

ANNUAL REPORT 2021 | LOTUS Legal Clinic

finding inspiration in each other



LOTUS
Legal Clinic

For me this has been a profound healing journey. I feel myself blossoming into a more authentic me, someone who trusts their own voice and tells their story. The real impact? Profound. Instead of being a victim, I now see myself as a survivor, nay, a thriver. How does one say, "thank you" for so great a gift?
~ 2021 Rise & Thrive Participant

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

As I close the chapter on my first year as Executive Director, I am so grateful for the dedication and support of you, and of the dynamic LOTUS staff and board. I learned a great deal and appreciate the guidance and wisdom so many of you shared with me. Throughout 2021, the pandemic continued to expose historical systemic inequities that greatly impact the survivors we work with who seek justice, healing, and accountability from the institutions that perpetuate harm. To that end, LOTUS and its clients shared in successes that gave us hope, inspiration, and a measure of justice.

I am very proud of the impact we are having at LOTUS and I'm excited to share some highlights. In June, LOTUS hired Rachel Sattler as our Senior Managing Attorney, increasing our legal services capacity and expertise in victims' rights law. Our development team formed new and long-term philanthropic relationships with foundations such as the Otto Bremer Trust and the Roots and Winds Foundation. Our direct client work saw immigration protections granted for survivors of human trafficking and protections granted for sex trafficking victims in criminal proceedings. We increased our advocacy by providing national and local trainings to a host of allied professionals and we submitted friend of the court briefs to the Supreme Court of Wisconsin in two cases. Our Survivor Empowerment programming saw a return to in-person events for both our Untold Stories Spring Showcase and our Fall Untold Stories Survivor Writing Workshop. Both events captured the beauty, strength, and empathy created by the participating survivor writers.

The future beams bright for LOTUS. We are actively engaging in a new strategic plan that will pave a new and exciting path forward in our work with survivors of human trafficking and sexual violence. Additionally, we are thrilled to announce our RISE + THRIVE 2022 Spring Concert Fundraiser on May 13th at The Cooperage Milwaukee in partnership with the talented singer-songwriter and Rise & Thrive artist in residence, Marielle Allschwang. It promises to be an evening to remember and to celebrate, and we hope you can make it!

Thank you again for your continued support. We would not be able to do this important work without you.

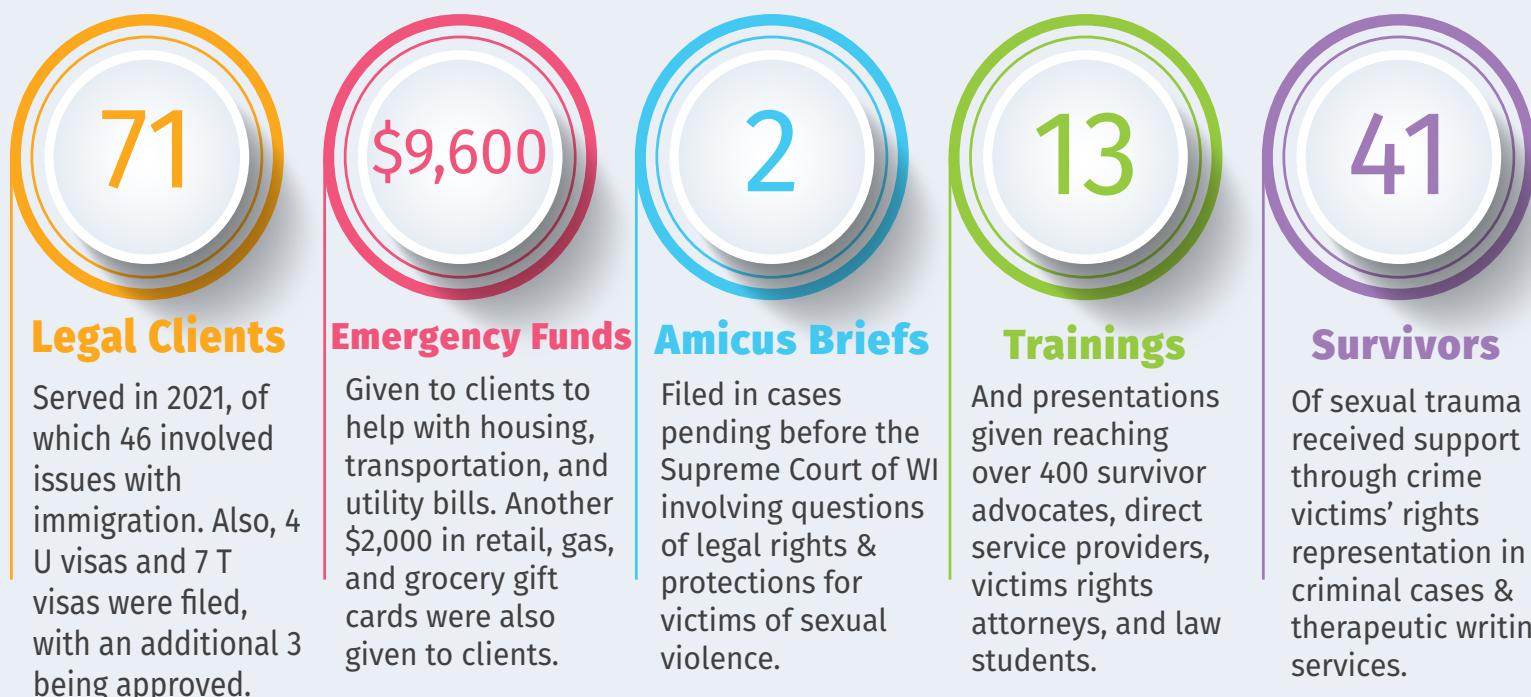
With Gratitude,
Erika Petty



It was a very joyous day when Erika and Yolanda accompanied a LOTUS Legal Clinic client to O'Hare International Airport where he welcomed and embraced his family for the first time in over four years.



Outside Northwestern Mutual Art Gallery in Glendale, Artist Brianna Seipel and Director of Survivor Empowerment Austin Reece pose for a picture with a Rise & Thrive participant.



Participants at the 2021 Untold Stories Showcase

I came to the U.S. to work but ended up being trafficked. I am grateful to LOTUS because they showed me that not everyone in the U.S. wants to take advantage of me. There are good people who help us immigrants. They have shown patience, flexibility, and commitment to us. I can say that they are there for us no matter what.

-Anonymous client

In the beginning it was challenging to speak about my trafficking, but I was able to finally tell my story. Since the first day I contacted LOTUS, they have always been responsive, patient, and a huge support for me. I appreciate everything that LOTUS has done for my family and me. Now that my T visa was approved, I look forward to reuniting with my family in Mexico. I know this will take some time, but I cannot wait see and hug my stepmother.

-Anonymous client

Untold Stories + Rise & Thrive

The 10th annual Untold Stories Spring Showcase was an intimate in-person gathering bringing together seven survivors to read their poetry surrounded by the response artworks of students from the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design.

Untold Stories Magazine (Number 4) was published and distributed widely throughout the community. It marks the first issue with a bar code and an ISSN designation.

Six Untold Stories alumnae returned for the Rise & Thrive program, and from March through June, the paintings of Brianna Seipel, the short films of Michael Snowden, and the creative writing of survivors were on display throughout southeastern Wisconsin, including the Waukesha Women's Center and a special exhibition at the Northwestern Mutual Art Gallery in Glendale.

In July, the first annual Rise & Thrive Artist Residency was awarded to musician Marielle Allschwang (pictured left) who was tasked to create original music inspired by and in response to the poems of four Untold Stories alums. The songs were recorded in October and will be published as an EP in March 2022.



Marielle Allschwang and her band The Visitations in the recording studio.

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Foundation and Organizational gifts, as well as Individual gifts over \$250

Badger Mutual Insurance Women's Amateur
Blackbaud Giving Fund
Digital Intelligence
Fidelity Charitable
Greater Milwaukee Foundation
OVW Legal Assistance to Victims
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In 2022, LOTUS welcomes Financial Analyst Dana Wilder as the new board Treasurer.

*Cover artwork by Brianna Seipel