Intern Gains Experience While Helping a Client with Unemployment Benefits

William came to Legal Aid Society after being denied unemployment compensation because his former employer claimed he voluntarily quit, which he vehemently denied. Under the supervision of staff attorney Rachel Moses, this case was assigned to summer intern, Amber Vargas, a law student at the University of Tennessee College of Law.

Prior to the hearing, the employer submitted information to the Department of Labor claiming William had quit his job even though he had been fired. At the hearing, the employer switched its story and admitted he was fired but accused William of work-related misconduct. Amber successfully pointed out the inconsistencies of the employer’s statements and objected to the employer’s testimony as hearsay and lack of personal knowledge behind the misconduct allegations. Amber further provided evidence that William had not engaged in work-related misconduct. William had worked at his job for two years without any disciplinary actions taken against him. Because of Amber’s competent representation, the Department of Labor Hearing Officer ruled in William’s favor and awarded him $705 in retroactive unemployment benefits.

Legal Aid Society has supported interns, externs and clerks for many years. We believe we can teach future attorneys the importance of access to justice as well as give them experience in and knowledge of public interest law. Interns work with our staff attorneys, observing all the aspects of legal representation. When opportunities arise, we provide interns with real hands-on experience in interviewing clients, drafting pleadings, and representing clients in administrative appeals, all under
the supervision of our attorneys. This experience not only prepares the interns for their future careers, but it allows us to serve more clients.

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**HCA Volunteers Help with Annual Campaign**

On September 27 fifteen energetic HCA employees helped stuff almost 6,000 letters for our Fall solicitations. They came as part of HCA’s annual Community Day which is a day of service for HCA employees to volunteer with nonprofit organizations in Middle Tennessee.

Throughout the year we also have had the benefit of volunteers from HCA’s audit department. Under the leadership of Brianna Howell and Lori Teal, these ladies have stuffed letters, folded remittance envelopes and performed other activities to help our development department. Many thanks to Brianna, Lori, Ann Lay, Gina Garrett, Damita Maddox, Kim Berry, Patty Conley and Devina Alexander for their ongoing help.

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**$23.3M in Services Provided by Legal Aid Society and Pro Bono Attorneys in 2015**

Our staff and the attorneys who assist us on a pro bono basis through our Volunteer Lawyers Program collectively provided Tennesseans with $23.3 million in free legal assistance and representation in 2015. That’s a 2.6 percent increase over 2014.

Throughout the year, we handled a total of 7,022 cases for low-income families and individuals across the organization’s 48-county service area. Assistance and representation was handled over a wide variety of civic legal areas in 2015 including: Family (33 percent), housing (18 percent), consumer (14 percent), income maintenance (13 percent), miscellaneous (9 percent), health (7 percent), employment (5 percent) and individual rights issues (1 percent).

For more details about our 2015 services see our 2015 annual report. If you would like to receive a hard copy of the annual report please contact Cindy Durham, director of development, at cdurham@las.org or 615-780-7125.

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**Two New Brochures**

Thanks to Russ Overby, the Lead attorney-Health & Benefits in Nashville and Emma Sholl, attorney in Nashville, we have 2 new publications.
"Nursing Home Rights" - a 30 page booklet

"Your Rights to Stay in a Nursing Home" - discharge rights brochure

Both can be found on our website (www.las.org) on the home page. They are #1 and #2 under "News You Can Use." They are also both under Legal Help Booklets > Health Problems. Click on the button with the name of the brochure on it to get the PDF.

We are printing "Your Rights to Stay in a Nursing Home." You can order those starting next week by contacting our Community Education coordinator, Adinah Robertson, at arobertson@las.org or 615-780-7108.

We currently do not have plans to print "Nursing Home Rights". You can print copies for free from the website.

Legal Aid Society Learns to Work Better with Individuals with Mental Illness

Twenty-seven members of our staff recently participated in Mental Health First Aid Training in an effort to learn more about mental health issues and how to more effectively work with individuals who have mental illness. The training was presented by staff from Centerstone.

We frequently face clients that are experiencing severe symptoms that can adversely impact the well-being and ability to work with us on their case. In some situations, it can reach crisis level. People with a mental illness experience a number of legal issues with potentially serious personal and financial consequences. They also can face many barriers in having these legal issues addressed. Building strong partnerships between legal services providers and mental health providers is critical in combating those barriers and ensuring that this group does not become even more marginalized in our communities.

See more about the issue in a recent Tennessean Op Ed by our Executive Director, Gary Housepian, here.
Staff Updates

Lorna McCandless-Moss has returned to the Legal Aid Society family. Lorna is working with the Family Law Unit as a temporary paralegal while we continue our search for a family law attorney, a victims advocate and a paralegal. Lorna worked in our Columbia Office from 2014-2016 before moving to the Nashville area. Lorna has a Bachelor’s Degree from UT Chattanooga and a Master’s Degree in Curriculum & Instruction from Tennessee State University. She worked for the Legal Aid Bureau in Riverdale, Maryland, before coming to work for us.

Bob Nadler retired August 31 after almost 15 years of working for the Tennessee Taxpayer Project, a program of Legal Aid Society. Bob previously worked for the IRS for 30 years and is considered a national expert on Innocent Spouse Relief. We wish him the best of luck!

Will You Help Bridge Our Funding Gap?

As of September 27, we have raised $657,955 for the 2016 Campaign for Equal Justice. This leaves less than $170,000 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 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.

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