



Why Boo Shea Still Shows Up for Justice: Even in Retirement



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AppalReD's work is vital to the low-income people in South-Eastern Kentucky, who cannot afford legal representation. It is devastating to consider the likely outcome if these folks did not have access to AppalReD's services. There's really no downside to this - you're helping others where you can, when you can.



Beverly “Boo” Shea
PRO BONO VOLUNTEER

This Celebrating Pro Bono Week, we’re celebrating Beverly “Boo” Shea—a lifelong advocate for justice who has given decades of service to AppalReD Legal Aid.

Boo loves birds, basket weaving, and building equal access to justice. Her connection to AppalReD runs deep. She volunteered as an AppalReD board member while in private practice in Winchester, Kentucky *for an incredible 18 years.*



Beverly Shea with fellow board members, including Warren Keller, Tood Eberle, and former Board President Elvin Dodson.

When she later moved to Hawai'i, Boo decided to follow a long-time dream of becoming a full-time legal aider. She spent several years in Hilo with the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i before returning to Kentucky to work where she was excited to work for AppalReD Legal Aid. Over the next nine years, she served as a staff attorney as well as Directing Attorney of both the Columbia and Somerset offices.

Even after retiring, Boo couldn't stay away for long. Or at all ☐☐. She laughs that she "begged the Kentucky Retirement Systems" to let her start volunteering right away at the Somerset office.

Her passion for family law kept her busy—serving children in dependency, neglect, and abuse cases, and later serving as a pro bono attorney at monthly pro se clinics across AppalReD’s 37-county service area. There, she provided the legal advice low-income families needed to confidently file for divorce or custody on their own.



Boo Shea helping clients at a pro se clinic in 2022.

As the years went on, Boo’s volunteer role evolved. She no longer wanted to spend long hours in court or on the road, but she wasn’t ready to stop serving. Together with Pro Bono Director Charnel Burton, she helped launch a twice-monthly Virtual Eviction Prevention Clinic.

“Sometimes there are conflicts with a landlord that, if left unresolved, would end up in an eviction,” Charnel explains. “There’s also a brief window of opportunity right after a Notice to Vacate when a person can take action to avoid eviction completely. The best time to stop an eviction is before it happens.”

Evictions, Charnel says, can be devastating for low-income families. “Many end up homeless, and an eviction record can be a major barrier to finding stable housing.”

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For Boo, this new role is a perfect fit. “With the quick turnaround time from filing to hearing, it’s vital to get information to tenants as soon as possible,” she says. “I enjoy helping people problem-solve. With a lot of people looking at an issue, you can come up with some really creative ideas.”

She encourages others to join her as a pro bono volunteer. “There’s really no downside to this,” Boo says. “You’re helping others where you can, when you can. There’s no pressure to take cases or attend clinics when you have a conflict (or just need a nap). It’s a win-win situation.”

When asked why she continues to give so much of her time, Boo doesn’t hesitate: “AppalReD’s work is vital to the people of Southeastern Kentucky who cannot afford legal representation. It’s devastating to consider what would happen if these folks didn’t have access to our services. Pro bono work is even more critical now, given the uncertainties in federal funding.”

Boo Shea shows us what's possible when compassion meets commitment. Her story is a reminder that pro bono service can be personalized to your strengths, your schedule, and your season of life. Every hour you give strengthens our communities and opens the door to justice for someone in need. You can make that difference too! Contact Charnel Burton at CharnelB@ardfky.org to volunteer with AppalReD Legal Aid.

Last updated on October 21, 2025.

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