

# 2008

ANNUAL REPORT



Southern Arizona Legal Aid, Inc.

Justice. Opportunity. Hope.

# Who WE ARE

Southern Arizona Legal Aid, Inc. (SALA) is a non profit 501(c)(3) organization which provides free civil legal aid in nine counties and on eleven Indian Reservations throughout southern and southeastern Arizona. SALA's administrative office is located in central Tucson with additional offices in Nogales, Sells, Bisbee, Casa Grande, Sacaton, Lakeside and Whiteriver.

SALA solves the civil legal problems of low-income individuals and families. Often, those legal problems are intertwined with other problems, creating an environment that traps people in unhealthy situations – without income, housing, safety or individual rights. SALA is able to help people untangle some of these problems. By working in collaboration with other organizations, SALA is able to assist communities with solving greater, more systemic problems.

SALA is a well known and highly respected agency with a record of accomplishments that spans almost six decades. With poverty increasing and financial support for social services decreasing, the demand for legal aid is growing.

Our Mission Statement is **'To provide quality legal services to people who would not otherwise have equal access to justice, in ways which affirm their individual and collective dignity, integrity, and power'**. In addition, we share the following vision:

- That all Arizona residents living in SALA's service area have access to legal, social and economic justice;
- That individuals and families residing in SALA's service area understand the vital role SALA plays in providing free civil legal aid to low-income people; and,
- That SALA's diverse programs and high quality services be available to more people through adequate funding, staff dedication, technology and dynamic partnerships.

Services in 2008 included safety and protection for the elderly, help to adults and children who were victimized by domestic violence; preservation of shelter for those wrongfully evicted from their homes; access to public assistance for people who are hungry and unable to obtain benefits; access to health care for those denied services; and a means to survive for disabled persons who are unable to obtain disability benefits.



SOUTHERN ARIZONA LEGAL AID, INC. STAFF

## *A Message from the Executive Director*

The need for civil legal aid grew during the year with the elimination of thousands of jobs, loss of medical coverage, foreclosures and evictions from housing. More people fell below poverty.

SALA provided a critical safety net by providing free civil legal aid. For many facing hard times, SALA was able to save some families from foreclosure and homelessness, assist victims with escaping domestic violence, and helped individuals gain access or retain economic benefits like social security and unemployment benefits.

Fortunately, our dedicated funders, donors, collaborative partners, and staff have helped ensure that SALA is able to continue its rich history of service on behalf of poor individuals and families in southern and southeastern Arizona.

With continued support, SALA can strive to balance the scales of justice for all.

Anthony L. Young, Esq.  
Executive Director



## *A Message from the Board Chair*

SALA's mission is to provide quality legal services to people who would otherwise not have equal access to justice. I speak for the entire Board of Directors when I say how proud we are of the many accomplishments by the dedicated staff members of SALA in 2008.

Despite the economic downturn, we have been able to provide free civil legal aid throughout an expansive 41,000 square mile service area (2000 U.S. Census data) in nine Arizona Counties and eleven Indian Reservations.

There are more than 280,000 eligible people who live in that area, which we know is up sharply from the last census report. We have built an organization based on shared values and common goals to improve the quality of legal aid, increase funding for legal aid to the poor, and to increase access to justice for poor people across southern and southeastern Arizona.

Peter Akmajian, Esq.  
Board Chair



# 2008

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### “Making A Difference”

Thanks to the support of national, state, and local organizations like the Legal Services Corporation (LSC), State of Arizona, Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education (AFLS&E), Pima County, Pima Council on Aging, United Way and private individuals, SALA was able to provide direct, legal assistance to meet the fundamental human needs of more than 24,800\* individuals.



#### Cases & Matters\*\* handled in 2008

Domestic Relations.....	4,120
Consumer.....	1,793
Housing.....	1,643
Public Benefits.....	338
Native American Issues.....	298
Wills & Estates.....	503
Others.....	1,624
Total Resolved:.....	10,319

\*\* **Note:** Matters are services which are intended to reach the broader community. SALA advocates provide the general public with legal self-help forms, flyers, brochures and educational programs.

#### Selected Services

**Counsel & Advice and Brief Services:** Counsel & Advice is the minimum level of service and is provided to everyone who qualifies for legal aid. This service primarily helps people identify legal problems, their legal rights, responsibilities and alternatives for resolution.

Brief Service consists of assisting clients with the completion of legal documents, making telephone calls or writing a letter, and is intended to quickly resolve a legal matter.

**Extended Services:** Extended services include self-help clinics where clients learn how to access the courts without a lawyer. The highest level of service consists of representation in court and administrative proceedings, including complex litigation.

- **Domestic Relations:** Family law cases comprise 40% (4,120 cases) of the total caseload SALA carried in 2008. Family law cases involving domestic violence are by far the most frequently handled by SALA advocates. These cases involve child custody, visitation, support and guardianship. Advocates counsel clients on safety plans, orders of protection and access to victim's compensation.
- **Public Benefits:** These services are intended to assist individuals with obtaining or maintaining access to government benefits such as disability, unemployment, food stamps, cash assistance and other public benefits to which a client may be eligible to receive. This program works to preserve economic stability and helps individuals and families become self-sufficient, thereby maintaining a stable community. Total dollars obtained/saved for client use as a result of SALA services was \$738,697.

### Preventing Homelessness:

*Client came to SALA after losing her husband of 30 years who died suddenly with no warning. The client nearly lost her home to a foreclosure sale as a combined result of the effects of depression and a mistaken belief that she was going to get insurance money to pay off her first mortgage. SALA attorneys stopped the foreclosure with a bankruptcy. Since filing the bankruptcy, the client obtained employment, and took in two roommates to help her with expenses and saved her home from foreclosure.*



- **Housing:** Housing services comprise 16% (1,643 cases) of the total cases handled by SALA advocates. Advocates assisted homeowners and tenants with an emphasis on preventing homelessness and maintaining or improving the quality of housing. In addition, advocates provided community outreach and educational programs designed to teach housing consumers their legal rights and responsibilities.

\* Please note that while individual cases were captured, services received impacted more than the specific individual; i.e., a family of four facing eviction, a mother seeking help to escape a violent relationship, etc.



Thanks to over 1,270 volunteer lawyers and 200 volunteer law students, hundreds of clients, who would otherwise have been turned away, received free legal services in 2008 through the Volunteer Lawyers Program. Volunteers offered a full range of representation, from brief advice to complex litigation, for clients whose problems spanned the spectrum of the legal system. By recruiting lawyers from the private bar and government service, the Volunteer Lawyers Program offers access to a broader scope of legal aid. Last year, the VLP accepted 2,172 new cases and closed 1,655 cases and matters benefiting over 4,435 people.

# 2008

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT

### Revenue:

Legal Services Corporation .....	2,439,388
Government Contracts.....	878,475
Other Contracts.....	716,218
Contributions.....	184,391
Interest Income .....	12,268
Other Revenue .....	16,672
<b>Total Revenue .....</b>	<b>4,247,412</b>

### Expenses:

#### By Line Item:

Personnel-Lawyers.....	1,165,152
Personnel-Non-Lawyers.....	1,725,637
Employee Benefits .....	302,273
Contract Services.....	152,483
Travel.....	70,750
Occupancy.....	329,139
Office Expenses.....	170,356
Communication.....	204,921
Equipment .....	145,420
Library/Research.....	35,257
Litigation Expenses.....	20,803
Depreciation Expense.....	30,373
Other.....	9,145
<b>Total Expenses by Line Item: .....</b>	<b>4,361,709</b>

#### By Function:

Program Services.....	3,461,388
Management and General.....	834,763
Fundraising.....	65,558
<b>Total Expenses by Function: .....</b>	<b>4,361,709</b>

### Net Assets:

Decrease in Net Assets at December 31, 2008 .....	(114,297)
Operating Net Assets Allocated at December 31, 2008: .....	114,297

Based on 2008 audited financial statements



**Preserving Government Benefits:**

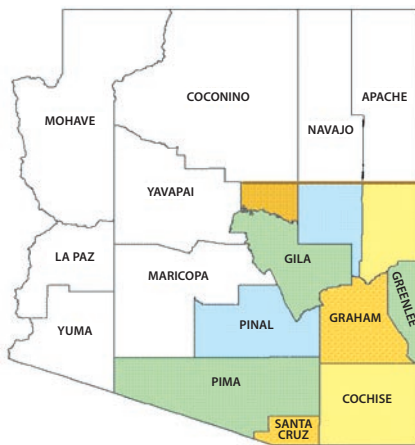
*SALA attorneys successfully represented a 74-year old client in the waiver of \$7,075 in Social Security overpayments. Even though the overpayment was caused by Social Security Administration's (SSA) error, the agency refused to waive it because our client could not prove it would be a financial hardship to pay the money back. SALA attorneys requested a hearing and presented evidence to an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) pointing out that the court expanded the interpretation of the regulations on waiving overpayments to include our client and fairness supports our client not being required to repay the funds. Based upon the evidence presented by SALA attorneys the ALJ ruled in our client's favor and waived the overpayment.*

# 2008

## FUNDING SOURCES

- Legal Services Corporation (LSC)
- Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education (AFLSE)
- Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES)
- Pima Council on Aging (PCOA)
- Southeastern Arizona Government Organization (SEAGO)
- Arizona Supreme Court
- Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families – Division for Women
- Pima County Community Development and Neighborhood Conversation Dept.
- Community Foundation of Southern Arizona
- Arizona Equal Justice Foundation
- Gila River Indian Community
- White Mountain-Apache Tribe
- Donors

### SALA Service Area



SALA's service area covers nine counties and eleven Indian Reservations and has an average poverty rate of 23%. Eligible people in this area number approximately 280,000 according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

### *Attorney Representatives*

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Peter Akmajian  
(Board Chair)

Michael J. Brune

Greg Droeger

Helen Anne Gaebler  
(Board Secretary/  
Treasurer)

Scott D. Gibson

Thomas G. Hippert

Co Horgan

Lisa Kimmel

Emery K. La Barge

Albert B. Lassen

John MacKinnon

Jennifer L. Nye

Juan Perez-Medrano

Don Riddle

Andrew Silverman

Jon Trachta  
(Board Vice Chair)

Hon. Bernardo P.  
Velasco

#### **Executive Director**

Anthony L. Young, Esq.

### *Non-Attorney Representatives*

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Maria Morales-Smith

Victoria Castro

Jim Rice

Dolores Benitez

Shirley Molina

Barbi Urias

Mark Bahti

Victoria Morgan



#### **Protecting Victims from Violence:**

*Client came to SALA seeking legal advice concerning a long term violent marriage. There were four sons ranging in age from 7 to 17. The client had no knowledge of her spouse's income and no access to property of the marriage including money and transportation. Fear of her spouse forced her to sneak to SALA's office and she was terrified about filing for divorce. SALA advocates gave her confidence that she could escape the violent marriage. Advocates filed a divorce for the client and she was awarded child custody, support and a fair division of the marital property.*



### **Consumer Protection:**

*A SALA client purchased a car which had cooling problems from the time it was purchased. The dealership put in a new radiator and claimed the car was repaired. The car continued to have cooling problems. The client stopped driving the car and purchased a second car because he needed transportation for work. He could not make payments on both cars, and the defective car was repossessed. SALA attorneys offered to settle the case with our client getting \$2,500, which was the amount he paid for the car, but the dealership chose to take the case to court. Our client was awarded a \$3,500 judgment.*

# SALA

## STAFF

### **Administration**

Anthony Young, Esq.  
*Executive Director*

Doris Lee Butler,  
*Chief Operations Officer*

Barbara Anderson,  
*Chief Admin. Officer*

Maria Gonzalez,  
*Systems Technologist*

Norma MacKenzie,  
*Development Director*

Pam Brown,  
*Executive Secretary*

Tangela Rodriguez,  
*Secretary*

### **Accounting**

Rose Marie Castro,  
*Chief Financial Officer*

Bart Rodriguez,  
*Accountant*

Blanca Leyva, *Admin. Asst.*

### **Tucson Office**

#### **(Intake)**

Sharon Rauseo,  
*Managing Attorney*

Elaine Williams, *Attorney*

Deonissa Cañez-Anderson,  
*Attorney*

Sam Reiter, *Attorney*

Christina Childs,  
*Intake Paralegal*

Linda Kay, *Intake Paralegal*

Barbara Pena,  
*Intake Paralegal*

Pat Velasco, *Receptionist*

#### **(Domestic Relations)**

Anthony Wisz, *Attorney*

Elda Rios, *Paralegal*

Olivia Sanders,  
*Legal Secretary*

#### **(Housing, Consumer & Public Benefits)**

Beverly Parker,  
*Managing Attorney*

Alicia Morado, *Attorney*

Katie Rogers, *Attorney*

*continued on page 8*



### **Protecting Income:**

*SALA staff attorneys successfully contested an income tax assessment of over \$3,600 dollars. The improper assessment resulted from our client's employer indicating that she was an independent contractor rather than an employee. As a result, the IRS assessed a self-employment tax, which is equal to both the employer's and employee's share of the Social Security tax and Medicare tax. SALA attorneys contested the assessment and request a determination that she was an employee and not an independent contractor. After an investigation the IRS agreed that our client was an employee and reversed the assessment and our client received a tax refund.*

*SALA Staff continued from page 7*

Wendy Ascher, *Attorney*

Susan Hobbs, *Paralegal*

Liana Pastrana, *Admin. Asst.*

#### **(Individual Rights)**

#### **(Immigration & VAWA)**

Valerie Hink, *Attorney*

Mary Day, *Attorney*

Yolanda Figueroa, *Paralegal*

Jessica Martin, *Paralegal*

#### **Volunteer Lawyers Program**

Michele Mirto, *Esq.*

*Program Director*

Randi Burnett, *Attorney*

Socorro Diaz,

*Pima County Coordinator*

Krystal Duran,

*Rural Coordinator*

Baudelina Ramirez,

*Admin. Asst.*

Michel Ellis, *Admin. Asst.*

Diane Wangelin,

*Admin. Asst.*

### **Rural Offices**

#### **Nogales**

David Juarez,  
*Managing Attorney*  
*(Nogales and Sells)*

Patrick "Manolo" Doyle,  
*Attorney*

Alma Barajas, *Paralegal*

Patty Peralta,  
*Legal Secretary/Intake*

#### **Sells**

Rebel Harjo,  
*Tribal Court Advocate*

Beverly Rivas,  
*Admin. Assistant/Intake*

#### **Bisbee**

Susan Kolb, *Managing Attorney*

John Willis, *Attorney*

Connie Hoyos, *Paralegal*

Diana Escojido,  
*Legal Secretary/Intake*

#### **Case Grande**

Fred Pinsky,  
*Managing Attorney*  
*(Casa Grande & Sacaton)*

Marlo Choate, *Paralegal*

Nora Diaz,

*Legal Secretary/Intake*

#### **Sacaton**

Habib Pierce-Byrd, *Attorney*

Jeffrey Thomas,  
*Tribal Court Advocate*

Sheri Cassa,  
*Tribal Court Advocate*

Rebecca Webb, *Admin.*  
*Assistant*

Alicia Gonzalez,  
*Legal Sec./Intake*

#### **Lakeside**

Brooks Chapin,  
*Managing Attorney*  
*(Lakeside and Whiteriver)*

Lori Johnston, *Attorney*

Shirley McCormick,  
*Paralegal*

Sheila Hancock,  
*Legal Secretary/Intake*

#### **Whiteriver**

Samuel Ottley, *Attorney*

Carrie, Kessay, *Tribal Court Advocate*

Kayona Altaha,  
*Admin. Asst./Intake*

# SALA

## OFFICE LOCATIONS

**The SALA office is located in central Tucson and is open between  
8:00 am and 5:00 pm Monday through Friday.**

### **Southern Arizona Legal Aid, Inc.**

Continental Building

2343 E. Broadway Blvd., Suite. 200 ■ Tucson, AZ 85719-6007

Phone: (520) 623-9465 ■ 1-800-640-9465 ■ Fax: (520) 620-0443

[www.sazlegalaid.org](http://www.sazlegalaid.org)

(The Sells Office is temporarily located at the Tucson location)

Application for new services can be done in person at the above location  
or by calling: (520) 623-9461 or 1-800-248-6789.

#### **Casa Grande**

Southern Arizona Legal Aid, Inc.

766 North Park Avenue

Casa Grande, Arizona 85222

(520) 316-8076; Fax: (520) 316-8063

1-877-718-8086

#### **Bisbee**

Southern Arizona Legal Aid, Inc.

2 Copper Queen Plaza (Upstairs)

P.O. Box AL

Bisbee, AZ 85603

(520) 432-1639; Fax: (520) 432-1641

1-800-231-7106

#### **Lakeside**

White Mountain Legal Aid

A division of Southern Arizona Legal Aid, Inc.

5658 Highway 260, Suite 15

Lakeside, AZ 85929

(928) 537-8383; Fax: (928) 537-1838

1-800-658-7958

#### **Sacaton**

Four Rivers Indian Legal Services

A division of Southern Arizona Legal Aid, Inc.

403 Seed Farm Road

P.O. Box 68

Sacaton, AZ 85747

(520) 562-3369; Fax: (520) 562-3900

1-866-312-2290

#### **Nogales**

Southern Arizona Legal Aid, Inc.

1071 N. Grande Ave. Suite 110

Nogales, AZ 85621

(520) 287-9441; Fax: (520) 287-9268

#### **Whiteriver**

White Mountain Apache Legal Services

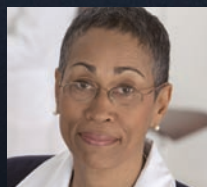
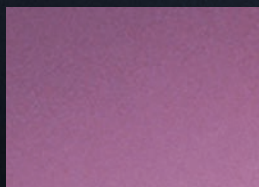
A division of Southern Arizona Legal Aid, Inc.

P.O. Box 1030

Whiteriver, AZ 85941

(920) 338-4845; Fax: (928) 338-1436

1-866-312-2291



Southern Arizona Legal Aid, Inc.

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