

2022 Program Outputs: Your Dollars at Work

750+

people served by
BLC



\$178,826

In debt waived
thanks to the work
of BLC advocates



77%

Of BLC's cases
ended in favorable
decisions



“ I want to say to BLC: I am so thankful, and appreciative of your services and your help along the way. Words cannot describe how happy I am, and how appreciative I am. Thank you. ”

-BLC Client, in reference to BLC's success in helping him gain access to Social Security Benefits



“Providing direct service to people in need via legal aid is one of the fastest and most powerful ways to lift up our communities. Direct legal aid services are life-changing, giving folks experiencing barriers like poverty, houselessness, and disability access to basic needs that they have been denied.”

-Kate Means, Staff Attorney



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A letter from the Executive Director

Dear BLC Community,

2022 was a year of new transitions and growth for Benefits Law Center. I joined on as the new Executive Director in July, and BLC hired three new attorneys, a paralegal, and a Development/Volunteer Coordinator. Former Executive Director Alex Doolittle's dedication and excellent work in establishing BLC's foundation and infrastructure enabled our new staff to hit the ground running in a seamless and successful manner.

As our community slowly recovers from the impact of the pandemic, BLC returned to serving our clients and conducting outreach at our partnership sites throughout King County in-person. BLC held our first in-person LOL fundraising event since 2019, and we were able to reconnect with our community partners to develop and grow our strong relationships. While our clients continued to experience long wait times and delays with Social Security, they now have the ability to attend their administrative hearings in-person, which was not an option during the pandemic.

For our clients, the past several years have exacerbated the barriers and inequities that they experience when attempting to navigate the Social Security system. King County experienced a surge in the homeless population, and the racial disparities of those who are living in poverty continued to grow. In spite of these staggering inequities, BLC served over 750 clients and connected with countless other community partners to help our clients find a pathway out of homelessness and toward housing and income stability. With BLC's focus and commitment to social justice, equity and inclusion, and legal advocacy, we stand with our partners to ensure that everyone's basic human needs are met.

BLC and our clients will continue to face new barriers and challenges, which requires that we develop new and innovative strategies to serve our clients, and build strong community ties and partnerships to provide services that are accessible, inclusive, and collaborative.

Thank you for your continued support; we can't wait for you to see what BLC will accomplish in 2023!



Huy Nguyen

Shari Marion

2022 Volunteer of the Year



"I'm proud to be part of an organization that has a deep sense of caring - that has a soul. Benefits Law Center not only does the work that is needed, but it believes strongly, and cares deeply for the people and community they serve. It is what continues to draw me to serve in whatever capacity is needed."

– Shari Marion, BLC Board President.

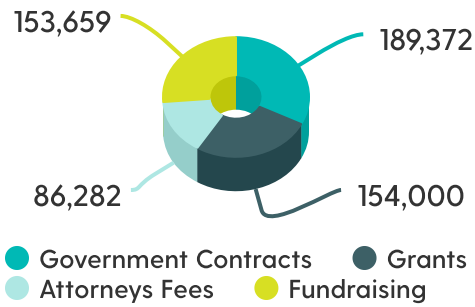
Shari Marion joined BLC's board in 2019 and currently presides as the President. Shari was introduced to our board through a former Microsoft colleague, who had also been a long-time board member for BLC. Shari initially got involved with BLC as a donor, attending our LOL fundraising events, yet she had a desire to volunteer with an up and coming nonprofit in the growing stages with committed board members. Shari has 30 years of experience nurturing small companies into global ones, having co-founded a marketing services agency that worked with technology clients. We are grateful that she was willing to bring her entrepreneurial experience to BLC when the time was right in 2019.

In the past five years, Shari has been instrumental in the projects driving our agency forward, including the evolution of and branding for our Justice Bus, Washington State's only mobile legal unit; and the passing of the torch from Alex Doolittle to Huy Nguyen as Executive Director. In 2022, Shari was particularly patient and supportive through the hiring process of many new staff members including three attorneys, one paralegal, our Development and Volunteer Coordinator, and our Development Director. In 2023, she has connected us with Microsoft employees to help raise funding to purchase a new Justice Bus.

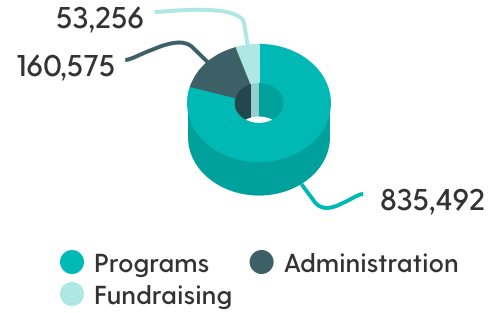
When asked what lies ahead for BLC from her perspective, Shari said that the board will be focused on building a three-year strategic plan, rebranding work from a race equity perspective, and finding ways to implement a fleet of Justice Buses to reach more people beyond King County who need BLC's critical legal services. Shari's dedication and energy as a volunteer has afforded BLC significant growth and stability. We are proud to honor her with the 2022 Volunteer of the Year Award for her passion and commitment to our shared work!

2022 Financials

Revenue (\$)



Expenses (\$)



13,368

Individuals in King County experienced homelessness in 2022

51%

Of homeless people in King County identify as having a disability

31%

Of homeless people in King County identify as having a mental health disorder

\$287,488

In back pay was awarded to clients thanks to BLC

New Benefits Awarded to Clients in 2022

\$21,231

so that people who did not previously have benefits can meet their monthly expenses



Client Success Story: Matthew

This story displays the need for BLC's critical services, the dedication of our experienced advocates, and the perseverance of our nearly 1,000 clients empowered annually. Using the words of our staff attorney, Hillary, here is Matthew's story:

Matthew, Hillary's client, lives with a variety of mental and physical impairments. He was shuffled through the foster care system and suffered abuse and neglect during his formative years. He experiences PTSD, Depression, Bipolar Disorder, learning disabilities, clubfeet, and pain due to back injuries—all of which make him unable to work. He was unhoused for years, was struggling with drug and

alcohol addiction, and had also spent some time incarcerated. He had no familial support, and faced financial, cognitive, and emotional barriers to successfully navigating the complex Social Security system. Despite being eligible for Social Security Insurance (SSI) benefits, Matthew's claim was denied in 2019. The process to appeal his case and appeal to a judge was lengthy; his hearing finally took place in 2021. Thanks in large part to a successful partnership with Downtown Emergency Services Center (DESC) and BLC's advocacy, Matthew received a fully favorable decision in August 2022. Matthew now receives monthly SSI payments and he was awarded about \$30,000 in back pay. The outcome for Matthew is one of night and day. He went from being



unhoused, struggling with addiction and childhood trauma, not receiving medical care, and feeling neglected. We're glad to say that Matthew is now in a great place of stability.

BLC offers our clients a space to feel seen and heard, and to have an expert advocate for them in a system they often find impossible to traverse. Matthew's journey showcases the power of BLC's collaborative efforts and the potential for positive change. Join us in celebrating Matthew's incredible success and the countless lives impacted by BLC's crucial programs.

2022 Community Partnerships

- Lavender Rights Project
- Mary's Place
- North Shore Senior Center
- Chief Seattle Club
- Pike Place Commons
- NJP
- REACH
- DESC
- NWIRP
- Iraqi Comm. Ctr
- Open Door For Multicultural Families
- SKCCH
- Swedish
- Harborview
- Solid Ground
- Compass Housing
- Team Child

The Need for BLC's Services Amongst Veterans

According to the WA State Department of Veterans Affairs, there are 99,376 veterans in King County alone; of which, 13% grapple with homelessness. Veterans face hurdles to obtaining Social Security Administration (SSA) disability benefits; and for veterans on SSA, they encounter unfair overpayment claims. To better support our area's veterans in 2022, BLC initiated weekly, on-site support at both the Northgate and Tukwila offices of the King County Veteran's Program.

Through our legal and advocacy support, we can increase veterans' knowledge of available SSA benefits and help them apply for benefits to quickly obtain income security, which is key for housing stability and ending veteran homelessness. In 2022, our experienced attorneys supported approximately 10 veterans per month, primarily with accessing and obtaining SSA benefits; and a few with their overpayment appeals of which some ended with favorable decisions.

77%

Of BLC's cases ended in favorable decisions

BLC helped **261**

people advocate for themselves in their own cases

Number of Clients Served in 2022

750+

\$234,527

in over payments were reversed or waived thanks to BLC

Thank you to our 2022 funders:



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town & country

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