

# **VLAK Newsletter June 2020**



## VOLUNTEER LAWYERS *FOR* APPALACHIAN KENTUCKY

### **AppalReD/VLAK Hosts Its First Virtual Self-Help Divorce Clinic**

#### **Pre-Covid Clinics—Before the Apocalypse**

Before the world and everything in it turned upside down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, VLAK conducted in-person pro se divorce clinics on March 10th in Hazard and March 11th in Prestonsburg. Vital to the success of these clinics was the participation of law students from the University of Notre Dame: Tanusha Yarlagadda, Kyle Smith, Seth Sanders, Andrew Pfeiffer, Colette DeRiso and Jacob Hoppe. This was a very flexible and resilient group of students during a very trying week! Although they were re-called to Notre Dame mid-week due to the sudden quarantining necessitated by the pandemic, their efforts earlier in the week significantly contributed to our work toward stabilizing life for the families attending these clinics.

Likewise, we had anticipated the arrival of law students from the University of California—Berkley later in March for two additional clinics; although it was unfortunately necessary to postpone this visit until a yet-to-be-determined date, we look forward to welcoming students again as soon as we can safely resume in-person clinics and travel. As always, we deeply appreciate the contributions of our partners and look forward to their continued involvement..

On June 11th, AppalReD/VLAK hosted its first online, virtual self-help divorce clinic. The clinic was conducted on Zoom, with technical assistance by AppalReD's Director of Technology, Paul Woosley, and confidential, individualized legal assistance was given by retired AppalReD attorney and current volunteer Beverly ("Boo") Shea. Ten clients representing Madison, Pulaski, Harlan, Laurel, Bell and Lincoln Counties participated. This clinic also introduced the involvement of VLAK's newest staff member, Clinic Coordinator Melissa Martin.

Although this first virtual clinic was a learning experience for all of us, we have deemed it a success! We look forward to conducting more virtual clinics, particularly in various areas of family law. Although we have moved to this format in response to COVID-19, we are excited about its ability to expand our service capacity to our most rural areas, regardless of the circumstances. Necessity certainly is the mother of invention!



Melissa Martin



LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

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# Together Lawyers Can



In an effort to anticipate and respond to the civil legal needs arising from restrictions necessary to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, the pro bono directors of Kentucky's four legal aid programs (AppalReD Legal Aid, Kentucky Legal Aid, The Legal Aid Society and Legal Aid of the Bluegrass have formed **Together Lawyers Can (TLC)**, a collaboration of trainings and services targeted toward the legal and economic effects of these restrictions. TLC recently developed and launched an online training in unemployment insurance issues, and will soon present a training in housing issues relevant to this crisis, including a likely surge in evictions likely to face the populations served by our programs. Additional trainings are in the works. Another feature of this collaboration is the establishing of a phone "helpline" which will assist COVID-affected clients in accessing the services of the legal aid program in their particular service area. Our programs look forward to finding additional ways to coordinate state-wide efforts to meet the civil legal needs of those in this Commonwealth with insufficient resources.

## Response to Social Security Fraud Crisis

**Lest anyone think the crisis situation created by SSDI/SSI fraud perpetrated by former attorney Eric C. Conn has disappeared, we anticipate that, although these cases have been somewhat "dormant" during a lengthy appeals process, we anticipate that these cases will "reignite" sooner rather than later, with hearings scheduled in the near future. We are still in need of volunteer attorneys to assist our clients in maintaining the benefits they and their families so desperately rely on. Please let us know if you can help!**

### Current Extended Service Cases

VLAK currently has 88 extended-service cases open (9 pro bono and 79 contract cases) in 30 of the 37 counties in our service area. The cases, comprising 43 divorces, 32 custody cases, 12 bankruptcies and 1 Medicaid issue, are in the following counties: Adair, Casey, Clark, Clay, Cumberland, Estill, Floyd, Harlan, Jackson, Johnson, Knott, Knox, Lawrence, Lee, Letcher, Lincoln, McCreary, Madison, Magoffin, Martin, Monroe, Owsley, Perry, Pike, Powell, Pulaski, Rockcastle, Russell, Wayne and Whitley

### As of this writing, the following attorneys are serving our VLAK clients in extended service cases

- |                        |   |                 |
|------------------------|---|-----------------|
| • Katherine Adams      | * | Melissa Howard  |
| • Karen Alfano         | * | Tammy Howard    |
| • Don Bailey           | * | Whitney Howard  |
| • Steven Bailey        | * | Warren Keller   |
| • Robert Brown         | * | Danny Lunsford  |
| • Keisha Caldwell Rice | * | Susan Martin    |
| • Nicholas Calmes      | * | Jessie Moberg   |
| • Rebecca DiLoreto     | * | Marilyn Neumann |
| • Clair Edwards        | * | Brian Reed      |
| • Susan Ham            | * | Daryle Ronning  |
| • Jill Haste           | * | Jennifer Taylor |
| • Trina Hendricks      | * | Marsha Taylor   |

AppalReD/VLAK serves clients in the following eastern and south-central Kentucky counties: Adair, Bell, Breathitt, Casey, Clay, Clark, Clinton, Cumberland, Estill, Floyd, Garrard, Harlan, Jackson, Johnson, Knott, Knox, Laurel, Lawrence, Lee, Leslie, Letcher,, Lincoln, Madison, Magoffin, Martin, McCreary, Monroe, Owsley, Perry, Pike, Powell, Pulaski, Rockcastle, Russell Wayne,, Wolfe and Whitley Counties..

*We welcome new volunteers who share our vision of equal access to justice for those in Kentucky with limited resources.*

**There are many ways to serve!**

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Last updated on June 25, 2020.

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