



The Georgia Clients Council (GCC) is the oldest statewide non-profit grassroots organization led by low-moderate income leaders. While the Georgia Clients Council has membership statewide, the Clients Council serves primarily rural communities. The Georgia Clients Council, founded in 1976, as an initiative of the Georgia Legal Services Program (GLSP). The Georgia Legal Services Program, which is funded in part by the federal government, provides legal assistance to Georgians who meet the federal poverty guidelines and cannot afford a private attorney. It was and is the premise of GLSP that given the information, training, resources and support many low-income people can represent and advocate for themselves; allowing Legal Service's Attorneys to focus on cases needing direct legal representation. Trained and prepared Client Council members have been effective advocates in addressing public assistance, housing and education issues. Using the Legal Aid website is another effective tool for client leaders. (See attached post-card)

There are six active regions of the Clients Council: Albany, Augusta, Athens-Clarke (Gainesville), Columbus, **Macon**, and Valdosta. Each serving 10-15 counties and working closely with the Legal Services Office in their area. Each region also works with other organizations with the same or similar mission of the Georgia Clients Council in their area and statewide.

Client members started taking a proactive approach instead of a reactive approach to persistent poverty in their communities in the late 70's. They collaborated with allies to secure more than \$ 7 million in Community Block Development Grants for housing rehabilitation, water and sewage systems and street paving for communities in Adel, Claxton, Jesup, and Sylvester. Georgia Client Council members were instrumental in building 194 affordable housing units in Treutlen, Wayne and Dougherty counties.

Up until 2018, GCC produced an informative newsletter that reached over 3,000 readers in and outside of Georgia.

The annual meeting and conference is an opportunity for GCC to raise monies but also to proactively address poverty by providing informative workshops, and networking for attendees on issues directly and indirectly related to poverty. Please make sure to attend our upcoming meeting.

After the Katrina Disaster the Georgia Clients Council members began working relationships with The American Red Cross and FEMA with disaster preparation/management in several rural communities. Georgia Legal Services Program provides legal assistance for families who have become victims of disasters in Georgia.

For many years the Georgia Clients Council worked on the "Claiming A Street Named King" Project. The Claiming a Street Named King is a community revitalization project in and around streets and thoroughways named after Martin Luther King Jr. This project is a partnership with Georgia Legal Service Program, Georgia State Trade Association of Non-profit Developers, The University of Georgia School of Environmental Design and Morgan State in Baltimore. The project is looking toward "Green and Environmental solutions for Martin Luther King Neighborhoods.

The Georgia Clients Council created the Veda McKnight Community Leadership Empowerment Institute 2005. This virtual institute was renamed after Veda McKnight who was the longest coordinator for the Georgia Clients Council. Many of the programs, training and outreach was led by Veda McKnight.

Many Client members have gone on to better jobs, become elected officials and/or have started their own non-profit organizations. Some of the former attorneys of Georgia Legal Services Program who worked closely with the Georgia Clients Councils have started their own law firms, and /or have become judges. But they still remain voices for the voiceless.