Chicago Volunteer Legal Services

ANNUAL REPORT

2022

CHICAGO VOLUNTEER LEGAL SERVICES

Because equal access to justice is everyone's fight

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Because equal access to justice is everyone's fight

FIGHTING FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE

Fighting for justice is at the center of CVLS' work. We fight against the systemic inequality that prevents our clients from accessing the justice they deserve. We workalongside our clients as they confront some of the most challenging times of their lives. Whether it be a devastating forclosure, or a bitter divorce, we're often the only resource available to those who seek our aid.

In 2022, we all experienced a rapidly shifting landscape roiled by the lingering pandemic, high gas prices, and inflation. In our 58 years of existence, we continue to expand and adapt to the ever shifting legal needs of our low-income client base. As cities grow and diversify, so do our client's legal problems. But no matter what our clients face in the future, CVLS will be here to face it with them.

MISSION

CVLS mobilizes Chicago's legal community to deliver traditional representation and innovative legal solutions to people working or living in poverty. We are **CHICAGO PRO BONO**.

MESSAGE FROM MEG

Flex·i·bil·i·ty: noun. The quality of bending easily without breaking.

While being poor in Chicago has always been a struggle, these last few years have been especially tough for our clients. CVLS continues to help improve the odds of success for low-income clients by providing skilled, caring, supported pro bono attorneys in and outside of courtrooms. How?

In part, by being flexible. Flexibility is the key to our strength and our success. CVLS continues to represent clients with civil cases through our panel and clinic programs, but in the last few years flexibility has allowed us to add services and to modify our service area to help clients from outside of Cook County that other programs can't help. It didn't break us. We've grown stronger.

CVLS staff attorneys, Rebecca Anger, Lauren Cherney and Terra Gross, counsel and help low-income landlords in Cook County and downstate. Staff attorneys Dan Quarfoot and Sima Sleiman help Illinois homeowners access state grants to pay mortgage arrearages and prevent foreclosures. Volunteers Kathleen Robson and Sal Lopez represent Illinois undocumented immigrants in foreclosure cases.

When Cook County judges asked us to accept court appointments for children, adults with disabilities, homeowners in foreclosure and low-income parties in Chancery litigation, we agreed to bend our standard way of getting cases because we knew vulnerable people in litigation needed attorneys. And we knew our volunteers would step up.

How did we know this? Because our amazing volunteers, donors and friends want people to be able to resolve their legal issues regardless of their ability to pay. Thanks to your flexibility, CVLS will always be around to help.

We are Chicago Pro Bono.

Margaret Benson
Executive Director

WE ARE CHICAGO PRO BONO

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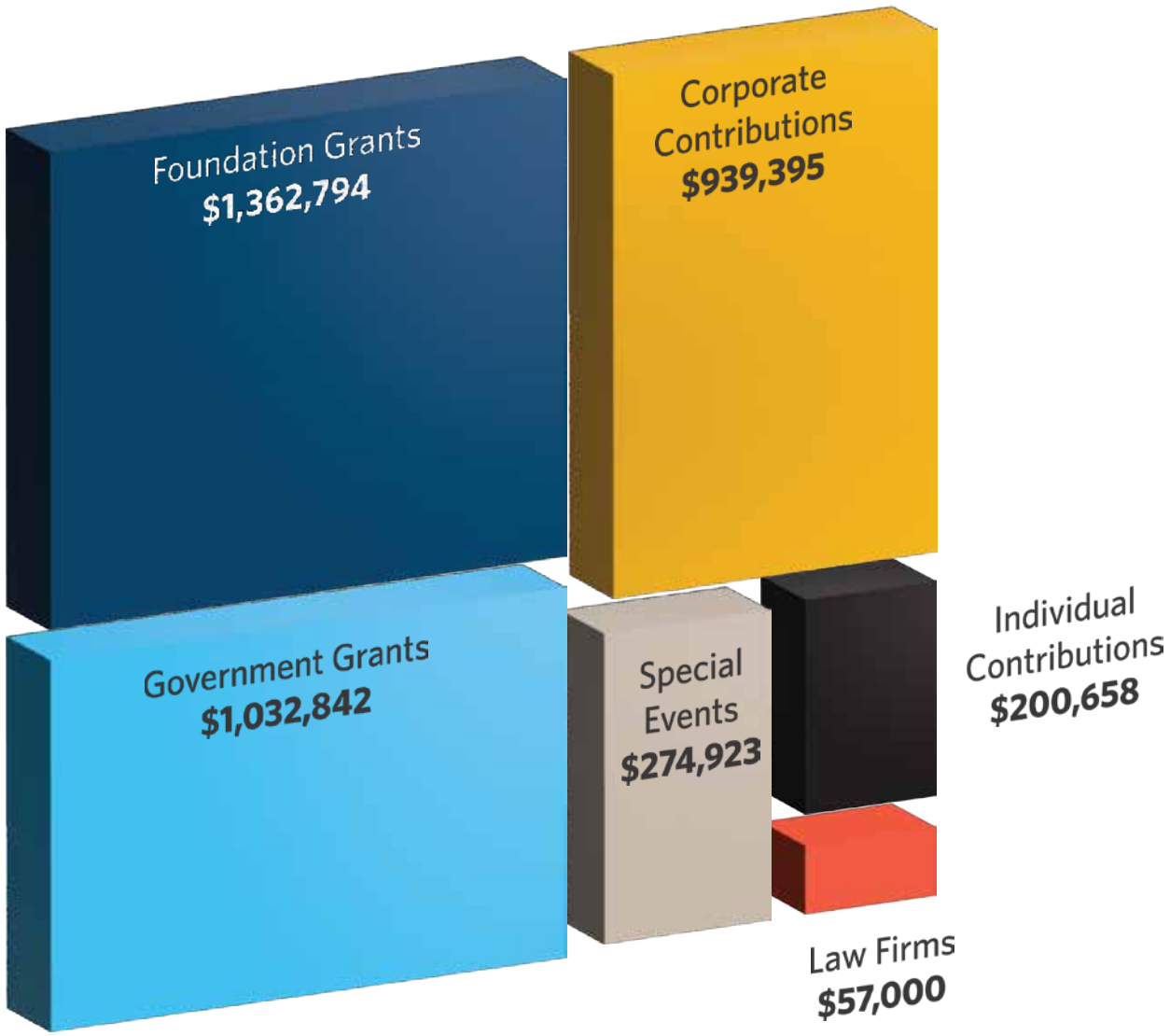
BY THE NUMBERS

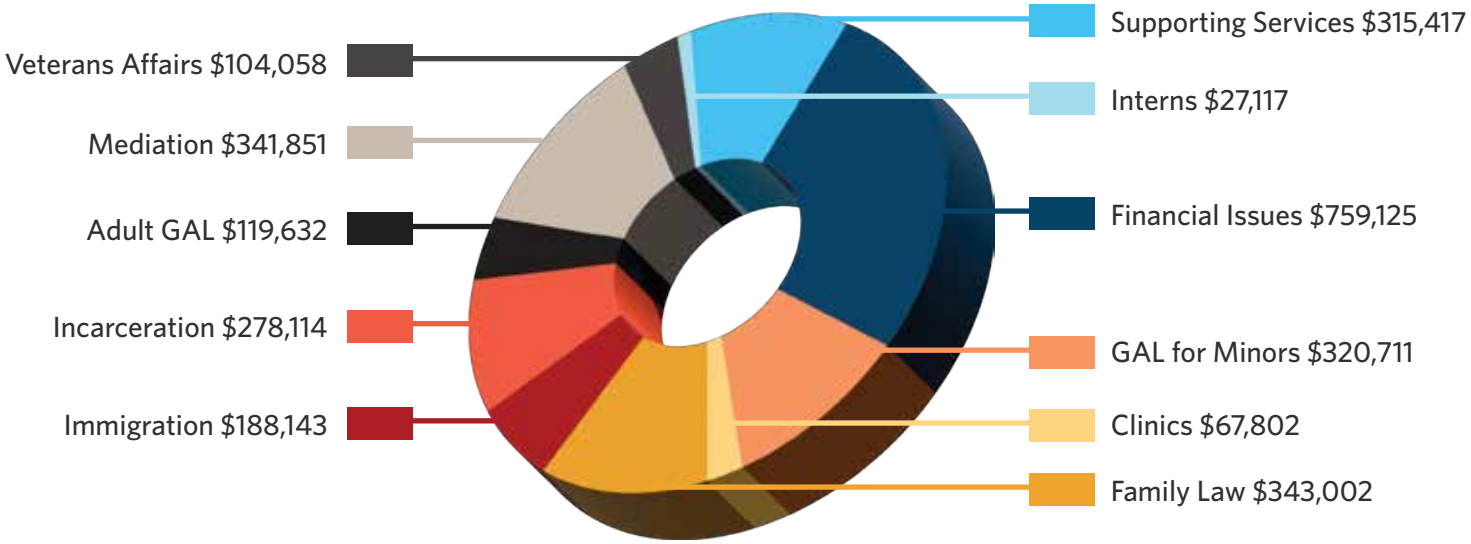
Total Public Support: **$3,868,084**



5,682 clients & households served

2,528 active volunteers
2,369 resolved cases
3,021 intakes/screenings
2,205 new open cases

Total Expenses: **$2,864,956**

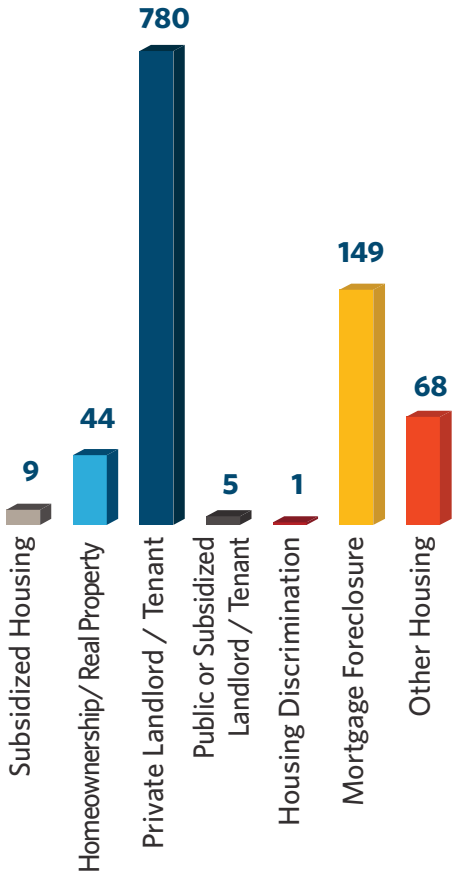


Pivoted to ensure that eligible homeowners, statewide, could access housing assistance funds to prevent foreclosure.

Last year, at the request of a funder, CVLS began serving low-income landlords outside of Cook County because other legal service programs do not serve this population. We also agreed to help undocumented homeowners in foreclosure from outside of Cook County access Homeowners Assistance Funds (HAF) to cure their mortgage defaults. We accepted this program because programs outside of Cook County cannot serve undocumented clients.

The HAF program limits a homeowner's arrearage to $30,000. By fall, the Illinois Housing Development Authority, (IHDA), had hundreds of otherwise eligible homeowners whose arrearages were over $30,000. IHDA wanted to give these people a chance to access the funds by paying the "overcap" amount, but the agency was not able to collect client payments so they asked the program's funder if legal service programs could help. After a series of meetings between IHDA, the funder and statewide legal service programs, CVLS agreed to serve as the primary clearinghouse for these eligible homeowners. (Legal Aid Chicago agreed to accept a smaller number of homeowners in specific southern Cook County suburbs).

1,056 families helped with their housing related issues.



IHDA began sending letters to hundreds of homeowners in late October, advising them of this new initiative. Interested people contacted CVLS through either a dedicated hotline or an email address for screening. Homeowners with cases in court, impending sales or legal issues were referred to other legal aid programs, CVLS worked with all other eligible homeowners. Once a homeowner gave CVLS funds for the overcap amount, IHDA was notified to mail CVLS a check for $30,000. CVLS deposited the funds and issued a check for the total arrearage to the mortgage servicer. (Servicers refuse to accept multiple checks for an arrearage. This meant that CVLS had to deposit IHDA's payment along with the homeowner's payment and issue a single check on CVLS' client trust account).

As the program gathered steam, IHDA decided to raise their arrearage limit from $30,000 to $60,000, which made many of the people who'd contacted us eligible for HAF without any contribution. CVLS rejiggered the process, returned money to people who'd already paid and continued to work with those that owed more than $60,000 (HAF 2.0). As of December 31, CVLS had served nearly 250 people and have nearly 100 cases pending.

Increased immigration capacity.

As the need for free immigration legal services spiked, CVLS struggled with capacity. We had partnered for years with the Chicago chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), whose members would screen and handle a variety of immigration cases. However, as of last spring, AILA volunteers had 131 pending pro bono cases, 19 of them for asylum. We know that immigration cases can take years, sometimes up to a decade, to resolve. Because CVLS' AILA pro bono attorneys, who are equally swamped with their own caseloads, have no capacity to take more from us, CVLS sought and received funding to hire Massiel Tarango, an experienced immigration attorney who would screen and handle her own cases while also training and supporting less-experienced, pro bono immigration volunteer attorneys. Fluent in Spanish, Massiel jumped in immediately, screening cases, taking some and, more importantly, preparing training materials for volunteer immigration practitioners. She gave her first Immigration training in November and has others scheduled for 2023. As she begins to build a new corps of volunteers, she has proven to be a huge asset to CVLS' expanded immigration program.

"Immigration is by definition a gesture of faith in social mobility. It is the expression in action of a positive belief in the possibility of a better life. It has thus contributed greatly to developing the spirit of personal betterment in American society and to strengthening the national confidence in change and the future."

John F. Kennedy
A Nation of Immigrants

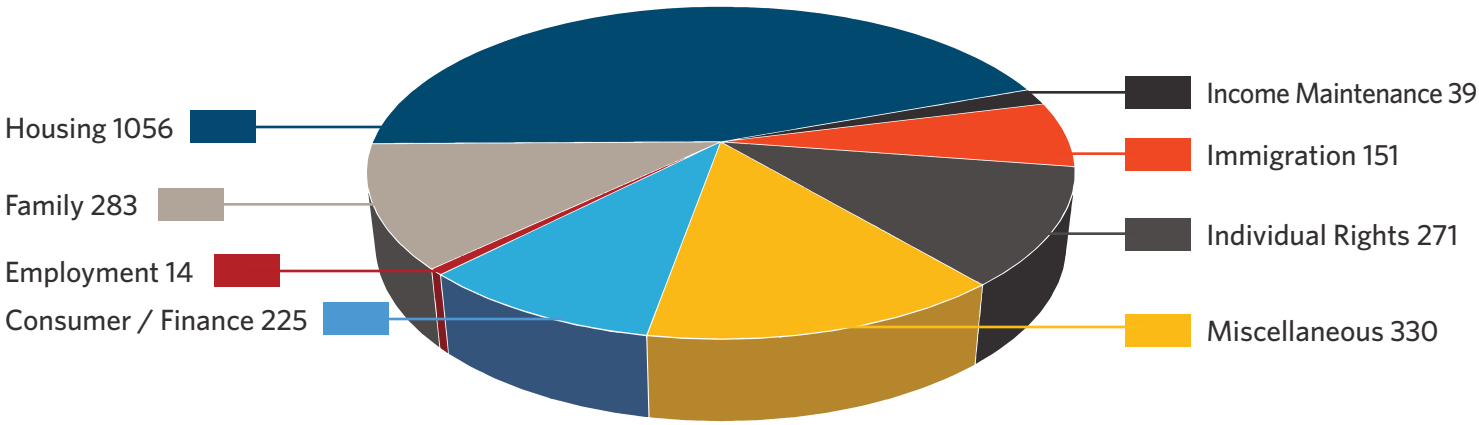
Worked with the Probate Court to eliminate the cost of mandatory criminal background checks for low-income petitioners in minor guardianship cases.

For years the probate court has required that parties and their adult household members get criminal background checks when petitioning for guardianship of a child or when petitioning to discharge a guardianship. Until 2021, Cook County's Probation Services conducted these background checks for free. However, when the probation department stopped providing the service, the probate court had to use outside programs that charged $65+ per person for fingerprinting and running the background checks.

Most people seeking guardianship are low-income and many file through the County's free Guardianship Assistance Desk for Minors (GADM). Eighty-four percent of their clients are women and 89% are African American or Hispanic. Although low-income petitioners are eligible for fee waivers, the cost of the background checks provided by outside companies could not be waived. As a result, many people who needed to get guardianship of children and parents trying to discharge a guardianship could not move forward.

Once that issue came to light, CVLS worked closely with the division's presiding judge, Daniel Malone, to solve the problem. At Judge Malone's request, CVLS reached out to Chief Judge Timothy Evans regarding the negative consequences for low-income children and their families. Judge Evans agreed and assigned his staff attorney to work with Judge Malone on the solution. For more than a year, various county, and state offices, including the Sheriff's office, the Clerk of the Circuit Court, and the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, worked to make this possible. As of late August 2022, free background checks at the Daley Center are available for low-income parties. Eventually, all parties will be able to get it done there once additional issues are resolved. In addition, we hope that the Court will also make it available to low-income adoption Petitioners in the County Division soon.

2022 closed cases



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Deborah Martin, Supervising Attorney, GAL for Minors

Phillip Mohr, Deputy Director

Lisa Murphy, Director, Adult GAL & Decedent Estates

Dan Quarfoot, Staff Attorney

Rebekah Rashidfarokhi, Director, Guardianship & Immigration Programs for Children

Rima Sleiman, Staff Attorney

Massiel Tarango, Immigration Staff Attorney

Rob Zielinski, Supervising Attorney, Child Rep

CVLS's staff are dedicated, caring individuals who strive to make a difference in people's lives by providing quality, free legal aid to those who need it most.

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Montserrat Cancino, Paralegal

Paloma Castaneda, Paralegal

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Morgan Smith, Child Rep Coordinator

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Stop by our downtown office or introduce yoruself at one of our annual events.

Share Your Time

If you are an attorney licensed in Illinois, or other professional interested in providing **pro bono services** to low-income residents of Cook County, then you are exactly who we are looking for. Sign up for one of our New Volunteer Orientations and join a team that has a direct impact in the lives of thousands of people each year.

Visit **www.cvls.org/volunteer** for more information.

Invest In Justice

The support of individuals thoughout the City of Chicago is essential to core mission of providing high quality pro bono services to those who need it most. Make a donation today at **www.cvls.org/donate** and ensure this important work continues into the future.

Become a Corporate Partner

CVLS partners with hundreds of law firms and corporations each year. We will work with your team to create the best opportunity catered specifically for your group. From event sponsorship, to a la cart volunteer opportunities, CVLS has a package that's right for you; and if we don't, we'll make one!

Follow us on Social Media

We have a presence on **Facebook**, **Twitter**, **LinkedIn** and **Instagram**. You'll be up to date on all of our upcoming events, success stories, new volunteer opportunites and more.

DONORS

Chicago Volunteer Legal Services provides incredible volunteers whose court advocacy tip the scales towards justice.

CVLS' impact would not be possible without the generous philanthorpic support of individuals, corporations, foundations, and other funders. Their contributions continue to make a difference in the lives of thousands of low income Chicago families. We are grateful for their support and pleased to recognize them in the following list.

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Kirkland & Ellis
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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Board of Trustees
of Chicago Volunteer Legal Services Foundation

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of Chicago Volunteer Legal Services Foundation (a nonprofit organization), which comprise the statement of financial position as of June 30, 2022 and the related statement of activities, functional expenses, and cash flows for the years then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Chicago Volunteer Legal Services Foundation as of June 30, 2022 and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are required to be independent of Chicago Volunteer Legal Services Foundation and to meet our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements relating to our audits. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Prior Period Financial Statements

The financial statements of Chicago Volunteer Legal Services Foundation as of June 30, 2021 were audited by other auditors whose report dated November 5, 2021 expressed an unmodified opinion on those statements.

Responsibilities of Management for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, and for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is required to evaluate whether there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about Chicago Volunteer Legal Services Foundation's ability to continue as a going concern within one year after the date that the financial statements are available to be issued.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in

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accordance with generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Misstatements are considered material if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, they would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user based on the financial statements.

In performing an audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards, we:

- Exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements.

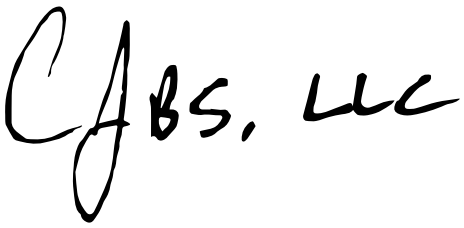
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of Chicago Volunteer Legal Services Foundation's internal control. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.

- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluate the overall presentation of the financial statements.

- Conclude whether, in our judgment, there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about Chicago Volunteer Legal Services Foundation's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time.

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit, significant audit findings, and certain internal control related matters that we identified during the audit.

Firm's signature



Northbrook, Illinois January 20, 2023

STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION

June 30,	2022	2021
ASSETS		
Current Assets:		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	$ 927,193	$ 678,382
Short-Term Investments	1,438,911	692,605
Prepaid Expenses and Other Current Assets	31,375	42,608
Total Current Assets	2,397,479	1,413,595
Property and Equipment:		
Furniture, Equipment, and Leasehold Improvements	202,197	202,197
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	(196,098)	(192,032)
Total Property and Equipment - Net	6,099	10,165
Other Assets:		
Long-Term Investments	1,007,800	1,128,051
TOTAL ASSETS	**$3,411,378**	**$2,551,811**
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Current Liabilities:		
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	$65,420	$41,952
Deferred Rent	152,464	187,408
Deposit Payable	11,022	10,113
Total Current Liabilities	228,906	239,473
Net Assets:		
Without Donor Restrictions		
Undesignated	2,855,923	1,653,932
With Donor Restrictions		
Perpetual in Nature	326,549	326,549
Time-Restricted	-	331,857
	326,549	658,406
Total Net Assets	3,182,472	2,312,338
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	**$3,411,378**	**$2,551,811**

STATEMENTS OF CASH FLOW

	2022	2021
OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets	$870,134	$554,472
Adjustments to Reconcile Increase in Net Assets to Net Cash Provided (Used) by Operating Activities:		
Depreciation	4,068	4,066
Net Unrealized and Realized (Gains) Losses on Investments	153,110	(172,839)
(Increase) Decrease in Assets:		
Prepaid Expenses and Other Assets	11,233	38,677
Increase (Decrease) in Liabilities:		
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	23,468	(7,403)
Deferred Rent	(34,944)	(30,488)
Deposits Payable	909	4,376
Net Cash Provided (Used) in Operating Activities	**1,027,978**	**390,861**
INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Proceeds from Sale of Investments	80,724	46,629
Purchase of Investments	(859,891)	(88,386)
Net Cash Provided by (Used) in Investing Activities	(779,167)	(41,757)
Net Increase (Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents	248,811	349,104
Beginning Cash and Cash Equivalents	678,382	329,278
Ending Cash and Cash Equivalents	**$927,193**	**$678,382**

See accompanying notes and independent accountant's compilation report located in the full audit.
The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.
Full audit can be viewed at www.cvls.org/audit2022

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