



## Jacksonville Litigator to Run 6 Marathons in 6 Days to Raise Awareness, Money for Underserved in Justice System

Jacksonville, May 9, 2017— Mike Freed, a business litigator with the law firm of Gunster, is *Blazing a Path* to justice to raise \$50,000 for Jacksonville Area Legal Aid. Freed's vision is to run six marathons in six days to raise awareness for the huge unmet need for legal services for low-to-no income citizens in Jacksonville and the surrounding communities. These individuals and families are served by Jacksonville Area Legal Aid (JALA) as well as the pro bono attorneys who support that same mission.

Freed's historical path to justice will start at the Florida Supreme Court in Tallahassee on Sunday, May 28th at 7:30 AM and will begin at each of the following Florida courthouses on his 6-marathons-in-6-days quest:

- Sunday, May 28th - Florida Supreme Court, Tallahassee
- Monday, May 29th - Jefferson County Courthouse, Monticello
- Tuesday, May 30th - Madison County Courthouse, Madison
- Wednesday, May 31st - Suwannee County Courthouse, Live Oak
- Thursday, June 1st - Columbia County Courthouse, Lake City
- Friday, June 2nd - Baker County Courthouse, Macclenny

Freed will finish the run at the Duval County Courthouse in downtown Jacksonville on Friday, June 2<sup>nd</sup> at 4:00 pm. Local supporters of JALA, the legal community and friends are expected to attend a finish line celebration which is open to the public and will commence after he completes the final leg of the run.

Freed's goal to raise \$50,000 for JALA is well underway with nearly \$40,000 raised to date. When he hits his fundraising goal and finishes the race, Freed will have run 157 total miles and raised the equivalent of \$318 per mile. That is approximately the running rate for one hour of legal services. With close to 50% of Floridians living paycheck-to-paycheck, attention and access to civil justice are imperative. Non-criminal offenders are not appointed state attorneys and oftentimes are underrepresented or not represented in the court system.

"There remains a huge justice gap that needs to be filled. Many of the poorest among us have no access to lawyer support to navigate the legal system," said Mike Freed. "That means a single mother may not be able to protect herself and her children from an abusive ex; a father may not be able to maintain adequate housing for his family; a veteran may not have the representation she needs to obtain benefits; an ex offender may go without help to rebuild his life and become a productive member of society. Legal Aid fills this critical gap."

Crystal Freed, Mike's wife and also a local attorney, commented on his initiative by saying, "I believe that JALA is critical for how we adjudicate ourselves as citizens of Jacksonville. Indeed helping the poor and most vulnerable in this way is integral to our very democracy and Mike and I are privileged to play a small part."

Sponsors are needed for daily marathons or miles. Visit the website ***Freed-to-Run: 6 Marathons in 6 Days*** - [www.jaxlegalaid.org/freedtorun](http://www.jaxlegalaid.org/freedtorun).

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Jacksonville Area Legal Aid serves 17 counties of North Florida including Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Clay, Columbia, Dixie, Duval, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Nassau, St. Johns, Suwannee, Taylor and Union. JALA is a primary engine for economic and social justice in Northeast Florida. You can learn more at [www.jaxlegalaid.org](http://www.jaxlegalaid.org).

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