Greetings

St. Louis Volunteer Lawyers and Accountants for the Arts (VLAA) connects the creative community with lawyers and accountants who share our belief that success in the arts should depend on creative energy and talent, not on the ability to afford professional services. We are grateful to the foundations, corporations, law and accounting firms, public funding agencies, law students and individuals who support our work and look forward to broadening our reach and impact.

VLAA Hosts National Conference

Welcomed by Chalk Riot, colleagues from across the country traveled to St. Louis on April 13, 2016, to attend the annual national volunteer lawyers for the arts conference. Each organization in our informal network operates independently. Most are nonprofit organizations, while others are housed within law schools or arts service organizations. The three-day conference featured informal networking, roundtables and presentations. Highlights included a session on the arts response to Ferguson, as reported by former VLAA Board Member Freida Wheaton, and a fascinating architectural bus tour, led by Michael Allen, founder of the Preservation Research Office.

Referrals

During FY16, 206 new clients received free one-on-one assistance from our volunteers, a 20 percent increase compared to FY15 and an all-time record. Many more artists, small creative businesses, and nonprofits received on-going assistance.

Among our new clients was Andrew Doty, a poet and freelance editor. He received assistance from Attorney Rachel Jeep, Copeland Thompson Jeep. “Rachel was PERFECT,” Doty said. “She sent a letter demanding payment to a client who was refusing to pay for a completed job and the client remitted payment within days. A non-paying client is much more than a loss of money; it adds stress and an enormous extra burden of energy to attempt to persuade them to pay. With a quick, simple letter, Rachel did that persuading for me, and I could stop wasting time on that nightmare.”
Joseph Ott, Brown & Crouppen, advised artists during our copyright clinic.

Our two-session hands-on QuickBooks training for non-profit staff members was team taught by the ever patient Cindy Gray and Pamela Ditch, Anders CPAs + Advisors. In the fall and spring, we offered our popular Accidental Arts Administrator, which provides basic training for new and emerging arts organizations.

Our Business Edge seminar series for individual artists included well-attended sessions on crowd funding and public art.

Our LLC clinic combined a short presentation with one-on-one consultations with attorney-accountant teams. Twenty-six artists attended our copyright clinic, which also includes a presentation followed by consultations. Low students observed. Thanks to our partnership with Gateway EITC Community Coalition, we offered free tax preparation to the residents of the Arcade, Leather Trades and Metropolitan Artist Lofts buildings. As part of our Every Artist Insured campaign, made possible by the Regional Arts Commission, we co-hosted four enrollment sessions with the Community Action Agency of St. Louis County.

Deborah Miller, Gitana Productions, received one-on-one QuickBooks assistance from Cindy Gray.

Outreach

Our Upstart initiative touched nearly 700 college students during the 2015-16 school year. By providing both volunteers and working artists as guest speakers and distributing our easy-to-understand guides, this program helps visual arts, music, theatre and film students make the transition from the academic environment to their artistic careers.

Bravo! Our well-received Much Ado About Ethics continuing education program for lawyers and accountants, led by Michael Downey, Downey Law Group, featured a troupe of professional actors reading scenes from Twelfth Night, Hamlet, King Lear, Winter’s Tale and All’s Well That Ends Well. “At my advanced age, I’ve been to countless CLEs,” said VLAA volunteer Peter Ruger. “I can’t recall any better than today’s. Michael’s wisdom and the Shakespearean introductions made it exceptional.” Much Ado About Ethics and a rooftop reception were co-presented with the St. Louis Community Foundation. RubinBrown was the sponsor.

Rachel Yarbrough and Caroline Abraham are St. Louis Community College-Forest Park clay students.

Five law students spent part of their summer vacation learning how the law relates to the unique issues raised in the arts and by artists. In addition to blogging, they drafted several contracts for Circus Flora. Attorney Scott Miller, who recently retired from Anheuser-Busch InBev, was their mentor.

Much Ado About Ethics actors: (left to right) Whit Reichert, Jackie Thompson, Ben Nordstrom, Michelle Hand and Bruce Longworth, who also directed.
Financial Highlights

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
Year Ended 6/30/16

REVENUES
Public Funding ................................................................. $40,358
Private Funding ............................................................... 40,274
Program Revenue .......................................................... 11,925
Investments ...................................................................(131)
Total ................................................................................ $92,426

EXPENSES
Program ........................................................................... $69,043
Management & General .................................................. 10,622
Fundraising ........................................................................ 8,852
Total ................................................................................. $88,517
Net Income ......................................................................... $3,909

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
Total Assets 6/30/15 .......................................................... $118,575
Total Assets 6/30/16 .......................................................... $100,089

By the Numbers

1982
St. Louis Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts is incorporated. Accountants were added and our name changed to St. Louis Volunteer Lawyers and Accountants for the Arts in 1984.

39
New volunteers joined our panel in FY16, bringing our total number of volunteers to 300+.

206
Number of new clients who received one-on-one assistance in FY16. Since FY07, annual referrals have increased by nearly 200%.

673
Number of college students reached by our Upstart program. Our speakers made 40 presentations at 12 area colleges and universities.

$16,025
Amount donated by law and accounting firms and other corporate sponsors. Thank you!

$150K+
Pro bono services provided by our volunteers each year.

Mission

St. Louis Volunteer Lawyers and Accountants for the Arts (VLAA) supports the creative community by providing free legal and accounting assistance and a wide variety of affordable educational programs. We serve artists of every discipline and career level, nonprofit cultural organizations and small arts-related businesses. Our organization enhances the region’s cultural fabric and offers rewarding volunteer opportunities.