The mission of the Nebraska Lawyers Foundation is “to serve the public and legal profession by securing contributions dedicated to the improvement of the legal profession and the administration of justice.”
Since 1982, the Volunteer Lawyers Project has developed and facilitated pro bono opportunities for Nebraska lawyers. VLP programs offer hope to people turned away each year by legal service providers who lack the resources or staff to help every person who needs free legal services. Without VLP, many Nebraskans are left to navigate a complex judicial system on their own.

The number of Nebraskans living in poverty has increased each year. Studies show that only 20% of the civil legal needs of low-income persons are being met. Thousands of people who cannot afford an attorney feel desperate, hopeless, and alone.

VLP programs are developed based on critical legal needs in Nebraska communities, and each program is assessed according to those needs. Historically, VLP has managed two major pro bono projects: Self-Help Centers and connecting unrepresented people with a volunteer lawyer.

**Self-Help Centers**

Self-Help Centers are located in courthouses in Buffalo, Douglas, Hall, Lancaster, Madison, and Scotts Bluff counties. In 2015, volunteers met with 4,160 visitors to provide general information about the court and civil court process, give information about legal resources and legal services that may be available, answer basic questions about divorce, custody, support, guardianship, protective orders, landlord/tenant, debtor and other civil matters, and help visitors understand and complete approved court forms.

**Referral to a Volunteer Attorney**

Since 2014, Legal Aid of Nebraska has provided a centralized intake and referral system to VLP. Last year, Legal Aid referred 478 applications to VLP. Priority cases included guardianship, divorce, paternity, custody, name change, small claims, bankruptcy, and select civil cases. VLP matched 102 of the referred applicants with an attorney from the VLP network.

**Telephone Requests for Assistance**

VLP staff processed nearly 3,500 calls for legal assistance or referrals. Staff provides callers with information about available resources, information, and referral to legal aid service providers.

“**A lawyer should be mindful of deficiencies in the administration of justice and of the fact that the poor, and sometimes persons who are not poor, cannot afford adequate legal assistance. Therefore, all lawyers should devote professional time and resources and use civic influence to ensure equal access to our system of justice for all those who because of economic or social barriers cannot afford or secure adequate legal counsel.**”

—Preamble, Neb. Ct. R. of Prof. Cond.

**Collaboration with Nebraska Families Collaborative**

During the first ten months of 2015, in collaboration with the Nebraska Families Collaborative, VLP facilitated placement of NFC clients with volunteer lawyers. NFC paid volunteers $500 to represent NFC clients who needed a District Court Order regarding children subject to the jurisdiction of the Douglas and Sarpy County Juvenile Court. During 2015, volunteers assisted nearly 50 individuals needing custody, parenting time, and stability for their children. The partnership for this program ended in November 2015.

“There are people like me who fall through the safety net. If it wasn’t for the volunteers it would make our lives so much more difficult.” ---VLP Client

“Thanks for all of your assistance. Your knowledge and commitment to help oneself is beyond measure. You are so appreciated.” ---Visitor, Self Help Center
Thank you to the volunteer lawyers who, in 2015, helped more than 4,000 low-income Nebraskans access a judicial system too difficult to navigate on their own.

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By addressing systemic barriers to equity and access, the Minority Justice Committee (MJC) improves the justice system and strengthens public trust and confidence in the courts and legal profession.

The mission of the Committee is to:
• Ensure equal access to justice for all Nebraskans
• Address racial disparities in both the juvenile and adult justice systems
• Increase the diversity of Nebraska’s judicial and legal workforce

Contributions to the Nebraska Lawyers Foundation support the work of the Minority Justice Committee. Below are just a few initiatives your contributions support:

Reducing Language Barriers

The Minority Justice Committee was recently awarded a grant from Woods Charitable Fund to pilot an on-call interpreter service for attorneys. In 2013, the MJC conducted an assessment of interpreter services in Nebraska’s state courts. One of the primary findings was that while the Nebraska Judicial Branch does a good job of providing high-quality interpreter services for all in-court proceedings, the quality of communication for out-of-court communications, particularly between attorneys and their clients, is lacking. The assessment revealed that many attorneys frequently use family members (including children) as well as “jail house” interpreters (other jailed defendants who claim to be bilingual). When these practices are utilized, serious concerns about both the quality of communication and attorney-client privilege are raised. When Limited English Proficient (LEP) clients are not able to effectively communicate with counsel prior to their hearings, it inhibits their ability to strategize a defense, develop a client-attorney relationship, contact witnesses on their behalf, etc. It may also deter them from using the court system to resolve issues (seek orders of protection, modify child support, etc.). The MJC also feels that the importance of accessing quality interpreter services has been heightened recently by a case from Iowa that found that an attorney provided ineffective assistance of counsel when the attorney did not use a qualified interpreter for attorney-client communications.

Looking Towards the Future - LSAT Prep Scholarship Program

The LSAT Prep Scholarship Program provides scholarships for Kaplan LSAT Prep courses and covers the cost of LSAT exam fees for recipients who are historically underrepresented in Nebraska’s law schools, demonstrate economic need, and reside in Nebraska.

The number of scholarships awarded annually is dependent on charitable contributions. The scholarship program reaches both traditional and non-traditional students from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds. On average, students receive an 8 point increase on their LSAT exam score.
NLAP Programs

- Firm and case management assistance in the occurrence of unexpected death, sickness or disability
- Help with aging and retirement issues
- Confidential substance abuse/mental health support, consultation and treatment referral
- Substance abuse education and prevention

Large Firm, Small Practice and Solo Support

NLAP maintains a network of support for firms or solo practices that face hardship due to death, severe illness, accidents or disability within the practice. In these instances, management support and case referral and adoption are handled by the NLAP director or veteran Nebraska attorney volunteers.

Dealing with Substance Abuse and Depression

The Nebraska Lawyers Assistance Program offers help to lawyers, judges and law students troubled by substance abuse problems, stress, depression or any other disorder which may impair their ability to perform in a competent and professional manner.

The foundation of NLAP is a statewide network of judges and lawyers who understand. The NLAP director and the network of NLAP volunteers stand ready to assist their colleagues in all areas of recovery.

Education and Prevention

Education continues to be an important component of NLAP. We believe recognition and prevention are the first line of defense in an effort to assist individuals and avoid harm to the public caused by impaired members of the legal community.

For assistance or to learn more, visit www.nebar.com or call our toll-free hotline listed below.
The Nebraska State Bar Association increased its efforts in 2015 to manage the shortage of small town lawyers in Nebraska.

**Bus Tour**

In partnership with the law schools, the NSBA hosts a bus tour which allows law students and new attorneys in practice two years or less to have the opportunity to travel to areas of Greater Nebraska during the law schools’ spring breaks. Participants meet with local attorneys and business leaders and experience what each community has to offer a new attorney.

**Rural Practice Interview Event**

In 2015, the NSBA hosted its first Rural Practice Interview Event to connect law students and attorneys with potential employers.

> “Twenty years ago, Chadron had 10 lawyers; Alliance had a dozen. Now, they each just have two or three. Clients in rural Nebraska who used to find a lawyer across the street may now drive 50, 60, sometimes 100 miles to find one.”

- Howard Olsen, a lawyer in Scottsbluff, and a former president of the Nebraska State Bar Association

**For More Information on the Rural Practice Initiative, Contact Sam Clinch, (402) 475-7091, sclinch@nebar.com**
The mission of the NSBA Leadership Academy is to help attorneys make greater contributions to the legal profession and their community by helping them to develop leadership skills. The Academy is targeted at attorneys that will be in their third to fifteenth year of practice.

The goals of the Academy are:

- To nurture effective leadership with respect to ethical, professional and community service issues
- To build relationships among legal leaders from across the state and from across disciplines within the profession
- To raise the level of awareness among lawyers regarding the broad range of issues facing the legal profession
- To enhance the diversity of leaders within the legal profession and the community as a whole

For More Information on Leadership Academy, Contact Sam Clinch, (402) 475-7091, sclinch@nebar.com
On April 18, 2015, over 400 guests celebrated the evening and helped raise money to support the Volunteer Lawyers Project. Russ & Caroline Westerhold of Lincoln served as co-chairs of the 2015 Barristers’ Ball.

Proceeds from the Barristers’ Ball support the VLP’s case placement and the courthouse self-help desks in Grand Island, Kearney, Lincoln, Madison, Omaha, and Scottsbluff.

This year’s Ball was a success and raised almost $67,000 to help the VLP assist those who have nowhere else to go for legal assistance.

The following firms and corporations graciously supported the 2015 Barristers’ Ball

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Individuals recognized for their efforts and support of the VLP were:

**Visionary Award Winners**

**Senator Danielle M. Conrad**
Lincoln

**Michael F. Kinney**
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**Robert M. Spire Pro Bono Award Winner**

**Avis R. Andrews**
Andrews Law Office, Fremont
Twelfth Annual
Greater Nebraska Golf Tournament

Deep in the heartland of America, on the rim of the Snake River Canyon near Valentine, Nebraska, is The Prairie Club. 73 golfers took to the first tee for the twelfth annual Greater Nebraska Golf Tournament on June 22, 2015. With the help of over 50 sponsors, the tournament raised over $15,000 to support the Volunteer Lawyers Project.

Proceeds of the event benefit the Volunteer Lawyers Project, the NSBA/NLF’s statewide pro bono legal assistance program helping low-income Nebraskans with civil legal problems.

The NLF would like to sincerely thank all participants, sponsors and raffle item donors. Your contributions have made a big difference toward making Nebraska more just and equitable for all.

Thank You to the Sponsors of the 12th Annual Greater Nebraska Golf Scramble!

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2015 Greater Nebraska Golf Scramble in Valentine
Flight 1 winners from L-R: Jack Besse, Larry Beucke, Dan Babensky, and Elizabeth Lydiatt.

2015 Greater Nebraska Golf Scramble in Valentine
Flight 2 winners from L-R: Brad Dawson, Bob Lindemeier, Judge Donald Rowlands II, and Kent Florom.
The following is a list of donors and sponsors for fiscal year 2015. (January 1 - December 31, 2015)

We extend our heartfelt thanks for their generosity.

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The Nebraska Lawyers Foundation Program Revenue Summary

January through December 2015

- Individual/Business contributions $40,222.00 (10.6%)
- Foundation/Trust grants $5,500.00 (1.5%)
- Special events (Barrister’s Ball, Golf Tournament) $142,785.00 (37.8%)
- State Grants $189,367.00 (50.1%)
- Other Grants & Expenses $600.00 (0.2%)

Total Revenue $377,874.00

The Nebraska Lawyers Foundation Program Expense Summary

January through December 2015

- Event Expenses $61,601.00 (17%)
- Grants to NLF Programs $293,929.00 (81.3%)
- LSAT Prep Scholarship Program $5,210.00 (1.4%)
- Other Grants & Expenses $600.00 (0.2%)

Total Expenses $361,340.00
If every Nebraska attorney agreed to do one or more of the following, our ability to serve the public and legal community would grow exponentially:

- **Donate cash equal to one hour of your billing rate** - Donate the equivalent of an hour or more of billing to the NLF. You may designate your contribution to any of our signature programs if you choose.

- **Accept a pro bono case** - The need is great. Commit to helping one of our clients navigate the civil legal system. You’ll be glad you did. Call the NSBA at (402) 475-7091 and ask to speak with Volunteer Lawyers Project Director Carol Cleaver.

- **Sponsor an LSAT Scholarship** - Make a donation to support our minority scholarship program for LSAT preparation. It’s a great way to promote a more diverse future for our legal system.

- **Volunteer at a Self-Help Center near you** - Two hours is all it takes and VLP staff are always at your side to help. Self-Help Centers are located in Omaha, Lincoln, Kearney, Grand Island, Madison and Scotts Bluff counties.

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