

THE SUMMIT



The official newsletter of AppalReD Legal Aid



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A Coming Together

Dear friends,

We are pleased to present the first edition of AppalReD Legal Aid's newsletter, *The Summit*. This year, 2020, has brought us the COVID-19 pandemic, economic distress, and a national reckoning on systemic racism. In these challenging and uncertain times, AppalReD Legal Aid is a constant force in Eastern Kentucky seeking to balance the scales of civil justice for the low-income, vulnerable, and oppressed. AppalReD Legal Aid is committed to fighting for racial justice and equal rights for all. At this time, it is critical to come together. We hope *The Summit* provides an opportunity to connect and a view of the needs and stories in our community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed challenges, but our staff has worked hard to innovate and continue to serve the legal needs of our clients. The economic devastation caused by the pandemic has brought an eviction crisis and other difficulties. At AppalReD Legal Aid, we are committed to making a difference in the lives of our clients. We are proud of our work, and we hope you enjoy reading about it.

Please stay safe and healthy!

Robert Johns

Executive Director
RobertJ@ardfky.org



Responding to the Community's Needs During Covid-19

Virtual Services Meet Real Needs

The decision to temporarily close AppalReD Legal Aid's doors to walk-ins was a difficult decision, though necessary. How would we serve people at a time of great need? How would our hardest-hit community members have the legal help they need?

Six months later, we've flexed and built our digital muscles and now plan to incorporate what we've learned into our future.

Executive Director Robert Johns said, "We've used creative approaches to serve and reach our clients. When we were unable to hold in-person self-help divorce clinics, we shifted to virtual clinics using Zoom. Those clinics have been very successful. Because we could not conduct in-person outreach, we decided to use Facebook Live to hold outreach and

education events for our client population. Our offerings have included sessions on eviction, elder abuse, tax issues, and LGBTQ rights. Each of our Facebook Live events has been viewed hundreds of times."

Charnel Burton, Directing Attorney in Hazard, reported that having hearings online has meant that she has more time to devote to clients and working on cases, instead of spending hours on the road.

AppalReD Legal Aid's large rural service region has always been a challenge for attorneys and clients, who may be over an hour from the courthouse or an AppalReD Legal Aid office. Kelly Ward-Wallen said, "COVID has caused everyone, including the courts, to utilize technology more. For judges who have embraced technology, their courts are very efficient. This is better for our clients who often have transportation issues as well. While I expect that the courts will eventually return to all in person, I certainly hope they hold open a virtual option for clients with transportation issues."

Moving education and legal clinics online has also meant clients don't have to arrange transportation or childcare. One event can serve people from several different counties. *"Responding" continued on page 7*



Domestic Violence and Elder Abuse Awareness Conference

Conference Doubles in Size

Now in its seventh year, AppalReD Legal Aid's annual Domestic Violence and Elder Abuse Awareness Conference drew a larger crowd than ever. Due to its virtual format, the conference doubled in size. From around the state, 281 participants convened from their kitchen tables, cars, and remote offices. They came from fields as varied as nursing home administrators, government officials, attorneys, and social workers.

The conference highlighted groups that can often be left out of discussions of violence: elders, children, kinship caretakers, and caring professionals. Laura Picklesimer Kretzer and Pamela Johnson Taylor from Judi's Place for Kids opened the conference by describing different warning signs to look for in youth that they've been impacted by domestic violence. Shannon Moody, Kentucky Youth Advocates, shared that Kentucky has the highest rate in the country of kinship care—grandparents and relatives stepping up to keep children out of the foster care system—and often have little support.

Mary Savage, Kentucky Coalition Against Domestic Violence, provided an insightful legislative update on bills related to sexual violence and voter ID law.

Amy Burke, Assistant Deputy Attorney General, Criminal Division, said, "Seniors become addicted to opioids too, and their addiction rates are growing. Covid-19 has made it even worse. Seniors find themselves widowed and more socially isolated without access to the gym or the local McDonald's for coffee and conversations." She provided the crowd with warning signs of elder abuse and opioid abuse.

Finally, University of Pikeville Assistant Professor of Religion, Sumer Bingham Musick told participants that "secondary trauma is real" and led the crowd in reflection and meditation that they can use throughout their day to help with stress.

One long-time participant said this year's conference was the best yet. "I'm not sure if it was the information or the ease of the virtual conference." While it was many attendees' first virtual conference, many came away fans of the experience. In turn, conference organizers hope to provide a virtual option alongside in-person programming for next year's training.

Funding for the conference was provided by VAWA-2019-Appalach-00667



If you suspect elder abuse, report it. You can report abuse at the KY Cabinet for Health and Family Services' 24-hour toll-free hotline at (877) 597-2331. Calls can be made anonymously.

AppalReD Legal Aid Legacy Society Launched

*A Life And Legacy
of Justice for All*

This September, AppalReD Legal Aid received a generous gift from the estate of Ragan T. Phillips. Remembering AppalReD Legal Aid with a gift in his will ensures that Ragan's legacy will mirror his life in its dedication to justice.

Phillips grew up in Lawrenceburg, KY. Before settling in Ashland, VA to be closer to his daughter and grandchildren, his career in the power generation business took him around the world. In Ashland, he ran an online newspaper, helped build a local theater, and was a passionate supporter of education. His wife, the writer Phyllis Theroux, is a force for good in her own right and worked with AppalReD Legal Aid founder John Rosenberg and his wife Jean at the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division in the 1960's where they became friends.

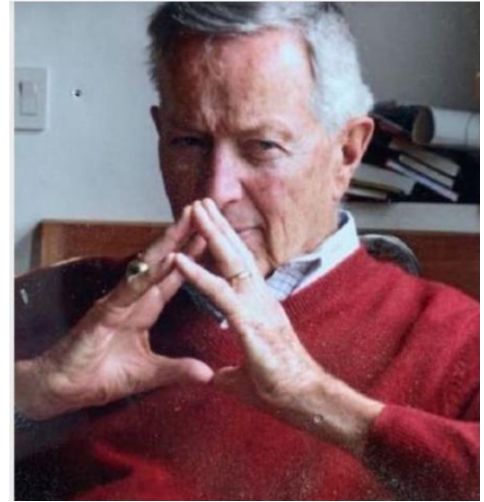
While we wish we could thank Ragan for his generosity in person, we will show him gratitude the best way we can, by stewarding his gift to sustain and grow AppalReD as we move into our 50th year of fighting poverty and providing equal access to justice.

Please join Ragan as a founding member of the AppalReD Legal Aid Legacy Society. Have you included AppalReD Legal Aid in your will or estate plan?

If so, we would like to honor and thank you today. Please let us know of your bequest intention by visiting www.ardfky.org/donate or using the QR code.

The Legacy Society recognizes friends who demonstrate their deep commitment to fighting poverty and creating equal access to justice by making a planned gift or including AppalReD Legal Aid in their estate plans.

You've spent your life fighting for justice. Fight on.



"The way in which this small town has responded and shown such kindness is powerful. It is finally dawning on me that most people are kind and that this is what makes our society work . . . I want to carry that 'joy' and my desire to love into my next incarnation."

—Ragan T. Phillips

You've been a part of our history.
Won't you be a key part of our future?



SCAN ME

“

Loren is headed to college this fall with a scholarship. She served her time for a crime she committed when she was younger. Helping her with an expungement means Loren will be able to work or live anywhere she wants when she earns her degree.

”



“

All Shane wanted was to move on with his life. But a peace offering ended with his ex assaulting him. AppalReD fought alongside Shane to get his day in court and he now has a protective order.

”



Fighting for Unemployment Benefits During Covid

In mid-March, the world fell apart for many Kentuckians.

However, Amy's started to crumble a little earlier. During her shift as a maid at a local hotel, Amy received a call that her grandmother was passing away.

"My grandma and my mom-- they are my two mothers. My mom had passed away the year before."

When Amy arrived in Ohio, she got a call from her supervisor. The woman who was supposed to cover for her couldn't make it because of a sick child.



Amy Ritchie pictured with Grandmother, Marian Ward, and her mother's remains.

"Here my grandmother is sitting in the other room dying and my supervisor is telling me I'm going to get written up."

When Amy returned to town she learned that due to COVID, the hotel had been mostly shut down. All the maids were furloughed.

Her unemployment claim was successful. However, a few weeks later, her supervisor messaged her on Facebook that she was fired. The state ended her unemployment benefits and started investigating her for fraud.

It was terrifying. From April through July she lived on almost nothing.

"It was rough. My health went down. My hair started falling out and I'd be freezing one minute and burning up the next. I was terrified I had coronavirus. But it was nerves. I was so stressed out."

Then she met Stephanie Flanary, the Directing Attorney in AppalReD Legal Aid's Richmond office.

"We actually had court in Stephanie's office on the phone," Amy said.

"The judge asked me a few questions. I was nervous, but you don't need to be nervous. Just tell the truth and be yourself. Stephanie was awesome. She was always explaining everything to me."

Amy won her case and received back pay for the unemployment she deserved. She was flooded with relief. It was thousands of dollars that she could use to finally feel secure. She paid her rent immediately. It meant everything to keep her home and to know she had stable housing moving forward.

Now she is spreading the word to her neighbors that they can call AppalReD Legal Aid for help: "I appreciate you so much."



Responding to COVID-19

Continued from Page 2 . . .

While taking advantage of technology is key, AppalReD Legal Aid remains conscientious about keeping things “low tech.” For example, clients for family law clinics register over the hotline and are mailed paperwork, since printing or filling out forms online can be a barrier.

Jo Ann Harvey, Legal Assistance for Victims Project Attorney, stated, “My interactions with the domestic violence shelter have gone remarkably well. We have switched to Zoom meetings with clients.”

There are concerns of course.

Harvey added, “I have Emergency Protective Order (EPO) hearings in Martin County over Skype, so many people don’t have good internet access or minutes on their phones. It’s a scramble to find a number where they can be reached for a hearing.”

When attorneys can’t meet over Skype with clients, they wear masks and meet in AppalReD Legal Aid’s conference room, which allows for social distancing.

The conference room has also turned into a makeshift courtroom. If a client doesn’t have access to a phone or computer, attorneys call or log in to court with their client.

Jennifer Perkins, a staff attorney in Barbourville, recently provided tips on Facebook Live for going to court in person or virtually. She let clients know what they could expect in

terms of social distancing, masks, and when they could enter the courtroom. She also walked participants through where to find links for court and how to use Zoom.

AppalReD Legal Aid also launched a billboard campaign on October 10 to ensure that the community is aware of our services. Lorie Elam, Director of Administration, described the billboards as a letter of love and support to Eastern Kentucky. “We want folks during this rough time to know we’re here and we care,” she said.

“Navigating the crisis, when information is changing sometimes on a daily basis, is challenging for everyone. But it is even more difficult if you are also struggling to meet basic needs. We provide legal help around utilities, eviction, health care, unemployment, EBT and other benefits, and even children’s schooling. We are here to help,” said Robert Johns, Executive Director.

JOIN US



Thanks to our Board of Directors

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Marilyn Morgan
Damon Preston
Travis Rossman
Amber H. Sisco
Patricia Thomas
Justice Daniel J. Venters
David Wright

Thanks to Volunteer Lawyers for Appalachian Kentucky (VLAK)

These attorneys have handled cases this year.

Katherine Adams
Karen Alfano
Don Bailey
Steve Bailey

Robert Brown
Keisha Caldwell Rice
Nicholas Calmes
Rebecca DiLoreto

Clair Edwards
Susan Ham
Jill Haste
Trina Hendricks

Stella House
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Warren Keller
Danny Lunsford
Susan Martin
Jessie Moberg
Marilyn Neumann

Daryle Ronning
Brian Reed
Jennifer Taylor
Marsha Taylor
Beth Wesley



Give Today



Cara Stewart: Why I Give

“Without AppelReD thousands of our neighbors wouldn’t have access to justice. When people’s children are at risk, safety is a risk, homes or income is at risk, AppelReD ‘fixes it.’ That’s the kind of work I want to support any way I can.”

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