



**GEORGIA<sup>™</sup>  
APPLESEED**

*Center for Law & Justice*

# ANNUAL REPORT FY 2020



**THE GREATNESS  
OF A COMMUNITY**

Georgia Appleseed advances justice for all Georgia's children, with a particular focus on children experiencing poverty, children with disabilities, and children who experience the effects of institutional bias and racism. Justice requires that **every child** has access to strong, nurturing schools and a healthy home.

**Our mission** is to increase justice in Georgia through law and policy reform and community engagement.

**Our values** include nonpartisan engagement, collaborations to achieve justice, listening to those who are most impacted, balanced and objective research, data-driven solutions, courage to tackle the hard issues, and the power of pro bono.

**[GaAppleseed.org](https://GaAppleseed.org)**



## A NOTE FROM GEORGIA APPLESEED LEADERSHIP

During a year marked by tragedy, struggle, and conflict, Georgia Appleseed remained steadfast in its commitment to increase justice in Georgia through systemic reform. Our remarkable Appleseed community proved that Georgians help each other through tough times and can look to a brighter future.

In the wake of the inexcusable killings of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Ahmaud Arbery, Georgia Appleseed listened to communities first and—when called to action—revisited our 2016 recommendations and report on violence against communities of color. Updating these recommendations will help us support the current movement to change our justice system with best practices, transparency, and healthier community engagement.

When the pandemic struck, community members told us that housing and educational access for low-income families were at immediate risk. Together with partners across the state, Georgia Appleseed led efforts to protect families from a wave of pandemic-induced evictions and provide children with needed educational supports when schools closed because of the coronavirus.

We quickly pivoted our existing network of statewide leaders to develop emergency responses and solutions to protect families, prioritize resources for the most vulnerable children, and develop innovative ways to deliver services. As a result, more children could attend school online, and schools were better prepared to meet the social-emotional needs of students, ensuring more learning and fewer behavioral problems.

We brought together more than 135 organizations across Georgia to advocate for supports for tenants and landlords. Our data collection efforts and analysis provided local communities with up-to-date information about how local housing courts adapted to the pandemic. And, in Clayton County, we partnered with the court to innovate an eviction prevention program that has kept hundreds of families in their homes and provided landlords with the money they need to stay in business.

As always, Georgia Appleseed looks to the future. COVID-19 has created new awareness of the inequities and inequalities faced by millions of Georgia's children. That new awareness is an opportunity to bring new Georgians into our community of hope and compassion. Together we will continue to build for all of Georgia's children welcoming schools, healthy homes, and needed supports for children facing challenges from trauma, disabilities, poverty, bias, and racism.

We hope you find inspiration as you read about our significant work and community outreach in this annual report.



Mary Benton  
Board Chair



Michael Waller  
Executive Director



# FY20 BY THE NUMBERS

Here are a few numbers that give a snapshot of our successes over the past year.

**63**  
kids in foster care

Through our Tribunal Project, we arranged or provided representation or advice for 100% of those children referred to us who were in foster care and facing long-term suspension or expulsion from school.

**53,264**  
K-12 public school students

Students in Bibb, Richmond, and Dougherty counties faced a lower risk of suspension and expulsion because of our effort to support implementation of school climate and discipline reform in these counties.

**1,155**  
participants

We trained lawyers, social workers, educators, parents, and advocates at events on educational rights, Tribunal representation, tenant rights, and more.

**2,500**  
Georgians of all ages

We developed and distributed our Help Guide for Children with Behavior and Learning Challenges to increase capacity among parents, caregivers, and case managers to advocate for their children.

**161**  
partners

135 organizations and 26 lawmakers joined our call for an eviction moratorium at the beginning of the pandemic to protect the homes of low-income families.







Atlanta Public Schools Board Chair Jason Esteves, Fulton County Schools Director of the Office of Student Discipline Maribel Bell, and Annie E. Casey Foundation Senior Associate for Education Achievement Rubye Sullivan.

**The film sparked conversation about institutional racism, privilege, and what we owe our youth.**

The Fulton County program was part of our successful and long-term efforts to reduce racial disparities in school discipline and juvenile justice involvement in specific counties across the state, including Fulton, Dougherty, Bibb, and Richmond counties. Addressing issues of race equity, education, and school discipline are central to Georgia Appleseed’s mission of bringing justice to all of Georgia’s children.

# BENDING TOWARD JUSTICE: RACE EQUITY IN SCHOOLS

On January 16, 2020, more than 100 community members gathered at the Landmark’s Midtown Art Cinema in Atlanta to watch the documentary “Segregated City” and discuss race equity in Georgia schools. A heart-wrenching story about teenagers pushing for change in their home school district, the film sparked conversation about institutional racism, privilege, and what we owe our youth.

Offered in collaboration with and supported in part by Working Films, the event included the following panelists: Fulton County Juvenile Court Judge Renata Turner,





create local solutions to local concerns and then test the impact of those solutions. Through the Clayton County HIPP, Georgia Appleseed brought together champions for healthy housing from the magistrate court, public school system, housing code enforcement, tenant advocates, and community engagement organizations, like Hearts to Nourish Hope and Housing Plus.

**The Homelessness Intervention Pilot Program (HIPP) is a “social lab” that provides space for local experts to create local solutions to local concerns and then test the impact of those solutions.**

Together, stakeholders designed and implemented several important policy interventions (or “experiments”) that are keeping hundreds of families and their children in their homes by preventing evictions and increasing code enforcement capacity to protect tenants from unhealthy conditions. While this project focuses on changing the way Clayton County courts and housing code enforcement deal with evictions, the model for innovation, community engagement, and information sharing are replicable in other places to tackle other injustices.

## INNOVATING TO END HOMELESSNESS

The connection between a child having a healthy, stable home and that child thriving in school is undeniable. Our Georgia Healthy Housing Coalition brings leaders together from across the state to ensure that all children have access to healthy, stable homes.

Local collaborations must also be part of the solution. We are developing best practices for these local collaborations, based in part on our engagement with the equity-driven Homelessness Intervention Pilot Program (HIPP), a “social lab” that provides space for local experts to



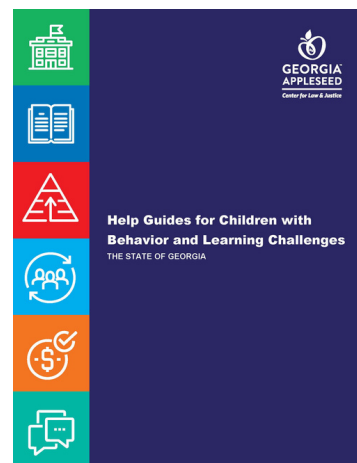
## BUILDING CAPACITY TO ADVOCATE: TOOLS & TRAININGS

Knowledge is power. Children thrive when those caring for them understand school-related rights and resources. And those who care for children—including parents, grandparents, foster parents, teachers, and other advocates—best support our children when they have easy access to information about how to get children what they need.

This year, Georgia Appleseed published and distributed innovative Help Guides for Children with Learning and Behavior Challenges to some 2,500 Georgians. Each hands-on guide lays out in simple terms what resources may be available to a child struggling at school.

### **Children thrive when those caring for them understand school-related rights and resources.**

The guides are the centerpiece to our in-person and virtual Advocating for Your Child trainings. More than 500 attendees (and hundreds more via Facebook Live) attended 29 trainings last year. Participants included parents, educators, foster care workers, and other advocates for children.







## KEEPING KIDS IN CLASS: REPRESENTING YOUTH IN CARE

A child in foster care facing long-term suspension or expulsion from school (or “exclusionary discipline,” as we call it) also faces a potential change in their home life. If exclusionary discipline requires them to change schools outside of their home district, this may also require a change in their home placement. For children who are living with loss and healing from abuse, neglect, or trauma, this can be devastating.

Through the Tribunal Volunteer Lawyers Network, Georgia Appleseed trained 55 lawyers last year to advocate for children in care facing exclusionary discipline and provided services to 63 children in care.

### **We raised the children's voices and protected them from unnecessary changes in home placement.**

Through these advocacy efforts, we added countless days to children's education, identified needed services, raised the children's voices, and protected children from unnecessary changes in home placement.





## GEORGIA APPLESEED STATEMENT ON RACIAL JUSTICE

Georgia Appleseed works to advance justice for all Georgia's children, with a particular focus on children experiencing poverty, children with disabilities, and children who experience the effects of institutional bias and racism. Our current areas of focus are educational rights and safe, healthy housing. We've chosen these areas because they are where we hope

to have the most impact with our very specific legal skill sets and perspectives. Our overall aim is to be part of a larger solution that breaks down the systemic, structural, and institutional injustices that are deeply embedded in our racist social structures, including education, housing, healthcare, criminal justice, economic justice, and nonprofit culture, just to name a few.

**Our overall aim is to be part of a larger solution that breaks down the systemic, structural, and institutional injustices that are deeply embedded in our racist social structures.**

We are not perfect in our pursuit. We will continue to strive.

#BlackLivesMatter

To learn more about our efforts, see our statements on diversity and inclusion, and racial justice:

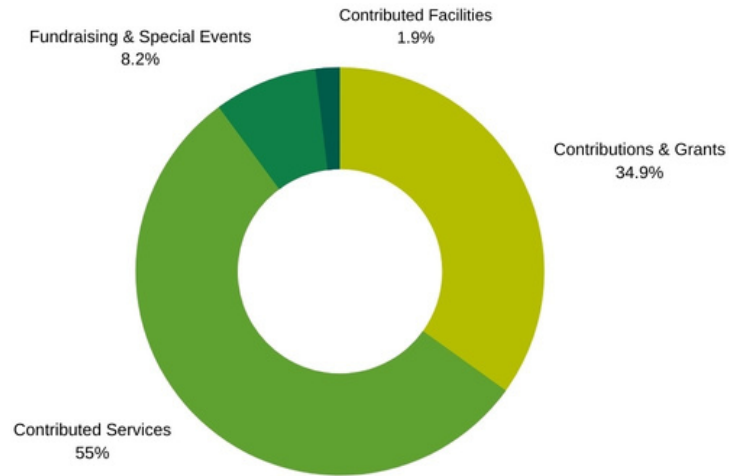
[gaappleseed.org/about/racial-justice](https://gaappleseed.org/about/racial-justice)

# FY20 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020

## Revenues & Support

Contributions and Grants	\$546,864
Contributed Services	\$861,107
Contributed Facilities	\$30,220
Fundraising and Special Events	\$128,109
<b>Total Revenues and Support</b>	<b>\$1,566,300</b>

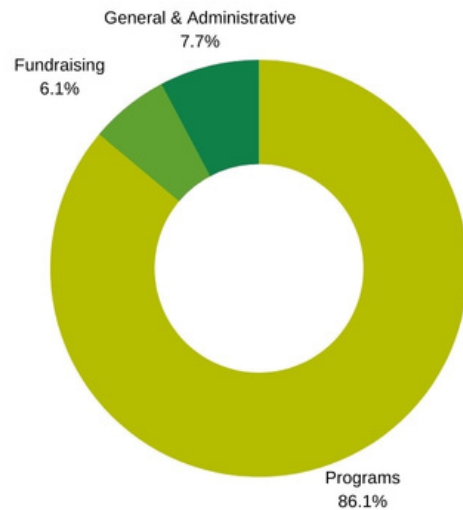


## Expenses

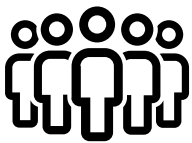
Programs	\$1,284,142
Fundraising	\$91,646
General & Administrative	\$115,378

**Total Expenses** \$1,491,166

**Total Increase in Net Assets** \$75,134



## Celebrating Pro Bono in FY20



3,186 hours



\$861,107

Board Members Harold Franklin (King & Spalding), Mary Benton (Alston & Bird), and Carrie Zhu (Aprio) gathered at November's "Branching Out for Justice" event with the Appleseed Network.





# FY20 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

(as of 6/30/20)

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The organization has 100% board giving.

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Staff Attorney Lashawnda Woods-Roberts, Legal and Policy Director Caroline Durham, Executive Director Michael Waller, and Georgia State Senator Donzella James at the 2020 Mental Health Day at the Capitol.

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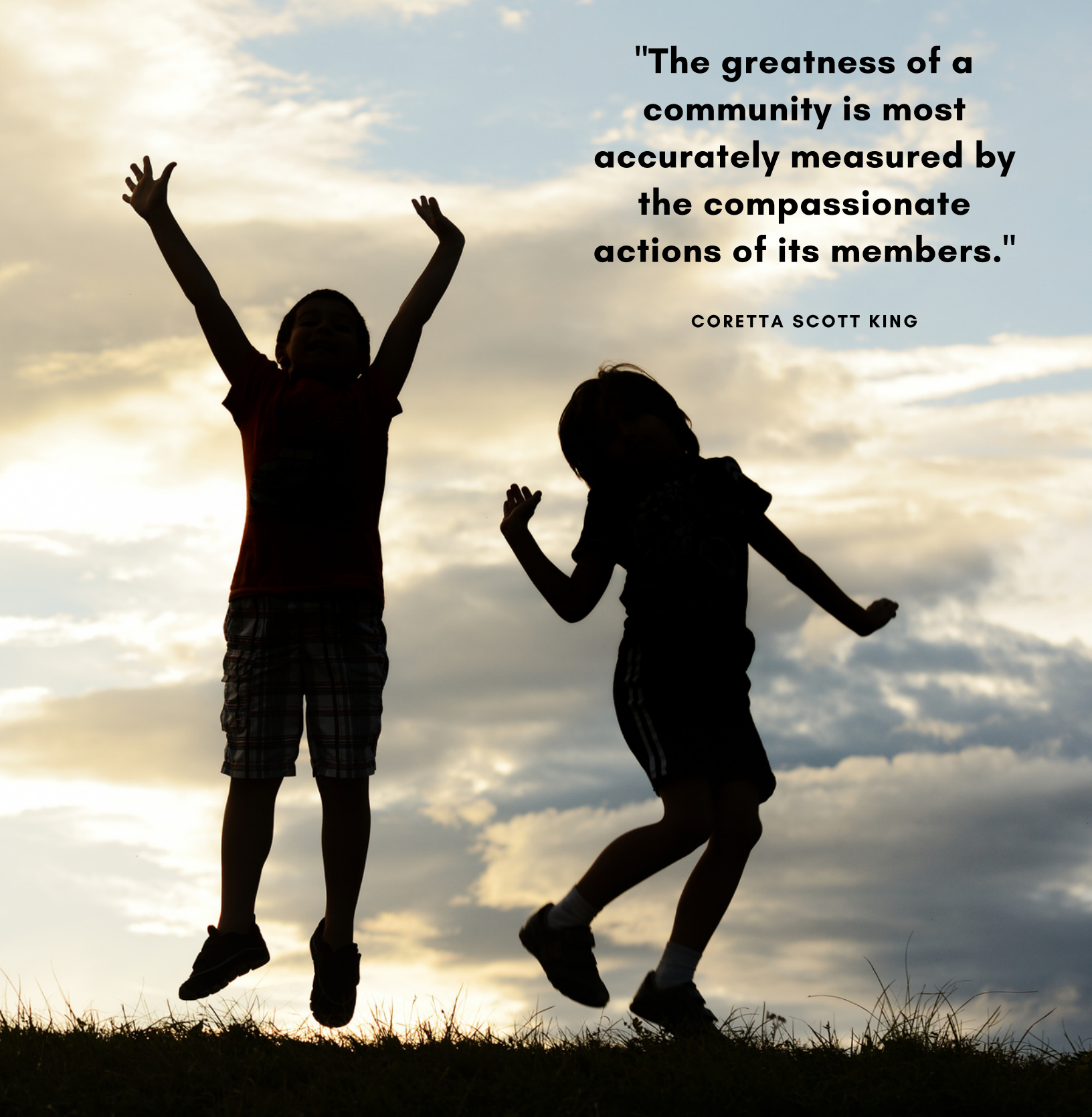


**This past year, individuals and firms generously gave their time—valued at \$861,107—to Georgia Appleseed to ensure every child has access to strong, nurturing schools and a healthy home.**

"After reflecting on which Georgia Appleseed project was my favorite, I realized how deeply personal all the projects have been to me. I was part of the team that gathered the re-write of the juvenile justice code when my son was in middle school.

Seeing the adverse impact that outdated and racially prejudiced laws could have on young lives was dumbfounding; knowing that a child's life could truly be ruined in the blink of an eye gave me better insight into raising my son."

**Maria Turner, longtime Georgia Appleseed supporter and paralegal coordinator for Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP**



"The greatness of a  
community is most  
accurately measured by  
the compassionate  
actions of its members."

CORETTA SCOTT KING



**GEORGIA<sup>™</sup>  
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