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APPLESEED**

*Center for Law & Justice*

FY 2021

# ANNUAL REPORT

Georgia Appleseed advances justice and equity for all Georgia’s children, with a particular focus on Black and Brown children, children experiencing poverty, LGBTQ+ children, children with disabilities, and children in foster care. 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, pragmatic solutions, courage to tackle the hard issues, and the power of pro bono.

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# MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP



Georgia's most vulnerable children and families navigated unprecedented challenges during the twelve months of FY 2020-2021. Many schools closed, often with limited access to virtual learning. Many parents lost their jobs as evictions continued outside of the Atlanta metro area despite a federal moratorium. And physical and mental health challenges increased with often limited access to treatment. Though government assistance was increasingly available, access to it was (and remains) difficult for so many of the families who need it most.



Georgia Appleseed strives to amplify the voices of these families. After hearing from families afraid of losing their homes, we worked to design and improve eviction prevention programs that protected thousands of Georgians from homelessness. When foster parents raised concerns about the lack of educational supports for their children, we fought for and achieved new protections for children in foster care entering new schools.

When teachers, parents, and children reported to us that mental healthcare was out of reach for many students, we expanded our efforts to increase access to behavioral services in schools. When parents of color told us that they needed more information about discipline in their schools, we successfully advocated for a new law that requires local schools to provide that data. And we continued to facilitate community conversations that foster police accountability inside and outside of schools. These conversations led to up-to-date community-driven policy to protect communities of color and children from unnecessary or harmful policing.

And as always, our lawyers represented individual children in school discipline cases, fighting for their rights and access to needed supports.

Georgia Appleseed will continue to listen to children and families and let their voices lead our efforts. We hope that the information in this annual report will inspire you to join and support us. Together, we will build a better future for all of Georgia's children.

Sincerely,

Harold E. Franklin, Jr.  
Board Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harold E. Franklin, Jr." in a cursive style.

R. Michael Waller  
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Michael Waller" in a cursive style.



# FY21 BY THE NUMBERS

Recent efforts led by Georgia Appleseed have resulted in significant milestones, including:

**1 LAW PASSED** (SB42)  
Georgia Appleseed led the effort to protect school discipline and climate reform. SB42 requires that schools be more transparent about discipline policies and their impacts on Black and Brown students and children in poverty.

**OVER 1,000 FAMILIES**

Working with partners, we protected over 1,000 families from eviction with an innovative diversion program.

**70+**  
**LAWYERS**

Georgia Appleseed trained lawyers and other professionals in a three-part training on trauma-informed representation.

**OVER 15,000**

**Georgia kids received mental health services in their schools.**

Our Bridges to Behavioral Health Project works to expand school-based behavioral and mental health services for children.

**OVER 100 EVICTION COURTS**

Georgia Appleseed surveyed over 100 of the state's eviction courts to paint the only comprehensive picture of how these courts responded to COVID-19 and its impact on tenants.

**44,000 FEWER CHILDREN SUSPENDED**

Georgia's schools suspended 44,000 fewer children last year than when we began advocating for school discipline reform in 2011, continuing the decline in discipline rates.

**2** new attorney manuals to help children access healthcare and advocate for children in school disciplinary hearings.

**700+** Georgians trained on how to better advocate for children.



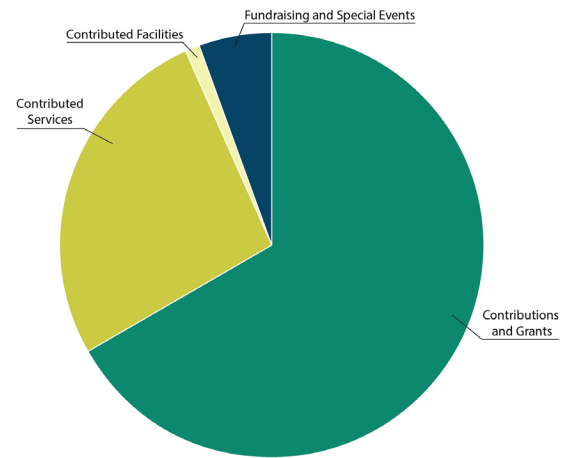


# FY21 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021

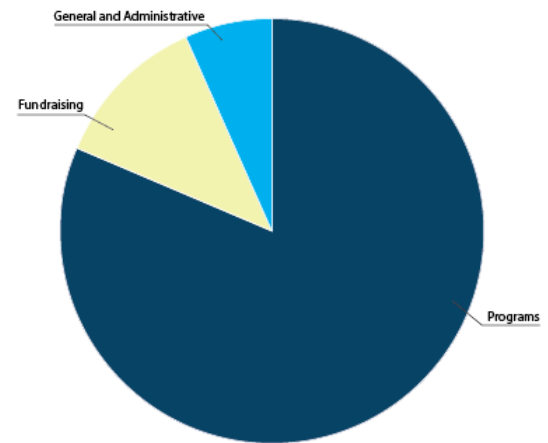
## Revenues & Support

Contributions and Grants	\$1,577,755
Contributed Services	\$627,004
Contributed Facilities	\$30,220
Fundraising and Special Events	\$126,322
<b>Total Revenues &amp; Support</b>	<b>\$2,361,301</b>



## Expenses

Programs	\$1,122,531
Fundraising	\$162,025
General and Administrative	\$90,355
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$1,374,911</b>
<b>Total Increase in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$986,390</b>



**1,813** PRO BONO HOURS  
worth more than **\$627,000**





# The FAIR Project: Children in Foster Care Are Everyone's Children

*Denise, a bright and chatty 10th grader, was surrendered into foster care as COVID-19 shut down schools.*

Safety protocols and virtual schooling isolated her from extended family and her new school community. When schools re-opened, Denise was eager to make new friends and please her teachers, but soon found herself singled out and bullied. Eventually, the taunting led to a fight at school. The school wanted to expel Denise for a year and a half, even though the school's leadership failed to protect Denise from bullying or provide necessary special education support.

Georgia Appleseed's attorneys fought for Denise to stay in school and won. Denise is not only continuing her education, but more importantly, she is receiving the support she needs to succeed in the classroom.

Denise's story is not unique and illustrates some of the many educational barriers confronting Georgia's 12,000+ children in foster care. Georgia Appleseed's FAIR Project (Fairness, Advocacy, and Individualized Representation for Children in Foster Care) transforms Georgia's foster care system by amplifying the voices of both children in foster care and their caregivers. In addition to providing representation for children like Denise, our FAIR Project embraces a holistic approach that advocates for legal and policy innovations that will ensure that Denise and other children in care succeed in school and in stable home placements. With the right care and support, these children can and will thrive.

Georgia Appleseed's attorneys represented Denise at her disciplinary hearing and successfully advocated for her to stay in school, learning and receiving the supports she needs to succeed.





# Helping Communities Help Their Children

*When COVID-19 shuttered workplaces across Atlanta, employee layoffs hit Clayton County particularly hard. Residents in Atlanta's poorest county were already struggling to pay rising rents and 5% of the county's children were homeless.*

Fortunately, a Georgia Appleseed partnership with the Clayton County Magistrate Court and other organizations had already built a crucial lifeline for Clayton County families. The lifeline is the Homelessness Intervention Project (HIP), a social innovation lab to curb homelessness and prevent evictions.

As federal relief funds became available, Clayton County scaled up HIP's eviction diversion program to distribute millions of dollars in additional critical funds to tenants and landlords, as a result, Clayton County protected thousands of families from homelessness. While other counties and municipalities across Georgia struggled

to get federal relief dollars into the hands of those who needed it most, Clayton County was a leader. HIP's program is a model for how stakeholders in other communities can work together to protect their families and children from homelessness.

The HIP social innovation lab is part of Georgia Appleseed's Healthy Housing Initiative and an example of how we partner with community organizations across Georgia to identify the specific challenges that diverse communities face and find equitable solutions to these challenges. Working together, we are building a new Georgia where every child has a safe and healthy home.

Georgia Appleseed seeks and supports innovative solutions to ensure every child has a safe and healthy home.



# Building a Better Future for Georgia's School Children

*Georgia Appleseed is a driving force in systemic reforms to Georgia's education and juvenile justice systems.*

This past year, Georgia Appleseed successfully fought for the passage of a new law that makes it easier for parents to see whether schools are applying discipline equitably or unfairly discriminating against Black, Brown, and other children. Our Georgia Education Climate Coalition and pro bono partners also created extensive guidance for schools, the Department of Education, and the Division of Family & Children Services on how to support children in foster care when they move to a new school. And we provided timely information to Georgia's schools and parents about how to support students and keep them safe during COVID-19-related school closures.

These efforts are part of our decade-long effort to make Georgia schools a safe place where every child can learn. Georgia Appleseed lawyers work with schools, the Department of Education, and dozens of other partners to improve classroom success and safety and to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline. As a result of our efforts, schools are safer, with fewer disciplinary incidents, more student success, and higher teacher retention. When students stay in class learning and out of the juvenile justice system, the impacts on their futures and our communities are long-term and far-reaching.

Georgia schools suspended 45,000 fewer students last year than in 2011 when we started our work—that means more students in class learning and not headed to the juvenile justice system.



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