Legal Aid Society Saves Housing Fees for Hundreds

"Mary" was being evicted for nonpayment of rent. She tried paying rent but the apartment complex would not accept it until she paid a $50 household inspection fee. Mary sought help from Legal Aid Society to remain in her home.

The Legal Aid Society contacted the apartment complex on Mary’s behalf, contending that the inspection fee was illegal for at least two reasons - improper lease change without giving tenants an opportunity to submit written comments and charge not permitted by HUD regulations. The apartment complex, through their attorney, agreed to drop the case and not charge an inspection fee or late rent charge. They accepted Mary’s rent.

Later the apartment complex tried to reimpose the inspection fee after proper notice, with the opportunity to comment by tenants. Legal Aid Society submitted written comments opposing their attempt to re-impose the household inspection fee as illegal and ill-advised. After we submitted the comments, we were informed by their attorney that they will not impose the fee and are going to refund all fees paid by the tenants. Not only was Mary able to remain in her home but she did not have to pay the $50 inspection fee and $25 late rent fee. In addition, hundreds of tenants, current and future, will save from the $50 inspection fees to be refunded to current tenants and not charged to future tenants.
Gilbert Family Fellowship Created Thanks to $100,000 Gift

Thanks to a generous donation of $100,000 from Harris A. Gilbert, with the support of his children, Legal Aid Society has established the Gilbert Family Fellowship. Harris was one of the initial incorporators of Legal Services of Nashville, Inc., the predecessor to Legal Aid Society, and is a longtime supporter of ours. The program supported by the Fellowship encompasses all 48 counties and identifies legal issues children and young adults face as well as provides free civil legal assistance to them.

Those to be designated as Gilbert Family Fellows are: Paige Barbeauld (Clarksville), Sonya Bellafant (Columbia), Kimberly deMent (Nashville), Cherrelle Hooper (Gallatin), Aimee Luna (Murfreesboro), Rachel Moses (Cookeville), Rae Anne Seay (Tullahoma), Emma Sholl (Nashville) and Theresa-Vay Smith (Oak Ridge). Legal Aid Society Skadden Fellow Vidhi Joshi, who focuses her practice on helping low-income individuals with criminal records, will provide additional assistance to Gilbert Family Fellows.

Pictured L-R: Vidhi Joshi, Kimi deMent, Cherrelle Hooper, Emma Sholl, Harris Gilbert, Gary Housepian (Legal Aid Society Executive Director), Page Barbeauld, and Sonya Bellafant

Clarksville Office Partners with First Presbyterian Church

The Clarksville Legal Aid office is partnering with First Presbyterian Church in Clarksville to provide legal counselling and assistance to homeless and low-income individuals. The Church operates Loaves and Fishes, a free food program. Many of the people using the service face great difficulties, often due to persistent legal problems. The Church reached out to Legal Aid Society for help, hoping that resolution of legal problems may lead to more stability for individuals using their services.

The new program has been named PLAN for Presbyterian Legal Assistance Network. It is a collaboration of First Presbyterian Church, Legal Aid Society, and independent attorneys. With the new PLAN initiative, Legal Aid Society attorneys will provide free civil legal advice at Clarksville’s First Presbyterian Church every second and fourth Wednesday of the month from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., coinciding with Loaves and Fishes. At that time, individuals can seek advice on family issues, housing and landlord disputes, taxes, auto accidents and other civil legal problems. When necessary, Legal Aid will provide further legal assistance to the individual. The program will also involve local private attorneys.
**Staff Attorneys to Participate in Racial Justice Training Institute**

Three Legal Aid Society attorneys have been selected by the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law to participate in the 2016 Racial Justice Training Institute (RJTI). RJTI is a national training program that increases the capacity of those advocating for low-income people, allowing them to deploy up-to-date racial justice advocacy skills that address the role racism plays in causing and perpetuating poverty.

The attorneys participating in the program are Patricia Jones, of our Columbia office; Samuel Keen, of our Clarksville office; and Marla Williams, managing attorney of our Cookeville office. Patricia, Sam and Marla are three of 41 fellows from across the nation invited to participate in the program. They are the first, and currently only, participants from Tennessee.

For more information, see the press release from the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law [here](#).

**Legal Aid Society Continues to Receive More Diversified Funding**

The HCA Foundation awarded Legal Aid Society $10,000 to support our Middle Tennessee Medical-Legal Partnership ("MTMLP"). Medical-Legal Partnerships bring civil legal aid on-site at health care locations where people in the community go to seek help for other issues. The MTMLP staff will also train and educate health care professionals to recognize a patient’s legal issues that can adversely affect their health.

In addition to continuing funding of $339,720 we will receive from the Victims of Crimes Act ("VOCA") Program for 2016-18 through Tennessee's Office of Criminal Justice Programs, we have been awarded an additional $262,154 to hire new Family Law attorneys for our Cookeville and Gallatin
service areas. These new staff attorneys will assist primary and secondary victims to stabilize their lives after instances of domestic violence by providing high quality, holistic civil legal services. This includes victim advocacy and counsel, safety planning, and representation for Order of Progrestion and other emergency legal representation.

Office Moves

Two of our offices have moved to "new" homes, creating better spaces for our clients and improved security for our staff.

Our Murfreesboro staff has returned to 526 North Walnut Street after being displaced for a year due to arson. We are grateful to the law firm of Blankenship & Blankenship for offering space to our staff while our building was renovated and enlarged.

Our Oak Ridge staff has moved to new space at 575 Oak Ridge Turnpike, Suite 201.

Tractor Supply Employees Help Clean Nashville Office

We were pleased to have employees from the corporate office of Tractor Supply in Brentwood deep clean our Nashville office this month. Their work was organized through United Way of Williamson County.

Staff Updates
Andrae Crismon, managing attorney for our Murfreesboro office, was named Volunteer of the Week by Volunteer Rutherford on June 15. Andrae was nominated by Greenhouse Ministries for his work with their weekly legal clinic for which he has been volunteering since 2009.

**Will You Help Bridge Our Funding Gap?**

As of June 20, we have raised $613,649 towards our $827,000 goal for the 2016 campaign. This leaves a funding gap of $213,351. Gifts to 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 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](#).

**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!

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.