ACTION.
ACCESS.
PROGRESS.

2015 Annual Report & 2016 Strategy
“THESE ARE THE TIMES THAT TRY MEN’S SOULS.”


Written in winter, as our young nation’s survival hung in the balance two hundred forty years ago, Thomas Paine’s words feel fresh today. Stories of worsening conditions in public schools caused by lack of funding stream in from all corners of the Commonwealth. Children enrolled in Medicaid in Pennsylvania are not getting in to see a dentist. People with disabilities want to work but face unemployment at more than twice the rate of their peers; and people with criminal histories face ongoing barriers to the work force even after resolving their charges. We can’t count on the political process to fix the problems because members of the Pennsylvania legislature have insulated themselves from the political process by drawing the election maps to preserve their seats.

It is in these times of darkness that we most need people to challenge these broken systems. The Public Interest Law Center is doing just that. Our small band of lawyers pressures elected officials where change is possible. We call on the courts to require public education funding. We apply vigilance and legal pressure to deter the School District of Philadelphia from taking shortcuts in providing special education services.

And the hard work you support pays dividends: our lawyers and community organizer successfully infuse leadership in our disinvested communities. Last year we helped end the largest urban renewal project in history, which tore apart the diverse, vibrant Eastwick neighborhood; and we are helping to give the community a say in what happens there in the future. Our advice helped Pennsylvania take the first step toward updating our election laws with online voter registration. Our advice, advocacy and lawsuits are helping people with disabilities and criminal histories who want to work.

We are not alone as we tackle these challenges. We gather power and energy from the people around us: clients, pro bono lawyers, coalition partners, volunteers, interns, donors, and our most dedicated and hard-working board of directors. You keep us going.

As another leader said in another time of trial: never, never, never give up. With all of you behind us, we won’t.

Sincerely,

Jennifer R. Clarke
Executive Director

Brian Feeney
Board Chair
**OUR MISSION**

We use high-impact legal strategies to improve the well-being and life prospects of vulnerable people in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania. Our actions help people remove barriers and secure access to resources that are essential to progressing against poverty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>EDUCATION:</strong></th>
<th><strong>ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE:</strong></th>
<th><strong>HOUSING:</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure all students, regardless of their zip code, the color of their skin, their language, or their abilities, have access to a high-quality public education</td>
<td>Provide tools for communities to advocate effectively for sustainable and equitable neighborhoods</td>
<td>Fight housing discrimination and promote quality, affordable housing for people in the neighborhoods of their choice</td>
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<th><strong>HEALTH CARE:</strong></th>
<th><strong>EMPLOYMENT:</strong></th>
<th><strong>VOTING:</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remove systemic barriers to medical and dental care for people enrolled in Medicaid, especially children</td>
<td>Help people with criminal records and people with disabilities fight and eliminate employment discrimination</td>
<td>Protect every citizen’s right to vote by modernizing Pennsylvania’s election system and challenging discriminatory barriers to the ballot box</td>
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</table>
In Upper Dublin, PA, the school district’s policies discriminate against African-American students. Black students experience significantly higher out-of-school suspension rates and are disproportionately placed in lower-level academic tracks. Since 2008 a group called Concerned African AmericanParents has been working to address this discrimination.

“The district’s policies have serious, immediate consequences for our children. Higher suspension rates are putting black students at a severe disadvantage when it comes to college and career prospects.”

- DAWN KELLEY, LEADING MEMBER OF CONCERNED AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENTS

When the school district backpedalled on a promise to eliminate tracking, Concerned African American Parents asked us to help. On their behalf, we prepared and filed complaints with the U.S. Department of Education and the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, requesting a full investigation into the district’s practices. State Senator Vincent Hughes has stepped in to help as well, urging the agencies to move forward and the school district to make improvements on its own. We will continue this advocacy throughout 2016.

DURING THE 2014-2015 SCHOOL YEAR, WHILE JUST 7.3% OF STUDENTS IN THE UPPER DUBLIN SCHOOL DISTRICT WERE BLACK, NEARLY 45% OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENIONS WERE ISSUED TO BLACK STUDENTS.

PERCENTAGE OF BLACK STUDENTS PERCENTAGE OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS ISSUED TO BLACK STUDENTS

Students championed by Concerned African American Parents.
Michael MacDonald works for UPS. He is deaf and his primary language is American Sign Language (ASL). The Americans with Disabilities Act requires employers like UPS to provide employees with disabilities reasonable accommodations, like ASL interpreters, to give them equal access to the workplace. Michael can do his day-to-day job well without an ASL interpreter, but he needs an interpreter during occasional human resource and other company meetings, for training, tests and to provide safety information. Michael has repeatedly requested an ASL interpreter, but UPS has failed to provide one, even when UPS erroneously laid Michael off. Without an interpreter, Michael had no idea what was happening and did not know whether he would get paid or be able to go back to work.

“I want to do my best at work. But without communication, problems occur. I’m bringing a lawsuit against UPS not just for myself, but to fight for the rights of my other deaf colleagues and counterparts.”

– MICHAEL MACDONALD

We helped Michael file a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and when that agency did not take action, we filed a federal lawsuit against UPS. Employment discrimination contributes to high unemployment rates among people with disabilities. In 2015, we represented 13 people with disabilities, launched a walk-in clinic, and trained 700 people on these issues.
Pennsylvania public schools are forced to rely heavily on local property taxes because the state does not pay its fair share of school funding. This results in Pennsylvania having the widest funding gap between wealthy and poor school districts in the country. Hundreds of thousands of children in low-wealth communities do not receive the quality education they need to become productive members of our society.

In 2015 we advanced our lawsuit against state officials for failing to uphold their constitutional responsibility to maintain and support, “a thorough and efficient system of public education” for all students. Together with the Education Law Center–Pennsylvania and O’Melveny & Myers LLP, we represent seven families, six school districts, the NAACP Pennsylvania State Conference, and the Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools.

“There has been racial discrimination in the way schools are funded for over 20 years. My boys are two of the hundreds of thousands of students throughout the state that lack basic educational supports and services – functioning school libraries, up-to-date textbooks and curriculum materials, reasonable class sizes, guidance counselors, school nurses – the list goes on. But there is hope! The lawyers and staff at the Law Center are providing hope to families like me because they are fighting for fair funding for my boys and the students of Pennsylvania. And I am hopeful that the justice we are fighting for will answer this mother’s prayer of just wanting what is right for my boys.”

- SHEILA ARMSTRONG, PARENT CLIENT IN WILLIAM PENN SCHOOL DISTRICT, ET AL., V. PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, ET AL.

In March 2015, the Commonwealth Court heard oral argument on the government officials’ claim that matters involving school funding are political and the courts cannot intervene. After the Commonwealth Court agreed with the government officials, we appealed to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. Oral argument is expected in 2016.
In addition to litigation, we helped The Campaign for Fair Education Funding develop a recommended school funding formula. State legislators used our formula as a model to create their own formula. We are working with The Campaign to activate the public to pressure legislators to adopt the formula. Visit www.fairfundingpa.org to join our advocacy efforts.

Marc Kitchens is a father of three who had a steady job with a software company. He built a strong track record at the company, having been promoted to a supervisory role just nine months after he was hired. When his company was bought by a global firm, the new firm invited him to stay on and apply for a higher-ranking job. But after the new firm conducted a background check and found a five-year-old, unrelated drug charge, they fired Marc, disregarding his positive work history.

“I paid my debt to society for a previous mistake and I did everything the right way. I got my affairs in order, started school, and got a steady job. I started at the lowest possible position and worked hard, earned promotions, and got great recommendations from company executives. But at the end of the day, all of that didn’t matter, and it was really unfair that I was let go because of my past record.”

– MARC KITCHENS

Pennsylvania law protects people like Marc from being disqualified from a job because of arrests that do not lead to convictions or convictions that are unrelated to the job at hand. In partnership with Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity, we helped Marc negotiate with the new firm and secure a settlement agreement that included financial compensation and a commitment to change its hiring policies. This is our third successful recent case on behalf of people with criminal records.
Voting should be easy and convenient and every citizen should have equal access to the ballot box. Instead, in Pennsylvania, voters face basic barriers to the polls and voter turnout is at an all-time low. Working people and voters with disabilities can’t always make it to the polls on Election Day. New voters and longtime voters who move can easily miss the 30-day voter registration deadline.

In 2015 we helped found Keystone Votes, a statewide coalition working to secure proven improvements to our election system such as optional voting by mail, same-day voter registration, and in-person early voting. We also provided legal expertise to the Pennsylvania Department of State on the Department’s plan to roll out online voter registration. Nearly 100,000 applications have been filed through the online system since it launched in October 2015.
Barbara Galarza is the mother of a 10th-grade student with ADHD enrolled in the School District of Philadelphia. Ms. Galarza reads and speaks Spanish only. However, when District personnel discussed her child’s special education needs with her, the District refused to give her important documents in her native language. As a result, Ms. Galarza could not review a psychologist’s report before an in-person education planning meeting, and she belatedly learned that her child had been diagnosed with an intellectual disability. When she needed to talk to school staff about her child’s math class, the District left her in the dark without a translator.

“The school wouldn’t give me information in Spanish; they didn’t seem to care. I couldn’t understand what the District was telling me. They did not help me or my child so that she could do well in school.”

– BARBARA GALARZA (TRANSLATED BY LAW CENTER VOLUNTEER)

We are working to help families like Barbara’s gain access to the fundamental interpretation and translation services they need to participate in their children’s education. In August 2015, we partnered with the Education Law Center–Pennsylvania and Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP to file a federal lawsuit challenging the District’s failure to provide interpretation and translation to more than 25,000 families in Philadelphia who do not speak English as their primary language. This case is now moving through court.
“The coalition has provided me with a means to stay abreast of the hard work being done by sister and brother gardeners in communities throughout Philly and south Jersey. Soil Generation is one of the few explicitly food-sovereignty focused community groups that is attempting to address the race, class and power issues that meet in our work as growers. Through challenges along the way, all the members have stayed committed to farming, working, praying and playing through it.”

- CHRIS BOLDEN-NEWSONE, SOIL GENERATION MEMBER

As part of our Garden Justice Legal Initiative, we helped found and currently support Soil Generation, a grassroots coalition of activist gardeners, farmers and community groups that uses organizing, advocacy and education to create a city in which all communities, particularly low-income, immigrant and communities of color, have access to wholesome, local foods and safe and vibrant neighborhoods. Soil Generation has been instrumental in shaping city policies, specifically for the implementation of Philadelphia’s new Land Bank, to value urban agriculture as an appropriate end-use for some of the estimated 40,000 vacant lots in the city.

Together with Soil Generation, we spent 2015 making sure gardeners and farmers have access to legal information about land tenure, so that they can become self-advocates. We trained 380 gardeners on how to gain legal access to vacant land, created a “train-the-trainers” curriculum and used it to train 27 advocates to conduct their own vacant land trainings and developed a comprehensive vacant land toolkit. We also helped 38 gardens on the pathway to legal access to land through direct representation and consultations.
Pennsylvania ranks 35th in the nation when it comes to providing preventive dental care to children enrolled in Medicaid. An estimated 59% of Medicaid-eligible children do not see a dentist in any given year, even though we know preventive dental care dramatically improves overall health.

We also know, from our decades of litigation in other states, that one factor in these low treatment rates is the low level of reimbursement paid to dentists by the state and insurance companies for treating kids enrolled in Medicaid. For this reason, we have been pressing for public release of dental reimbursement rates under Pennsylvania’s Right-to-Know Law. When the state and insurance companies refused to make records revealing these rates public, even though they show how taxpayer dollars are spent, we sued. In 2015, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled largely in our favor, noting that the public has the right to see and scrutinize how billions of dollars in taxpayer funds flow from the state to private insurance companies to operate the state’s Medicaid program. The only data that the Court did not order disclosed were rates paid to dentists by insurance subcontractors, but only because state officials had failed to oversee how these state funds were spent. We are now working to secure and analyze these data.

ART SHOW
We partnered with Community Integrated Services’ Art/Works program to turn our office into an art gallery and display work made by artists with disabilities including Deborah Miller, Jaither West, Bob Billbrough and Woodley White.
In December 2015, following three years of advocacy and partnership, we helped residents in the Eastwick neighborhood in southwest Philadelphia bring an end to the largest urban renewal project in history, gain back public control of 135-acres of land and pave the way for the first community-based planning process.

“Our legal strategies work. We drive lasting change.

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“On behalf of the Eastwick Friends & Neighbors Coalition, we extend our deepest gratitude to the Public Interest Law Center for their stellar legal counsel, dedication and commitment toward helping to influence the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority’s (PRA) decision to end the Korman Corporation’s option to 135 acres of land in Eastwick.”

-TERRY A. WILLIAMS, PRESIDENT, EASTWICK FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS COALITION AND JOANNE GRAHAM, CHAIR, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE, EASTWICK FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS COALITION

Eastwick residents live with the legacy of the nation’s largest urban renewal project, which displaced over 8,000 people. They continue to struggle with the impacts of decades of disinvestment, recent school closures and chronic and increasing flooding risks. In 2012, residents learned that Korman Residential was going to turn 135-acres of green space in their neighborhood into unwanted housing and parking that residents feared would exacerbate flooding and threaten the nearby John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge. Residents formed the Eastwick Friends & Neighbors Coalition (EFNC), and, with our help, showed up in force at a City Council hearing and persuaded City Councilman Kenyatta Johnson to withdraw the bills that would have allowed for the development. In partnership with Dechert LLP, we worked with EFNC to build relationships with city officials, holding them accountable to working with resident leaders to understand and meet the community’s needs. We are now working with EFNC, city agencies and elected officials to envision Eastwick’s first planning process in over fifty years.
We sued the state of Florida for failing to provide medical and dental care to 1.9 million children enrolled in Medicaid, and we won. After 10 years and more than 90 days of trial, the court found Florida’s Medicaid system neglects children, fails to provide preventative medical and dental care to one-third of eligible children, creates insurmountable bureaucratic hurdles and uses an enrollment system that failed to capture a quarter of a million additional eligible children. Together with Boies, Schiller & Flexner, LLP, we secured a settlement agreement with Florida health officials under which state agencies agree to significantly improve access to health care for kids from low-income families and kids with disabilities.

Credit: Emily Le Coz, Maggie Clark and the Sarasota Herald-Tribune. See more at http://medicaid.heraldtribune.com
We helped Philadelphia parents hold state education officials accountable to investigate claims that state budget cuts led to serious gaps in the courses available to children in the School District of Philadelphia. In 2015 in response to a decision by the Commonwealth Court, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) found four schools had failed to offer the state-mandated curricula and ordered the school district to create corrective action plans. We are now working with state officials to develop an easy-to-navigate and transparent process for parents to file future complaints and for the Department to investigate them.

“The lawsuit represents the investment of parents and communities to ensure that our children receive the thorough and efficient education mandated by the Pennsylvania Constitution. We are excited and energized that PDE is hearing our parent voices and seems to be working in a direction to address and investigate our concerns. And, we are grateful that through this work parents have a further recourse to affect the educational system for their children.”

– ROBIN ROBERTS, PARENT PLAINTIFF

Robin Roberts has three children enrolled in the School District of Philadelphia. One of her sons is gifted, but at the start of the 2013-2014 school year, the District eliminated his school’s gifted program, leaving him without challenging, enriching work for the last two years. With help from partners like Parents United for Public Education, City Councilwomen Maria Quinones-Sanchez and Helen Gym, and others, we helped parents like Robin from 90 schools file more than 800 complaints with the Pennsylvania Department of Education. This was the first time parents widely used a state regulation to file such complaints. When the Department failed to respond, we filed suit, resulting in a favorable decision from the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court. The Court found that the Department had a responsibility to investigate allegations of curriculum deficiencies. In 2016 we will continue to support parents in holding the state accountable for addressing gaps in schools’ curricula.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secure adequate and fair funding for public education in Pennsylvania</th>
<th>Take legal action to pressure the School District of Philadelphia to provide adequate nursing coverage, translation and interpretation services and special education services</th>
<th>Press state officials to ensure appropriate delivery of early intervention services for young children with disabilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase the number of people with disabilities in supported workplaces and design legal strategies to abolish sub-minimum-wage sheltered workshops</td>
<td>Increase public awareness of, and compliance with, state law prohibiting use of criminal background checks in hiring</td>
<td>Improve rates at which Pennsylvania children enrolled in Medicaid see a dentist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secure remedy for Florida’s failure to provide medical and dental care to children enrolled in Medicaid</td>
<td>Contribute to public policies which value long-term preservation of gardens and farms and access to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food</td>
<td>Develop leadership in low wealth, minority and immigrant communities around self-determination and land access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Eastwick Friends &amp; Neighbors Coalition in environmental justice efforts and planning process</td>
<td>Update Pennsylvania’s election laws</td>
<td>Launch housing project to represent disadvantaged communities against housing discrimination</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Finalize and adopt a new strategic plan</td>
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PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

Dechert LLP attorneys Barton Winokur, Susan Nieto and Olu Onafowora contributed significantly to our work in Eastwick over the last three years.

“Our team has a tremendous partnership with the Law Center and its clients. When we started working with the Eastwick Friends & Neighbors Coalition a few years ago, the community felt as though the odds were stacked against them and that powerful forces were going to stand in their way of influencing what gets built in their neighborhood. It felt like a quixotic quest. Staff attorney Amy Laura Cahn did a great job getting us fully involved, and together with this incredible group of people, we began to generate the belief that we could win, and we did. Now, we attend most every community meeting and we remain a real part of the community’s work. If you can’t get excited about working with people in a community who care about their neighborhood, what can you get excited about?” – Barton Winokur

“It has been a privilege and a delight to work with the Public Interest Law Center, and in particular Amy Laura Cahn, as co-counsel to Eastwick Friends & Neighbors Coalition (EFNC). I have been inspired by the dedication of the members of EFNC and Amy Laura, and it has been incredibly rewarding to help facilitate a community advocacy effort that is changing outcomes for an entire neighborhood. The Law Center has played a crucial role in EFNC’s accomplishments and we at Dechert are honored to be part of the EFNC team.” – Susan Nieto

“Partnering with the Public Interest Law Center afforded me the rare opportunity to do good for my community while honing my legal skills. I look back very fondly on my experience and greatly look forward to future partnership opportunities.” – Olumide Onafowora

O’Melveny & Myers LLP attorneys Brad Elias and Matthew Sheehan are part of the pro bono team leading our school funding lawsuit.

“It has been a privilege to work with the Public Interest Law Center, and Jennifer Clarke and Michael Churchill in particular. Their dedication to improving Pennsylvania’s public education system is inspiring, and their knowledge and experience has been invaluable. While there are many hurdles ahead, I look forward to continuing our efforts to fix a broken and unjust system. Regardless of the outcome, it is comforting to know that the Law Center will continue to fight for the rights of Pennsylvania school children. It is a fight that I have been proud to join.” – Brad Elias

“As the son of a high school teacher, I strongly believe that the key to a better life is through education. I became involved with the Law Center because they share this same philosophy, representing individuals and entities in the school funding litigation that seeks to provide the opportunity for all children across the Commonwealth to achieve success by having a quality education.” – Matthew Sheehan
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Jeffry Duffy
Carl Hittinger

Berger & Montague, P.C.
Nick Urban

Blank Rome LLP
Kevin J. Baum
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Matthew J. Sheehan

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Pennsylvania Land Trust Association
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Joe Tucker

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Thomas Fiddler
Kimberly Havener
Jonathan Klein
Daryn Rush

Willig, Williams and Davidson
Ryan Hancock

Solo Practitioners and Others
Dana Bazelon
Lawrence Berger
Jennifer McIntyre
Bharati Sharma-Patel

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55 interns and volunteers donated 5330 hours in 2015, expanding our capacity to help more people.
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- James Weygandt
- Abigail Wolf and Jonathan Weiss
- Judy Yun

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- In honor of Jennifer Clarke
- Anonymous (3)
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- Maurice Davis
- Carl and Constance Della
- Peter Deutsch
- Samuel and Miriam Diamond
- Mark and Tobey Dichter
- Alison and Stephanie DiCiurcio
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- Stefan Ellis
- Perri Evanson
- Leonard and Helen Evelev

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This list recognizes donors who gave to the Law Center for the 2015 campaign year. Every effort was made to ensure accuracy. Contact Barb Grimaldi with questions or concerns at 267-546-1304.
Advisory Board member Dean JoAnne Epps presents Jennifer Clarke and the Law Center with The Barristers’ Association of Philadelphia’s Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Award for Outstanding Service to the Community.

Staff attorney Benjamin Geffen joins pro bono attorneys Stuart Singer, Carl Goldfarb and Joshua Riley from Boies Schiller & Flexner LLP, and Dr. Tommy Schechtman in receiving the Child Health Advocate Award from the American Academy of Pediatrics for their work on behalf of children in Florida.

Amy Laura Cahn was recognized by Grid Magazine as one of “10 Philadelphians making change by empowering others” and she received the Young Alumni Award from the University of Pennsylvania Law School. [Photo credit: Mark Likosky]

Executive director Jennifer Clarke receives the Edwin D. Wolf Award, named after the Law Center’s founder, from the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

Staff receive the 2015 Juanita Jackson Mitchell, Esquire Award at the NAACP National Convention.

Staff attorney Amy Laura Cahn receives the Bread & Roses Community Fund’s Trailblazer Award from disability rights lawyer Steve Gold. [Photo credit: Bread & Roses Community Fund]

Michael Churchill celebrates with family and friends after receiving the Philadelphia Bar Foundation Award for his more than 40 years of service as a public interest lawyer.
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January 1, 2015 - December 31, 2015

SUMMARY OF REVENUE & EXPENSES*

REVENUE
Foundations & IOLTA $209,530
Legal Community & Other Support $495,768
Cy Pres Awards $215,479
Fee & Out of Pocket Awards $176,672
Contracts & Honorarium $56,334
Interest & Other Income $4,148
Total Revenues $1,157,931

EXPENSES
Program Expenses $827,067
Fundraising Expenses $199,363
General Expenses $81,898
Total Expenses $1,108,328

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
Current Assets $592,533
Fixed Assets (net of depreciation) $25,596
Total Assets $618,129
Current Liabilities $5,006
Prior Year Net Assets $563,521
Current Year Change $49,603
Total Liabilities and Net Assets $618,129
Unrestricted Net Assets $391,701
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets $120,410
Permanently Restricted Net Assets $101,011

*These are unaudited statements. Audited financial reports will be available on our website after June 30, 2016. Not included are recognized contributions in professional services.
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