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Our History

AppalReD began in 1970 and had three operating offices in Prestonsburg, Barbourville, and on the campus of the University of Kentucky in Lexington. AppalReD now serves 37 eastern and south central Kentucky counties, and today has six offices throughout the region.

In the early days, AppalReD addressed many devastating environmental and coal mine related issues such as black lung disease, abusive land use practices, and disfigured mountain tops caused by strip mining. AppalReD clients still face some of these same challenges, but even more devastating to the region are the socioeconomic challenges which promote instability and threaten to keep the region mired in poverty.



John M. Rosenberg, Founder of AppalRed

John M. Rosenberg was the Director of Appalachian Research and Defense Fund of Kentucky, Inc. (AppalReD), since it first received funding from the Office of Economic Opportunity in 1970. He held the directors position for over twenty-eight years before retiring.

Prior to his career at AppalRed Legal Aid, John served for eight years as a trial attorney and Section Chief in the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice from 1962 - 1970, litigating discrimination cases primarily in the deep south. John's area's of practice have been primarily those of environmental law, and representation of the elderly. He has authored a number of articles on these matters.

October 1, 2020 - ABA Journal "[Is this a moment or a movement? 6 civil rights lawyers reflect on recent demands for racial justice](#)"

November 1, 2019 - ABA Journal "[Holocaust survivor has dedicated his career to serving others](#)"

October 23, 2019 - The Paintsville Herald "[Rosenbergs honored among 'Champions of Appalachia'](#)"

On September 17, 2016, John was presented with the Muhammad Ali Humanitarian Award. [For a video of John's remarks that evening click here.](#)

In April of 2015, John was presented the American Bar Association Grassroots Advocacy Award for his longtime service and his outstanding work in providing access to legal services.

In May of 2015, John was presented with the Jewish Family & Career Services 2015 MOSAIC Award. <https://jewishlouisville.org/jfcs-2015-mosaic-awards-honorees/>

In November of 2015, John was honored by the ACLU of Kentucky for his lifetime work of leading AppalReD.

John is featured in the book [This is Home Now: Kentucky's Holocaust Survivors Speak](#) by Arwen Donahue, Rebecca Gayle Howell, and Joan Ringelheim.

On October 2013, John received the 2013 Difference Makers Award from the American Bar Association.

On June 2013, John received the Kentucky Bar Association Distinguished Lawyer Award.

On April 29, 2004, John received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Lawyer Magazine.

In December of 1999, John was presented a Doctor of Public Service Degree from Morehead State University and in January 2000, he was presented a Doctor of Laws Degree from William Mitchell College of Law in St. Paul, MN.

On June 29, 1997, John was featured in *The New York Times Magazine* - ["What's a Nice Jewish Lawyer Like John Rosenberg Doing in Appalachia?"](#)

Read Mr. Rosenberg's article:

[Reflections on Bringing Justice to the Citizens of Appalachia](#)

[West Virginia Law Review - Personal Reflections of a Life in Public Interest Law: From the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice to AppalReD](#)

Last updated on March 25, 2021.

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