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Newsletter

November 2017

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Giving Tuesday

Help Keep Legal Aid Available

Black Friday, Cyber Monday and then Giving Tuesday!

After the turkey and the bargains comes [Giving Tuesday, Nov. 28, 2017](#). Join in this global day of generosity and [make a donation](#) to support LASP's regional Helpline.

Helpline paralegals and attorneys are on the front lines of justice every day. Your donation sends a message that easy access to free legal aid is crucially important. Keep the front line strong, and make a [Giving Tuesday donation](#) to support the LASP Helpline. #GivingTuesday



Black Friday. Cyber Monday.

#GIVINGTUESDAY™

November 28, 2017

[Donate online today.](#)

Thank you!

LASP Delivers Hope

Standing Together for Justice

Giving a Family a New Start

Resolving a complicated problem is often a team effort. LASP advocates collaborate to get clients the supports they need. That was the case for Ms. B., a domestic abuse victim who came to LASP for help. First, her LASP pro bono attorney made sure she got a protection order to keep her safe from her abuser.

Ms. B and her children were homeless. Her volunteer attorney reached out to other agencies and together, they helped Ms. B resolve her child custody problems and find temporary shelter. Now she and her children are safe, and can begin rebuilding their lives.



When we **stand together for justice**, we can help people solve these complicated problems. Between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, campaigns in each county LASP serves are raising money so LASP can help people like Ms. B. Your donation to LASP helps lower-income people resolve complicated legal problems.

DONATE NOW

[Donate online today.](#)

Thank you!

**Name has been changed, but the story is real.*

LASP provides legal services to veterans



LASP staff attorney Deborah Steeves prepares for the monthly veterans clinic.

LASP offers monthly outreach clinic at Coatesville veterans center

Inspired by her father, who served in the Air Force, attorney Deborah Steeves initiated LASP's outreach to veterans in 2013, with a goal of making it easier for veterans to get legal help. Since then, LASP has held a monthly clinic at the Coatesville Veterans Affairs Medical Center on the second Wednesday of each month, from 9 a.m. to noon.

In any given month, Steeves will see 10-20 vets. She's helped nearly 1,000 vets with their legal issues since 2013. Veterans bring many types of legal problems to the clinic. Some are related to their service, or to resulting health challenges. Steeves recalled a veteran who had to leave his apartment in order to get treatment for PTSD related to his tour in Iraq. When his landlord refused to refund his deposit, LASP intervened and worked out an arrangement with his landlord so that he could break his lease without financial penalty. Another vet gave his car away when he was suffering from mental health issues. "We were able to successfully get him his car back," Steeves said.

Steeves helps veterans with many other issues, including bankruptcy; divorce; removing barriers to employment; preparing wills, powers of attorney and health directives; and family law problems. Steeves recalled a custody case with a gratifying outcome. "A veteran father had not been allowed to see his son for a year," she said. "LASP filed a petition for custody and was able to get an order allowing visitation. The son was so glad to be able to see his father again, while the father was able to enjoy a renewed bond with his son."

If veterans need legal assistance outside LASP's jurisdiction, Steeves can refer them to the appropriate Legal Aid organization nationally. She also refers veterans to programs such as the Military Assistance Project, which helps veterans seek bankruptcy protection if they are over LASP's income guidelines. Widener

University's Veterans Law Clinic, which accepts PA residents, assists with veterans' disability claims.

While LASP doesn't assist clients in criminal matters, attorneys can refer them to Veterans Court in the appropriate jurisdiction. Steeves noted that most Pennsylvania counties now have veterans courts, in the same way that some specialized courts address mental health or drug issues.

Pro Bono News

LASP announces new Interim Pro Bono Director

LASP Deputy Director / Director of Advocacy **Kesha James, Esq.** has added the role of interim pro bono director. Chris Zaccarelli departed LASP on Oct. 25 to become executive director of Crime Victims Center of Chester County. Best wishes to Chris! To learn more about pro bono volunteering with LASP, please contact Kesha at 610-275-5400 x131 or kjames@lasp.org, or one of LASP's pro bono coordinators: **Bucks County:** Jennifer Pierce, 215-340-1818 x205 or jpierce@lasp.org; **Chester County:** Brian Doyle, 610-436-4510 x211 or bdoyle@lasp.org; **Delaware County:** Tom Kerstan, 610-422-7053 x103 or tkerstan@lasp.org; **Montgomery County:** Mike Kelley, 610-275-5400 x125 or mekelley@lasp.org.

Highlights from the Counties

Housing | Evictions | Montgomery County

LASP joins coalition to impact eviction issue



With a goal of serving people at the time they're facing eviction and BEFORE they become homeless, LASP has joined a broad-based Montgomery County partnership of government, nonprofit, philanthropic and community groups. After months of planning, the Eviction Prevention & Intervention Coalition (EPIC) was formally announced Nov. 14 at a Montgomery Bar Association gathering, and officially launches in January 2018.

Over the past 12 months, EPIC grew out of three converging initiatives. Your Way Home of Montgomery County conducted a 2016 research study in conjunction with HealthSpark Foundation of Colmar which identified eviction as a serious problem. Meanwhile, the Montgomery Bar Association planned and held an Access to Justice Summit in April 2017, which identified legal assistance to those facing eviction as an unmet legal need in the county. Finally, Legal Aid of Southeastern PA applied for and received funding to hire an attorney who would focus exclusively on assistance to tenants at risk of eviction.

As Your Way Home describes the project, "...EPIC is a six-month pilot project designed to stabilize vulnerable families and individuals in Montgomery County who are facing eviction by providing them with free legal representation and social services on the day of their eviction hearing." In addition, EPIC "will provide limited

financial assistance to prevent evictions, and referrals to the long-term financial and social supports needed to prevent future housing instability." LASP will contribute expertise and experience in landlord-tenant law to train volunteer attorneys to assist tenants at Magisterial District Justice court proceedings.

LASP attorneys Susan Strong, Eileen Carroll and Don Cheetham will join Hon. Margaret Hunsicker in presenting a **CLE on "Eviction Prevention & Intervention Coalition (EPIC): Learn how to handle Magisterial District Justice court eviction hearings from experienced practitioners" Thursday, Nov. 30 from noon to 1:30 p.m.** For more information or to register, visit http://bit.ly/MontcoBarCLE_Eviction.

"We're very happy to be aboard" said Eileen Carroll, regional LASP attorney for landlord-tenant issues.

Head Start Outreach | Bucks County

Meeting our clients where they are

A Nov. 8 presentation at BARC Friendship Circle Preschool in Croydon kicked off LASP's Bucks County Division's effort to reach out to parents at Head Start programs. Staff attorney Tesla Thomas spoke to parents about LASP's services. "About half knew about LASP," she said, "but the other half didn't know we were here or that our services are free."

In addition to explaining LASP's services, Thomas gave information on Unemployment Compensation appeals. "It's important for workers to know they can appeal if their benefits are denied and that LASP can help," said Thomas. Presentations at Bucks County Head Start programs will continue into 2019.

If you'd like to schedule a LASP community legal education program at your organization, contact Deputy Director Kesha James, Esq. at kjames@lasp.org.

Delaware County

Profile: LASP staff attorney Natalie Diaz

A native Californian who grew up with earthquakes, Natalie Diaz joined Legal Aid of Southeastern PA in August and likes her role in helping clients to maintain stable housing. At LASP's Delaware County office in Chester, Diaz does primarily housing cases, but is beginning to take some custody cases as well.

"There's a long list of discriminations people face, but I always enjoy helping people with their housing legal issues the most," Natalie said. "There are a lot of guidelines, and a lot of room for advocacy. Fortunately, most see that housing is vitally important. If you lose where you're going to live, if a client's house is taken away, they'll be homeless."



Natalie Diaz

An alumna of UCLA for undergraduate studies,

Diaz describes herself as "an art history major who went blindly in to law school." Her longtime interest in art meant she was assigned books in college that she'd already read for fun. In law school, she struggled with a "money-driven" attitude among some classmates. After her first year at UC Irvine School of Law, she interned for a legal aid organization in Sacramento. "I loved it, and I could see a light at the end of the tunnel." Diaz maxed out internship hours with Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles. She also spent a summer interning with the Colorado State Public Defender because she wanted trial experience and to see the criminal justice system at work.

She moved from Long Beach, California to Philadelphia in a March 2016 storm, having visited Philly once for four hours prior to the move. Her fiance got his dream job in Philly at Earthjustice, an environmental law nonprofit. They enjoy ready access to New York and Washington, D.C.

When Diaz prevents vouchers from being taken, so that a client can continue living in their home, she feels that her work can offer a positive outcome in what "can be a long system of everything being taken." Said Diaz, "I always wanted a career that allowed me to help others, and working as a legal aid attorney is the perfect fit."

Chester County

Free workshop on clearing criminal records

On Dec. 12, 2017, LASP attorney Deborah Steeves, Esq. will explain when and how people can eliminate criminal records. The workshop will be held at the Coatesville Center for Community Health, 1001 E. Lincoln Highway, Coatesville, PA beginning at 4 p.m. Download registration information below.



Chester County

CCPA supports LASP through Encore Event

Special thanks to the Chester County Paralegal Association for sponsoring a fundraiser benefiting LASP and CCPA! This Oct. 18 "Encore Event" was held at Uptown! Knauer Performing Arts Center in West Chester.



Photos by Brian Doyle

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