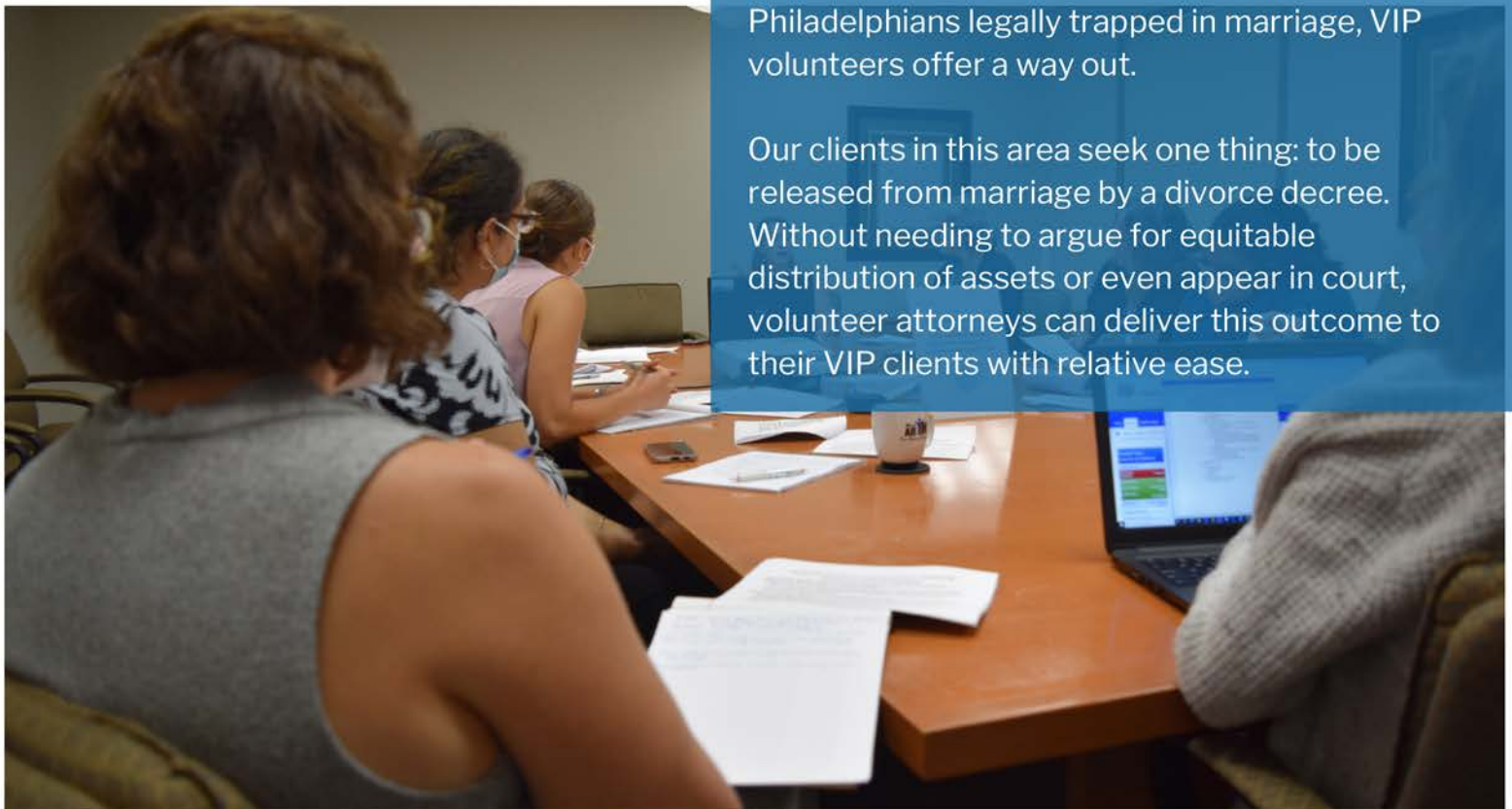
When a developmentally disabled child turns eighteen, or when an elderly parent's dementia prevents them from caring for themselves, it is sometimes necessary to seek legal guardianship to ensure a good quality of life for the incapacitated person. Each year, VIP volunteers help dozens of families navigate this process.

Philadelphia's Orphans Court takes guardianship petitions very seriously. Accordingly, VIP has a fine-tuned client screening process that identifies families for whom guardianship is the least restrictive option. Thanks to this, VIP guardianship volunteers usually prevail in helping stabilize clients' families.

Divorce

Divorce in Philadelphia is legally simple, yet procedurally complex – so much so that a joint Harvard Law–VIP study deemed it “virtually impossible” to get a divorce without a lawyer. For the untold numbers of low-income Philadelphians legally trapped in marriage, VIP volunteers offer a way out.

Our clients in this area seek one thing: to be released from marriage by a divorce decree. Without needing to argue for equitable distribution of assets or even appear in court, volunteer attorneys can deliver this outcome to their VIP clients with relative ease.



VIP's Impact: Sirlinda Burgess

Sirlinda Burgess looks back on her VIP case with a sense of relief. "My goal was to set up my son's future for the best things possible," she says. "Thanks to VIP, and my volunteer attorneys, I can do that."

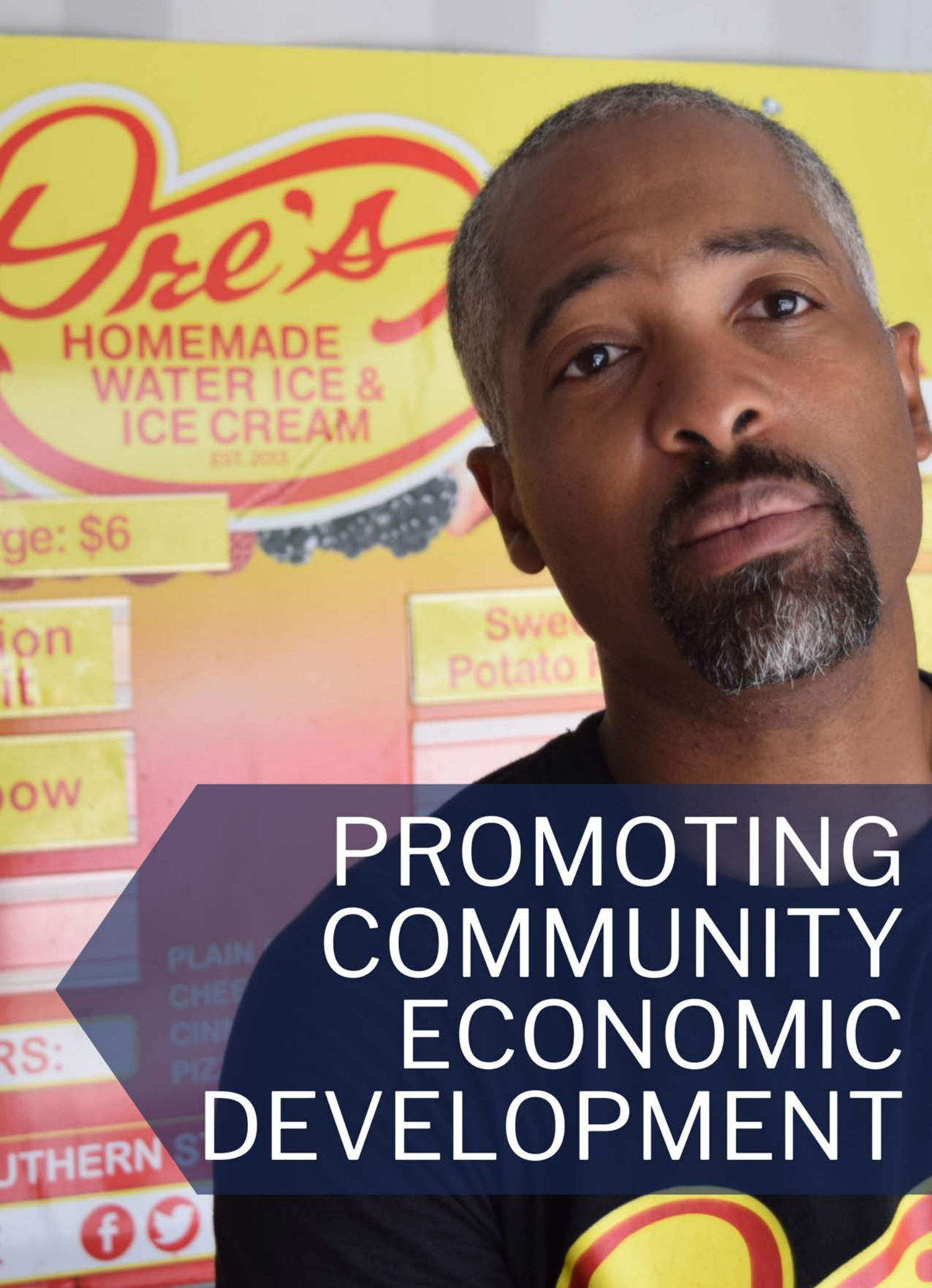
Sirlinda's son has autism and is largely nonverbal. She gave him a supportive home environment and worked with a team of doctors to care for him throughout his childhood. But as her son's eighteenth birthday approached, Sirlinda began to consider the changes that would bring.

As an adult, Sirlinda's son would be presumed legally competent, meaning he would have to make his own decisions about healthcare and finances. Even though his doctors agreed he could not care for himself, he would soon become his own sole advocate. Sirlinda wanted to provide him with the best quality of life she could, so she sought to become his **legal guardian**.

Sirlinda found her way to VIP after reaching out to several private attorneys, each of whom placed an insurmountably high price tag on the guardianship process. VIP matched her with two experienced volunteers. Sirlinda worked with her son's lifelong doctor to produce an "expert report" detailing his incapacity and then partnered with her attorneys to petition the Court for guardianship.

"The volunteers helped me so much," Sirlinda says. "They made sure they understood my whole story. They guided me throughout the entire process and encouraged me when I was nervous about going before the judge. **Because of their help, I became my son's guardian in only six months.**"





PROMOTING
COMMUNITY
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

Small Business Cases Referred

Total	99
Landlord/Tenant	25
Intellectual Property:	19
Miscellaneous:	17
Contracts:	16
Incorporation:	13
Tax:	4
Employment:	3
Consumer:	1
Zoning:	1

VIP's Promoting Community Economic Development priority focuses not on individuals and families, but rather on the small businesses and nonprofits that form the backbone of our city's economy and serve Philly's public interest.

Our volunteers represent these small enterprises in a range of legal matters with the goal of helping them operate with legal security and contribute to the local economy. Common legal problems include:

- Negotiating commercial leases
- Understanding business taxes
- Incorporating and obtaining tax-exempt status
- Trademarking business names and logos

Ask an Attorney

Our clients range from established businesses with discrete legal needs (such as drafting an employee handbook) to entrepreneurs with open-ended questions, and everything in between.

To serve all our clients' needs, VIP offers one-hour "Ask an Attorney," consultations to small businesses and nonprofits who only need issue-spotting or legal assessments.

These clients often return for full representation on a discrete matter. In 2022, we referred 39 Ask an Attorney cases.

Nonprofit Cases Referred

Total:	48
Miscellaneous:	11
Tax:	11
Contracts:	9
Incorporation:	8
Employment:	2
Intellectual Property:	2
Landlord/Tenant:	2
Real Property:	2
Zoning:	1

VIP's Impact: Mi Salud

Keila (right) was approached by her local church to run a formal wellness program for her North Philadelphia community. After Keila said yes, she knew the first step was **incorporating as a nonprofit**.

Keila met with a VIP volunteer attorney and laid out her questions. She learned how to file for tax-exempt status, as well as the annual filing requirements after obtaining her 501(c)(3) status.

Just a few months after reaching out to VIP for help, Keila used what she learned to launch her organization: **Mi Salud**, a nonprofit providing varied health promotion, disease prevention, and wellness services in the heart of the Feltonville community in North Philadelphia.



VIP's Impact: Dre's Water Ice

Dre's Homemade Water Ice & Ice Cream, founded by Andre (Dre) Andrews (left), is a staple in Philadelphia stores and communities.

Founded in 2015, Dre started the company with just a single push cart selling water ice in local neighborhoods. In the past seven years, he has grown the enterprise into a successful small business, with his water ice sold in stores throughout Philadelphia as well in mobile trucks scattered throughout the city. Like most small businesses, Dre faced challenges as he continued to grow. Over the years, Dre turned to VIP's small business program for help.

Dre first reached out to VIP for help trademarking his name and logo. VIP found a volunteer attorney to help Dre register his trademark, and this enabled his business to grow as well: he was able to negotiate with a local supermarket chain to acquire shelf space.

Since founding his business in 2015, Dre has reached out to VIP for help several times. Thanks to his VIP volunteer lawyers, Dre's business has navigated the many challenges posed by the past few years.



RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE

Each month, VIP honors a dedicated volunteer who provided outstanding pro bono legal or professional services to VIP clients. We applaud our 2022 Volunteers of the Month for expanding access to justice. Thank you and congratulations!



GENEVA BROWN | JANUARY 2022
Senior Counsel; Cigna



KEN JOHNSON | FEBRUARY 2022
GlaxoSmithKline



MEGHAN HENRY | MAY 2022
Partner; Morgan & Akins, PLLC



LEE KLEIN | JUNE 2022
Attorney



STACY FILOPOULOS | JULY 2022
Managing Counsel; Fidelity National Law Group



FRANK TRAPANI | AUGUST 2022
Partner; Kreher & Trapani LLP



DELISA MARTINEZ | SEPTEMBER 2022
J.D. Candidate; Drexel Law School



KEVIN M. LEVY | OCTOBER 2022
Associate; Saul Ewing LLP

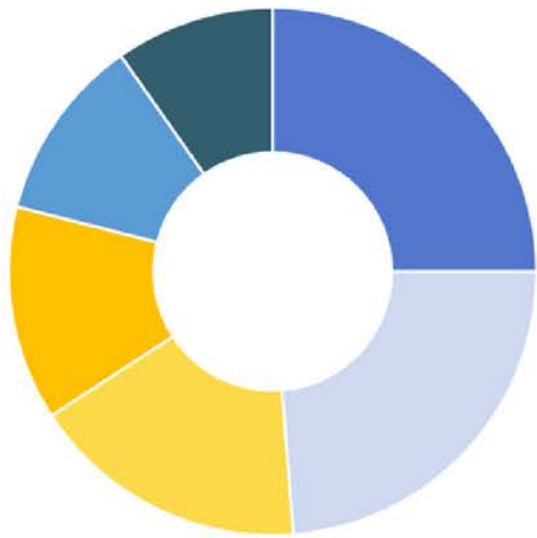


CHRISTINE FLYNN | NOVEMBER 2022
Litigation Paralegal; Haggerty, Goldberg, Schleifer & Kupersmith, P.C



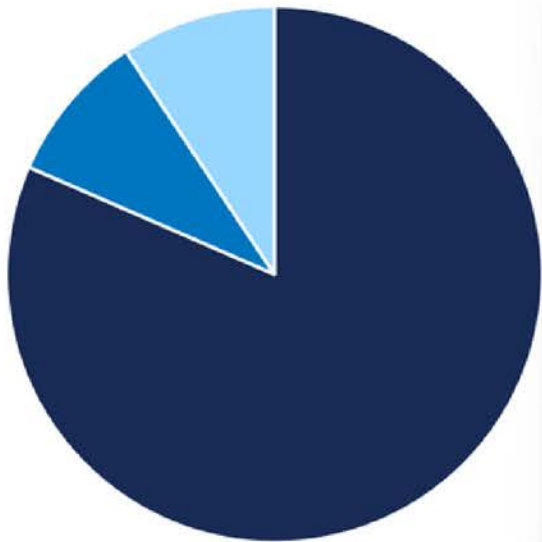
REGINA NELSON AND CHINITA COLEMAN | DECEMBER 2022
Counsel and Paralegal; Reed Smith

FINANCIALS



Support & Revenue | \$2,263,255

- Government Grants/Contracts
- Grants/Foundations
- Individuals
- Law Firms
- Tangled Title Fund (pass-through to grantees)
- Corporations



Expenses | \$2,067,137

- Program Services
- Management and General
- Fundraising

Net Assets, Beginning

\$2,387,623

Net Assets, End

\$2,583,740

Number of Contributors

Individual: 366

Organizational: 87

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THANK YOU

Philadelphia VIP is deeply grateful to our 1,000-plus volunteers. You are fierce advocates for your clients; help transform lives and create opportunity for our fellow Philadelphians; and expand access to justice. We honor your pro bono service.

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Philadelphia VIP was created in 1981 as a collaboration between the Philadelphia Bar Association, the private bar, and the public interest legal community to address the rapidly widening justice gap between the civil legal needs of Philadelphia's low-income residents and the availability of affordable representation.

In the 41 years since, VIP has worked closely with our partners at the Bar Association to expand access to justice in Philadelphia.

VIP's Staff Team and Board of Directors are proud to help advance the Bar Association's mission of "promoting justice, professional excellence and respect for the rule of law" and, by doing so, "fostering understanding of, involvement in and access to the justice system."

We salute the Bar Association on its significant accomplishments in 2022, including:

- Launched an institutional partnership with Temple's James E. Beasley School of Law and continued a partnership launched in 2021 with Drexel's Thomas R. Kline law school.
- Our Board of Governors passed historic resolutions supporting reproductive rights and gun violence prevention. We also partnered with the Pennsylvania Bar Association and the Allegheny County Bar Association to file an amicus brief in support of the implementation of Rule 8.4(g) of the Rules of Professional Conduct.
- Successfully helped to defeat House Bill 38, which proposed to amend the State Constitution to create representative districts for appellate judges.
- Began offering members free legal research from Decisis, a tool powered by LexisNexis.

We thank the Bar Association for its strong partnership and invaluable support, and look forward to ongoing collaboration in the years to come!



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