

Move Creates New Opportunities for Clients

On October 1, 2006 the Legal Aid Society will move to a new home at the Scoop Building at 416 W. Muhammad Ali Blvd. Legal Aid Society has been at its current location for nearly thirty years and the organization needs modern office space that can better serve the needs of both staff and clients. Located across the street from its current office, the new space will provide Legal Aid Society a more efficient layout by bringing together the 42 employees on two floors. The new offices have been recently renovated and are outfitted with updated technology and phone systems- an upgrade desperately needed to help field the 50,000 calls received each year.

The improved conference rooms at the new location will also create opportunities for client outreach and community education that was not possible at the previous location. Jeff Been, Executive Director, explains, "This new office will be a place for clients to come to not just when they are in dire need of legal help, but also to attend seminars, education sessions, and other programs that can improve the quality of their lives and reduce the likelihood of legal crises in the future. We are also creating a work area for law students and volunteer attorneys to help us serve clients. This space provides Legal Aid Society new ways to creatively serve the needs of our community."

The Legal Aid Society welcomes donations of gently-used furniture to furnish its new office space. Please see our website, www.laslou.org, for our "wish list" or contact Patty Kennedy at 585-6980 ext. 258, or pkennedy@laslou.org, for more information.



Legal Aid Society's new home: 416 W. Muhammad Ali Blvd.

Grants Enable Will Clinics to Continue Thanks to Kentucky Bar Foundation and Archdiocese of Louisville

For more than fifteen years, the Legal Aid Society and the Brandeis School of Law have partnered to conduct Will Clinics for those in our community who wish to document end-of-life decisions or to provide for their care in the event of incapacity. These clinics are held throughout the community for low-income seniors and for individuals with serious disabilities. Law students and lawyers volunteering their services at these clinics depend upon laptop computers to help them draft and print the legal documents so the clients can sign them and leave the clinic with final, fully executed and notarized documents. When the laptop computers started failing last year, and after some laptops had to be held together by duct tape, these Will Clinics were at risk of ending.

Thanks to grants from the Kentucky Bar Foundation and

the Archdiocese of Louisville, Legal Aid Society was able to secure six new laptop computers and a portable printer to allow these important clinics to continue. Low-income seniors and disabled individuals on fixed incomes are unable to afford the services of an attorney to prepare a will, living will, power of attorney or health care surrogate and, as a result, these individuals frequently go without them.

They and their families disproportionately experience the crises that follow from the lack of advance planning. By conducting Will Clinics at a neighborhood community center or health care facility, Legal Aid Society can provide these individuals with these documents. With the assistance of volunteers and with laptop computers, over 25 people can receive help at each Will Clinic.

These new laptops also recently allowed Legal Aid Society

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Student Interns Provide a Wealth of Services

Throughout the year the Legal Aid Society hosts a variety of students and interns eager to gain experience and earn valuable credits for academic coursework and programs. At no cost to the organization, these students bring an enthusiasm and dedication that is of enormous benefit to our clients. The direct client contact strengthens the foundation of public service in these future legal professionals.

This summer, the Legal Aid Society was fortunate to host three students from the University of Louisville Brandeis School of Law through funding from IOLTA, and a fourth student intern via a stipend offered by the Indiana University School of Law. For ten weeks, Andrew Black, Heather Cash, W. Justin Clark, and Tyler Yeager, worked in numerous capacities, from research and fact gathering to the preparation of letters and petitions to meeting and aiding clients in a variety of cases.

Andrew Black proved indispensable at the HIV/AIDS Legal Project as he simultaneously worked to complete a joint program in law at the University of Louisville and ministerial training from the Presbyterian Theological Seminary. His unique background was valuable in the counseling he gave clients, especially on cases involving employment and housing discrimination and immigration status and benefits. Of his experiences as an intern at the Legal Aid Society, Andrew said,

“The experience is incredibly worthwhile and eye-opening because you can put your finger on the pulse of poverty issues-- not just in the local community, but in the city, state, and even the nation.”

Fortunately, Andrew is now a permanent fixture as a part-time paralegal in the HIV/AIDS Legal Project office.

Working to help victims of domestic violence obtain divorces from their abusers in the rural counties Legal Aid Society serves, Justin Clark gained great appreciation for

the necessity of free legal services in order to break the cycle of abuse. In addition to domestic violence work, Justin's research and fact gathering were crucial to a Social Security case filed in Federal Court. Additionally, he was instrumental in another Social Security case in which the debt of a client was forgiven after she was mistakenly charged over \$15,000 in back payments.

The Housing Advocacy Program was grateful for the time and energy of Heather Cash. Her research on the Uniform Residential Landlord Tenant Act brought a fresh insight

which was vital to the attorneys in the program and allowed them to focus their energies on much-needed client services. Heather also attended an administrative hearing at the Louisville Metro Housing Authority where she represented a client facing a termination of public housing benefits.

Lea Hardwick, a staff attorney with the Economic Stability Advocacy Program, was particularly impressed with Indiana University student Tyler Yeager's work with bankruptcy clients, as he helped them gather and organize their documents, worked to ensure they understood the credit counseling requirement, and assisted those clients with limited English and reading proficiency. “His creation of a step-by-step instruction sheet for the credit

counseling of those clients who lack computer proficiency is an innovation which will have long-lasting practical value to the Legal Aid Society,” said Ms. Hardwick.

In addition to the Legal Aid Society's connections with law schools the summer intern program with Central High School helps bring bright, industrious young people to the Legal Aid Society every year. Student intern Elvira Tsekova came to the Legal Aid Society last summer and has joined us again in 2006 to work as a court runner. When asked about the hard-working court runner, Patty Kennedy, Human Resources Director at the Legal Aid Society, described Elvira as “a dedicated self-starter. It's great to see a high school student so energized by the work we do.”

The experience these students received and the work they accomplished on behalf of clients, would not have been possible without the generous support of a variety of organizations, especially the IOLTA program, the Brandeis School of Law, and Indiana University School of Law. The Legal Aid Society is grateful for their continued generosity.



Indiana University student intern, Tyler Yeager.

Will Clinics

(Continued from front page.)



Will Clinic client Latonya Butler and her son, in front of their new home.

expand this service by offering a Will Clinic to low-income public housing residents who are now working and becoming first-time home buyers. Having documents that help them plan what would happen to their home should they die was important to Will Clinic participants like Latonya Butler.

Latonya lived in public housing for many years with her young son. When she completed the home-ownership program offered by Louisville Metro Housing Authority, she was finally able to purchase her first home. She also realized the importance of documenting her wishes should she die or become incapacitated.

"I've been thinking about doing this for a while to make sure that my son is taken care of," said Latonya. "I am so grateful that this service was available to me. The clinic was very professional and I think it is wonderful that the Legal Aid Society was able to help me do this. I can't tell you how much this means to my son and me."

For more information on how you can volunteer to help at an upcoming Will Clinic, contact Andrea Robbins, Program Assistant for the Volunteer Lawyer Program at 585-6980 ext. 243 or at [arobbins@laslou.org](mailto:a Robbins@laslou.org).

LEGAL AID *Successes*

HIV/AIDS Legal Project

Works with clients who have been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS and performs a variety of work on estate issues, family law, health insurance, wills, and government benefits.

As the deadline for Medicare Part D enrollment neared earlier this year, staff from the HIV/AIDS Legal Project conducted a workshop offering information on the new prescription drug plan. Through their efforts, individuals living with HIV/AIDS were able to make informed choices as to the best plan for their needs.

Family Advocacy Program

Helps domestic violence victims break the cycle of abuse by providing legal representation and social services support.

The Family Advocacy Program provided representation to more than 150 clients in the first half of 2006, including nearly 100 that received divorces. By helping them obtain divorces, custody decrees, and child support orders, members of the program empower their clients to provide safe and stable homes for themselves and their families.

Rural Counties Program

Maintains a strong legal presence for the rural poor in the courts and communities by providing a wide range of legal services in the fourteen Kentucky counties surrounding Jefferson County.

An attorney in the Rural Counties Program was recently able to secure a judgment for more than \$34,000 for a client who was both wrongfully evicted from her home and had all of her possessions destroyed and disposed of by her landlord. By defending the rights of low-income tenants, the Rural Services Program ensures that safe and affordable housing is available for all people regardless of their income.

Support *Legal Aid*

Legal Aid Society is a private not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing free civil legal representation and advice to families living in poverty. We rely on the generosity of our supporters in order to meet the annual operating budget and continue to provide valuable services to our community.

Please consider contributing to the 2006 LAS Annual Campaign. Send your gift using the enclosed envelope. You can also contribute via our website, www.laslou.org, or call Jamey Elliott, Development Director, at (502) 585-6980, ext. 247, if you have questions about supporting Legal Aid.



Legal Aid Society

Pursuing Justice • Restoring Hope

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**Serving clients
in 15 Kentucky
counties.**



Legal Aid Society is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to providing free civil legal representation and advice to families living in poverty.

BRIEFINGS

Summer 2006

6 Lawyers, 3 States, 1 Check for Legal Aid

Attorney Ellen Friedman prompts \$1,000 gift

Recently, the Legal Aid Society received a gift of more than one thousand dollars as part of a *cy pres* remedy in the settlement of a class action lawsuit. The case, alleging a Fair Debt Collection Practices Act violation, was filed in Kentucky and involved six attorneys from Kentucky, Illinois, and Louisiana. As part of the settlement, the local counsel for the plaintiff, Ellen Friedman, suggested that the Legal Aid Society be the beneficiary of any unclaimed monies:

“Cy Pres is a great way to make contributions to a worthy organization like Legal Aid Society... it’s not hard to do--you just have to ask.”

Cy pres, from the French term meaning “as near as possible,” is a court-approved method of distributing a damage fund when the original purpose cannot be achieved. When there is to be a payment of damages to class members in a class action lawsuit, a fund is created. Often, once class members’ claims have been paid, a residual amount remains.

Under the doctrine of *cy pres*, the judge and the attorneys can recommend residual funds be distributed to the “next best” use. This remedy can also be used for an award of statutory damages when the amount of damages to each class member is too small to warrant distribution.

The Legal Aid Society is a grateful and deserving beneficiary of the residuals of class action lawsuits in our community. It can easily provide a “next best” use for residual funds. For example, the *cy pres* award from the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act litigation will be used to educate low-income consumers in deceptive trade practices and to represent them when unlawful collection practices threaten their economic stability. Ultimately, the designation of *cy pres* funds to the Legal Aid Society is more than a recognition of Legal Aid’s unique history and position within the community, it is a crucial step in the ongoing campaign to provide civil legal services to those in our community who are most vulnerable.

Please contact Jeff Been, Executive Director, at 585-6980 ext. 254 or jbeen@laslou.org to find out more.

Pursuing Justice • Restoring Hope