

From the Goodwill Insider: Cassandra and Casey of Project Renew

We love it when good news spreads—and recently, *Goodwill Insider* shined a spotlight on two of our very own: Cassandra and Casey! These two rockstars are not only fierce advocates for second chances through their work with Project Renew at AppalReD Legal Aid, but they also proudly serve as Goodwill Ambassadors, bringing hope, heart, and hustle to everything they do.

AppalReD Legal Aid is proud to partner with Goodwill Industries of Kentucky in making justice more accessible for everyone. Together, we've teamed up to offer free legal assistance at Goodwill expungement clinics—events that help people clear old criminal records and move forward with their lives. Because everyone deserves the chance to build a brighter future.

Goodwill Opportunity Centers, which can be found in Corbin, Somerset, and Pikeville, are also an excellent one-stop resource for our communities, offering employment support, referrals for benefits or other community partners, including AppalReD Legal Aid.

Want to know what fuels Cassandra and Casey's passion? You're in luck. Read more about Cassandra and Casey below.

AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT: CASSANDRA & CASEY OF PROJECT RENEW

Casey became a Goodwill Ambassador because she's seen how powerful the partnership can be: "I have seen the role that Goodwill can play in helping individuals get back to actually living and not just existing when not many others will help." She believes legal aid can be the key that unlocks opportunity for those who've been counted out: "Helping someone remove items from their past can be invaluable in their attempt to regain their future so that future employers won't judge them on where they used to be."

One moment that has stayed with her was when a man she'd met in jail showed up at her office the day after his release from prison, determined to find a job. "We were able to connect him to a program to help him get his license back for the first time in more than 5 years and also helped him expunge four felony cases from his record. He is now employed, has his license, and [is] living independently."

Cassandra, who is based in the Barbourville and Hazard offices, originally joined AppalReD as a community resource coordinator before stepping into the paralegal role. "Now, I can't imagine working anywhere else!" She first encountered Goodwill through the Corbin Opportunity Center and remembers being in awe: "That lit a fire under me. ... I knew that I had to do whatever I could to become a Goodwill Ambassador."

Her personal "why" runs deep. "I myself am a recovering addict, and back when I started my recovery journey, there were no good resources for people like me. I literally had to rebuild myself, and my life alone, and that was no easy feat." She shared that after working for several years, she returned to college at 57, taking on a full course load to graduate in just three years—all while grieving the loss of her brother and mother within three months of each other. "I didn't relapse, and I graduated with honors in 2021."



A moment that reinforced her impact came after helping a client with expungement and divorce. "She started crying on the phone, and I asked her why. She stated that I had helped her so much... that even though she had never met me personally, she loved me as if she had known me for years."

Cassandra's favorite quote is "And this too shall pass." She added, "There are so many situations and hard places we can find ourselves in, but with wisdom, strength, and determination you will come out the other side just fine, and most times, better off and a whole lot wiser!"

And when she's not changing lives through legal aid? She's building them—literally—through model train collecting: "I have a 4'x8' layout that I have four tracks on, and recently my son gave me an L&N engine that I am

restoring to pull my 1982 World's Fair train cars."

Both Casey and Cassandra are proud to lead Project Renew, which provides free legal support to Kentuckians in recovery. As Cassandra says, "We do so much more than this, but these seem to be the most necessary things that help keep the triggers at bay and help them get back on their feet."

If you'd like to connect, Casey can be reached at caseym@ardfky.org or 606-889-1968. Cassandra can be reached at cassandraa@ardfky.org or 606-302-9105.



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