LETTER FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT

As I reflect on ELAP in 2018, I keep coming back to the old yet relevant adage: “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.”

For many vulnerable residents in our community – low-income families, seniors, immigrants and domestic violence survivors among them – 2018 was a tough year, triggered in part by widening income disparity, political uncertainties and a rising tide of racial and religious intolerance.

But ELAP is tough too. The hundreds of volunteers, staff and supporters who make ELAP the vital community lifeline it is responded with urgency, compassion and some creative new ways to help people in need in 2018. Here are just a few examples:

**Medical-Legal Partnerships:** Recognizing that underlying social factors can exacerbate health issues for low-income and marginalized patients, ELAP entered into Medical-Legal Partnerships with both Sea Mar Community Health Centers and International Community Health Services. Now health providers and legal aid lawyers can work together to make legal services more accessible to patients.

**Immigrant Advocacy:** With immigration challenges intensifying in 2018, ELAP stepped up efforts to help immigrants and refugees understand their legal rights, offering free clinics and advocacy on their behalf. ELAP is fully committed to getting this information and assistance to low-income residents of the communities we serve who are affected by immigration crackdowns, travel bans and lack of due process.

**Domestic Violence:** ELAP also strengthened efforts to support the legal needs of domestic violence survivors in King County, thanks in part to winning a generous $80,000 grant from Pitch Your Peers (PYP) Seattle. This grant is funding an additional DV staff attorney – a huge help given the incredible demand we are experiencing.

To me these examples suggest an agile organization able to adapt to the times and the changing needs of a diverse and growing community – and a fierce defender of the right to justice for all.

Dale Schomer
President, 2019
Hundreds of volunteers, staff and supporters make ELAP a vital community lifeline.
OUR IMPACT:
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGAL PROGRAM

It was a night Rose will likely never forget, but hopefully her daughter will. Rose was parking her car one evening after returning home when her former boyfriend – the father of her three-year-old daughter – assaulted her.

He was watching their daughter at the time but was also very drunk. He chased Rose into her apartment where he continued to hit her, choke her and bite her in front of their child. She managed to fight him off and call police.

She filed for a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO) and was referred to ELAP. Originally Rose received pro se assistance from one of ELAP’s volunteer attorneys to help prepare her for her hearing and strengthen the evidence in her case. But when her former boyfriend hired an attorney, ELAP agreed to represent her at the hearing.

The protection order was granted and her ex was required to undergo DV treatment, including substance abuse screening.

But that wasn’t the end of it. Immediately after the hearing, Rose was served a summons and petition for a parenting plan; her daughter’s father was asking for a 50/50 custody arrangement. Her ELAP attorney agreed to help Rose draft a strong response, but at the last minute the father called off the hearing. Should he try again, Rose knows where she can get expert advice from a caring attorney.
**Program Highlights**

**Advice Clinics:** ELAP operates more than 30 free community-based legal advice clinics each month for low-income residents. The legal clinics are held throughout East, Northeast and Southeast King County. Each year more than 1,000 individuals receive one-on-one appointments with pro bono attorneys who assist with a comprehensive array of civil legal issues including general law questions, family law, domestic violence, immigration, bankruptcy and multilingual general law.

**Domestic Violence Legal Program:** ELAP provides extensive advice and limited representation for survivors of domestic violence using DV staff attorneys and volunteer attorneys. ELAP’s full-time staff attorneys provide legal assistance and safety planning to survivors of domestic violence and their children. Attorneys work closely with other community agencies to ensure survivors receive coordinated services.

**Wills Project:** Volunteer attorneys prepare wills, powers of attorney and advanced healthcare directives for clients. ELAP provides witnesses and notary public services at the time of signing.

**Medical-Legal Partnership:** Two on-site collaborations between ELAP and Sea Mar Community Health Centers and International Community Health Services (ICHS) in their Bellevue clinics to address patients’ legal needs. MLPs place civil legal aid attorneys alongside the health center teams to detect, address and disrupt the cycle of unhealthy social conditions that impact health.

**Community Education:** ELAP provides legal information through a Know Your Rights series for the public at various agencies on the Eastside. These presentations are made by volunteer attorneys and discuss immigration, probate, preparing your own will, veterans benefits, family law, and fraud issues among other topics.

**Project Safety:** ELAP partnered with the King County Prosecutor’s Office to assist victims of crime. Two full-time legal navigators have offices in the King County Courthouse in Seattle and the Maleng Regional Justice Center in Kent. The legal navigators serve as liaisons between recent victims of crime and area legal aid and social service agencies.
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YWCA Sexual Violence Legal Services

Generous Individual Donors
OUR IMPACT: LEGAL ADVICE CLINICS

TIMOTHY’S STORY

One day last fall, Timothy parked his car on a Kirkland street and took a bus into Seattle, just like he did every other weekday.

When he returned to his car, it was surrounded by police cars and fire trucks. Someone had set his car on fire. He explained to the officers that he was not involved in the fire and showed them his bus ticket to prove he had been in Seattle, but he was still worried that he would be charged with a crime.

With limited means, hiring an attorney was not an option. Timothy had heard about ELAP and he was able to make an appointment at the ELAP General Law Clinic – and he left greatly relieved. The attorney he met with confirmed there were no criminal charges filed against him and advised him to pursue further action with the Washington State Insurance Commission.

PETER’S STORY

When you don’t have a lot of money but do need a lawyer, the free clinics that ELAP provides are a vital community resource. That was Peter’s experience when he sought help with a guardianship issue at an ELAP Family Law Clinic.

Peter’s elderly mother, who suffers from dementia, had legal responsibility for Peter’s 55-year-old brother. Peter feared his mother wouldn’t be able to take care of his brother, who has Down Syndrome, and wanted guardianship transferred to him.

He met with an ELAP attorney, who helped him understand the process, provided forms to get started, and followed up to answer some additional questions. Peter felt much better knowing that he would be able to make arrangements for his brother’s care.
ELAP began 2018 in a very strong financial position. This support made it possible to invest in expanding our services to include the Medical-Legal Partnership and additional clinic programs to reach more clients.
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“When I walked out of there, I felt like I got a little something settled for myself.”

– Margaret
OUR IMPACT: MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIP

Emily was referred to ELAP through the Medical-Legal Partnership. Over the past few months, Emily had been in therapy to help her deal with domestic violence and problems with her family.

Emily has been married to her husband for over 30 years and together they have a teenage son. She first started seeking help last year for her son when she realized that he had become addicted to video games—his addiction had become so severe that he frequently missed school, failed to complete his assignments and was failing out of school.

She and her husband enrolled in couples’ therapy and marriage counseling in order to help them handle their son’s video game addiction. She also started individual therapy at the health clinic, because she is afraid to disagree with her husband and is tired of his abuse. He is verbally abusive and controls all the finances and he frequently transfers money between their accounts without her knowledge.

ELAP facilitated discussion of her legal options including her concerns about the effect of age on her legal remedies. The group also talked about safety planning for her and their son as well as planning for retirement. Together, her therapist and the ELAP MLP attorney were able to connect her with resources at a DV agency.
ABOUT ELAP

Since 1989, Eastside Legal Assistance Program (ELAP) has been dedicated to making the legal system more accessible to those most in need. ELAP’s work is interwoven into the fabric of the Eastside and the organization has served the area continuously for the last 29 years using volunteer attorneys and staff attorneys, program staff and community volunteers.

Today, with our team of volunteer attorneys and full-time staff attorneys, we provide hundreds of hours of free civil legal assistance to low-income families and individuals who live in Northeast, East, and Southeast King County and to survivors of domestic violence throughout King County.