Sometimes We Have to Help When It Doesn't Seem to Fit

The Wednesday before Memorial Day Zac Oswald, housing attorney in our Nashville office, was contacted by Carrie Grishaber from the American Red Cross regarding a fire that occurred at an apartment complex when a contractor was welding stairs back onto the building. The stairs were apparently one of the only ways to exit the building. Metro Codes determined that 34 units should be closed and tenants were advised they would not be compensated nor would their security deposits be returned. The Red Cross was directed to take complaints to the "Corporate Office" by the property manager.

Zac went to sleep Thursday night believing the Red Cross shelter was going to close on Friday and residents would become homeless. He contemplated filing a lawsuit and emergency temporary restraining order. Then, he wanted to contact the news. He knew he wanted, and needed, to do something.

The tenants’ main concerns were “What can we do right now? What can we do if the shelter goes away? When can we go back to the property? How can we get our money back?” Getting back into the property would require a compromise between the Fire Marshall, Codes, and the property owners. At this point, getting back on the property to retrieve belongings was not an option. While the tenants probably had the right to end their leases, and get prepaid rent and security deposits back, it did not provide an immediate remedy. They needed shelter and funds with which to find a new place to live now, not later.

With the assistance of Janet Rosenberg, housing paralegal, and Allison Cooley, family law attorney, Zac went to the shelter site and did intakes for tenants and spoke with the Red Cross staff. The
Red Cross believed the easy solution was a temporary staircase, which they believed would get the Fire Marshall's blessing to reopen the units. Zac called the Corporate office himself and negotiated with "Jane", who agreed to provide each tenant a new apartment or hotel lodgings immediately. Zac was also able to get expenses for hotels to date paid for by the Corporate office. The Red Cross kept the shelter open an extra night and then determined the tenants were sufficiently protected from this point forward because of Legal Aid Society's actions. Jane gave Zac her personal cell number and continued to touch base until all of the tenants' issues were resolved.

Carrie Grishaber, Disaster Program Manager, American Red Cross, Tennessee Region wrote this after our help:

"I want to thank you for the excellent work last week with our clients who were displaced due to fire. The legal assistance you offer helped us to give the utmost level of care and service to each person. I am significantly impressed with the speed with which you initially responded, as well as your readiness to call your team to action for these people in their time of need. At the Red Cross, we care deeply about the long term recovery of our clients as well as their immediate needs post-disaster and I believe you and your team were an integral part in that process in this case. I look forward to a long partnership with you and the Legal Aid Society and am incredibly grateful that you are a part of our community."

While the path to justice was unclear, Zac knew he just had to keep marching on until the path was revealed. There were some dead ends along the way but the goal remained the same - pursuing justice, taking a stand, being a voice, chasing down all options, and not giving up.

New Officers for Legal Aid Society

The Board of Directors has elected new officers to serve July 1, 2016-June 30, 2018.

- President – Robert J. Martineau Jr., attorney, Commissioner of TN Dept. of Environment and Conservation in Nashville
- 1st Vice President – Charles K. Grant, attorney, Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz in Nashville
- 2nd Vice President – J. Andrew Goddard, attorney, Bass, Berry & Sims in Nashville
- 3rd Vice President – Susan L. Kay, attorney, Vanderbilt University School of Law in Nashville
- Secretary – Adrie May Rhodes, client-eligible, Bethlehem Center in Nashville
- Treasurer – Walter H. Stubbs, attorney, The Stubbs Law Group in Gallatin
- Member at Large - Charles H. Warfield, attorney, Stites & Harbison in Nashville
- Past President – John T. Blankenship, attorney, Blankenship & Blankenship in Murfreesboro
Legal Aid Society Continues to Receive More Diversified Funding

We are pleased to be one of numerous partner agencies for 2016-17 with the following United Way programs, with a total of $160,581 in funding:

- United Way of Anderson County (Anderson county – 2016 calendar year)
- United Way of Bedford County (Bedford and Lincoln counties)
- United Way of Franklin County (Franklin)
- United Way of the Greater Clarksville Region (Houston, Montgomery and Stewart counties)
- United Way of Metropolitan Nashville (Davidson county) – 3 programs - Domestic Violence, Social Security and Housing
- United Way of Rutherford and Cannon Counties (Cannon and Rutherford counties)
- United Way of Sumner County (Sumner county)
- United Way of Williamson County (Williamson county)
- United Way of Wilson County and the Upper Cumberland (Clay, Cumberland, Fentress, Jackson, Macon, Overton, Putnam, Smith, Trousdale, Van Buren, White, and Wilson counties)

We also are grateful to be a partner agency of the Tennessee Regional Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) once again. The mission of the CFC is to promote and support philanthropy through a program that is employee focused, cost-efficient, and effective in providing all federal employees the opportunity to improve the quality of life for all. Our CFC number is 16796.

Staff Updates

Allison Cooley has been promoted to Managing Attorney of our Gallatin office. Allison has been a Family Law attorney in our Nashville office since 2011.

Allison Jones has joined the staff as the Middle Tennessee Medical-Legal Partnership attorney and will be based in our Nashville office. She most recently served as a law clerk for Senior Judge John T. Nixon of the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee. Allison is a 2013 graduate of Washington
University School of Law in St. Louis. She also received her MSW from Washington University's George Warren Brown School of Social Work.

Aimee Luna, a staff attorney in our Murfreesboro office, has been named a "Remarkable Rutherford Woman" by the Murfreesboro Post. Read more [here](#).

Zac Oswald, a staff attorney in our Nashville office, has been named the New Advocate of the Year by the Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services. He will receive the award at TALS' Equal Justice University on August 31. The New Advocate of the Year Award recognizes those who use their legal skills in an active, creative way that produces outstanding benefits for individual clients and the communities in which they live. Eligible nominees have been with their legal services program for five years or less.

Shaina Thompson has joined our Nashville office as a Family Law attorney. She began as a volunteer attorney in October 2015 and became a contract attorney for us in April 2016. Shaina is a May 2015 graduate of the University of Georgia School of Law and received her Bachelor's Degree and Masters of Arts in Executive Leadership from Liberty University.

Will You Help Bridge Our Funding Gap?

As of July 15, we have raised $617,450 for the 2016 Campaign for Equal Justice. This leaves a funding gap of $209,550 in order to reach our goal of $827,000. Gifts to the campaign benefitting Legal Aid Society provide unrestricted support for our civil legal advocacy, representation and community education.

To make YOUR tax-deductible donation to Legal Aid Society, you can go online to [www.las.org](http://www.las.org) or send a check payable to Legal Aid Society to 300 Deaderick Street, Nashville, TN 37201. If you would like to make a pledge to be paid later this year or have questions, please contact Cindy Durham, director of development, at 615-780-7125 or cdurham@las.org.

Upcoming Clinics
We are pleased to host many clinics across Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland Plateau. These clinics are staffed by both Legal Aid Society and pro bono attorneys. If you would like to volunteer at one of the clinics, please contact Jarod Word at jword@las.org (or 615-780-7131) or call your local Legal Aid Society office. You can see the list of upcoming clinics, hosted by Legal Aid Society and offered by partners, here.

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**Shop With Amazon or Kroger? Support Legal Aid Society!**

Looking for an easy way to support our work? When you shop at Amazon or Kroger, a portion of your purchases can go to support Legal Aid Society. To participate, sign up for Amazon Smile or Kroger Rewards (NPO # 98149), select Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberlands as your charity of choice and start shopping. A percentage of your eligible purchases will be donated to the organization at no extra cost to you!

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**Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberlands**

1-800-238-1443  |  300 Deaderick Street  |  Nashville, TN 37201

Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberlands advocates for fairness and justice under the law. The non-profit law firm offers free civil legal representation and educational programs to help people in its region receive justice, protect their well-being and support opportunities to overcome poverty. We serve 48 Tennessee counties from offices in Clarksville, Columbia, Cookeville, Gallatin, Nashville, Murfreesboro, Oak Ridge and Tullahoma. We are funded by Legal Services Corporation, the Tennessee Bar Foundation, United Way in 16 counties, the State of Tennessee, foundations and donors. For more information about our services or how to donate and to download information about common legal issues, visit us online at [www.las.org](http://www.las.org).