For nearly half a century, Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberlands has been a relentless advocate for justice on behalf of our most vulnerable and underprivileged neighbors. In 2017 alone, we provided more than $5,759,441 in advice and representation to people throughout the region.

Much of our good work in 2017 and the years leading up to it is due to the leadership of Gary Housepian, who served as executive director for 10 years. In his time with the organization, Gary was a dedicated servant to the less fortunate members of our society. By modernizing our organization’s delivery of services and bringing in capable and passionate new staff members, he was a devoted steward of Legal Aid Society’s legacy and helped position us for continued success.

We’re proud to carry on this legacy under the leadership of our new executive director, DarKenya W. Waller.

We’re carrying on a legacy of service that has existed for nearly half a century.

Recognizing a Good Steward

The Gilbert Family Fellowship – a Legal Aid program that provides free civil legal services to low-income children and young adults – is made possible by a $100,000 donation from Harris A. Gilbert, a longtime supporter of Legal Aid Society and an attorney with Wyatt Tarrant & Combs LLP, with support from his children.

Securing necessary and appropriate health services – particularly mental health services

Identifying eligibility for special education and related services for school-age children

Preventing unfair exclusionary discipline of students that causes loss of important instructional time and opportunities to succeed

Working with juvenile courts to identify youth who are at risk and in need of services

Advocating for young adults exiting the custody of the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services and/or those who are receiving post-custody services

“When children fall through the cracks of justice, our future begins to crumble,” said Harris Gilbert. “So it is my honor to work with Legal Aid Society and its team of Fellows to expand access to justice to our region’s youth. As a lawyer and as a parent, there is no better mission. And for our children, there is no better gift.”

2017 by the Numbers

- 7,944 requests for assistance
- 5,733 cases handled
- 115,060 hours worked by employees on cases and supporting activities
- 112 staff presentations
- 3,279 people attended Legal Aid Society presentations
- 2,766 self-help brochures downloaded in six months
- 62,694 visits to Legal Aid Society’s website
- 44,212 brochures distributed
- 450 print media mentions
- 121 taxpayers assisted through the Tennessee Taxpayer Project
- $11,330 gained in confirmed financial benefits for taxpayers through the Tennessee Taxpayer Project

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Types of Legal Issues Addressed in 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPES OF CASES</th>
<th>2017 Volunteer Lawyers Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Maintenance</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment (including taxes)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Rights</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gary Housepian, former executive director of Legal Aid Society, and Julie Watson Lampley, chair of the 2017 Campaign for Equal Justice

Leaving a Legacy: the 2017 Campaign for Equal Justice

As a result of the generosity of so many who gave graciously to our organization, the Campaign for Equal Justice was a success. We received $802,489 from 1,163 donors, which allows us to continue our legacy of providing access to justice for thousands of low-income Tennesseans.

We are incredibly grateful to the 2017 committee members who championed the campaign:

Julie Watson Lampley (campaign chair)
Barbara and Eric Chazen
Katherine "Kathy" A. Austin
John "Jay" B. Hardcastle Jr.
Judge Lynda F. Jones
Judge James "Jim" G. Martin III
Margaret "Meg" C. Mazzone
Emily A. Shouse
Stephen G. Young

Legal Aid Society filed suit for Mary against the contractor, seeking triple damages under the Tennessee Consumer Protection Act. The court awarded Mary the full judgment as asked for, totaling $397,600.

Our Consumer Protection Program is supported in part by a $1.6 million bequest made by Herman Loewenstein to Legal Aid Society in 2006 to support consumer protection work, including collection defense. Loewenstein was an attorney with the collection firm Loewenstein, Ziegler and Buffaloe.

Righting the Wrongs of a Dishonest Home Contractor

When a fire at her residence destroyed the second floor and caused serious smoke and water damage throughout the first floor and the basement, "Mary" hired a contractor to fix the damage. Unfortunately, he turned out to be both unqualified and dishonest. Unknown to Mary, he didn’t have the license he needed to legally take a job the size of hers, or even insurance to protect her if he didn’t perform the job as outlined in the contract.

The contractor underbid the job by many thousands of dollars, and when he had already received the contracted dollar amount with much work still left to do, he demanded more money. When Mary refused to pay the extra money, he abandoned the job, leaving her homeless except for the rental unit that she was living in temporarily.

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We’re proud of the results we continue to generate for Tennesseans year after year and the way we’ve been able to maximize our funding. Under the leadership and guidance of previous executive director Gary Housepian, our organization’s budget has grown from just under $6 million to almost $7.5 million — and with it, we’ve expanded the scope of services and impact that we’re able to provide.

It’s thanks to generous donors and volunteers like you that we are able to have a lasting effect on the lives of those who need our services. Our commitment to you is that we will continue to serve as good stewards of the resources we’re given. We want to create a lasting impact and legacy within our communities, and that wouldn’t be possible without your support. The positive effects of civil legal aid assistance ripple out from those we serve into our communities as a whole. By investing in civil legal aid services, we’re investing in the well-being of our community.

A 75-year-old widow from Murfreesboro had her monthly Social Security check cut drastically after being told she was no longer eligible for a TennCare program that provided money for Medicare premiums.

Program participants receive a 98-page packet each year containing a 14-page application to re-apply for benefits. The woman, who has poor eyesight and relies on a neighbor for daily living assistance, hadn’t received a packet and wasn’t aware that she had been eliminated from the program until she started receiving a reduced monthly check.

The woman contacted Legal Aid Society, which appealed the decision and got her reinstated in the program within weeks. Legal Aid Society also convinced TennCare to award her the total amount of the premium payments she had missed in the interim — totaling more than $1,000.