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Newsletter

October 2017

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LASP Delivers Hope

Helping an Older Woman Live Safely at Home

Ms.G wanted to be closer to family. Her new home was in a different county, but the county assistance office assured her that this was no problem. Her benefits would follow her. But that's not what happened.

When she called the pharmacy to refill a prescription, her Medical Assistance wasn't in place. She couldn't afford to buy her medicine, so she went without. Her SNAP (food stamp) benefits didn't come either, and she began to run out of food. To make matters worse, the in-home care services she needed to live safely in her home were cut off.

Then she came to LASP. Her LASP attorney advocated for her with the county office. Her Medical Assistance and SNAP benefits were set up within 24 hours and her in-home care began within the week.



Your donation to LASP brings hope – *and real solutions* – to people who cannot afford an attorney. You are helping people facing life-changing legal problems.

[Donate online today.](#)

Thank you!

DONATE NOW

[Donate Now](#)

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

Pro Bono Month

Providing pro bono representation increases access to justice

Pro bono attorneys help bridge the "access to justice" gap, which is growing in our region. In honor of Pro Bono Month in October, LASP extends a special thanks to pro bono attorneys for supporting access to justice throughout the year for economically disadvantaged residents of Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery counties. Probono.net notes, "The need for legal services among the poor is overwhelming. According to an American Bar Association study, at least 40% of low and moderate-income households experience a legal problem each year. Yet studies show that the collective civil legal aid effort is meeting only about 20% of the legal needs of low-income people."

For more information about pro bono volunteering, please contact one of LASP's pro bono coordinators: **Bucks County**: Jennifer Pierce, 215-340-1818 x205 or jpierce@lasp.org; **Chester County**: Brian Doyle (incoming pro bono coordinator), 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. Upcoming events in our region during National Pro Bono

Week follow.

Montgomery County: Tuesday, Oct. 24: LASP and Montgomery Bar Association's Pro Bono Committee will present a **CLE on "Criminal Record Expungements,"** with **registration at 3:45 p.m.** and the CLE from 4-5 p.m. at George Washington Carver Community Center, 249 Jacoby St., Norristown. This CLE, presented by LASP attorneys Erica Briant and Mike Kelley, will target those interested in the basics of assisting those filing for expungement in Montgomery County, PA. There will be a focus on local procedure and themes that emerge when taking pro bono cases. Registration: <http://bit.ly/2gBakgX>. An Expungement Clinic follows from 5-7 p.m.

Bucks County: Wednesday, Oct. 25: Pro Bono Reception / CLE. There will be a CLE on "Understanding Immigration Basics in the Current Administration" presented by HIAS from **4-5:15 p.m.** The Pro Bono Reception will follow, with refreshments and hors d'oeuvres. The Arthur B. Walsh Award will be presented to a pro bono attorney at the event. Location: Bucks County Bar Association, 135 E. State St., Doylestown. Contact Michelle Froehlich with any questions at MichelleF@bucksbar.org or 215-348-9413 x110. To register, visit <https://www.bucksbar.org/calendar/>.

Delaware County, Thursday, Oct. 26: A **CLE-approved session on "The ABCs of Divorce"** is sponsored by the Delco Bar Association's Family Law Section and co-hosted by the Pro Bono Committee. It will be held from **noon-1:30 p.m.** at Delaware County Bar Association, 335 W. Front St., Media. <http://bit.ly/2yixrog>

Chester County, Thursday, Oct. 26: Expungement CLE with Pro Bono Thank You Reception immediately following, both at the Chester County Bar Association, 15 W. Gay St., West Chester, and starts at **4 p.m.** Questions? Email Emily Kollhoff at ekollhoff@chescobar.org or call 610-692-1889. Registration: <http://bit.ly/2yihvSN>

Montgomery County, Thursday, Oct. 26: Pro Bono Appreciation Reception, 4:30-5:30 p.m., Montgomery Bar Association, 100 W. Airy St., Norristown. Registration: <http://bit.ly/2xDVkoa>



Highlights from the Counties

Montgomery County

"Domestic Violence & the Courts" Town Meeting

In honor of Domestic Abuse Awareness Month, LASP staff attorney Beverly Boyle and paralegal Liliana Ventura joined professionals from Montco's Domestic Violence Legal Network (**DVLN**) at a town meeting. The Oct. 3 event outlined services available to victims. Speaking on the panel, Boyle noted that **LASP helps domestic abuse victims obtain Protection From Abuse orders (PFAs) and can also help clients under Pennsylvania's 2015 law, the Protection From Sexual Violence and Intimidation Act.**

Victims and friends/family of victims shared their stories. They observed that **educational programs on "what a healthy relationship looks like" were missing** from their experiences as students. **School assemblies on the dangers of drunk driving, drugs and other issues did make a difference**, they said, and they **encouraged schools to teach about healthy relationships through health classes and school presentations**.

Moderated by Joel Bernbaum, Esq., the town meeting also addressed:

- * Procedures of the Montco **Prothonotary's Office** and **Sheriff's Dept.**
- * Improvements in Norristown Police Dept. procedure in addressing domestic violence calls in the last 11 years.
- * **Friends of the Court** volunteer program, implemented by Hon. Kelly C. Wall, Administrative Judge for the Family Division of Montco's Court of Common Pleas.
- * Assistance to victims from **Women's Center of Montgomery County**.
- * Help offered to victims through **Laurel House** and **DART** (Domestic Abuse Response Team).



A "Light the Courthouse" ceremony closes the first Town Meeting on Domestic Violence & the Courts, held Oct. 3 at Montgomery County Courthouse, Norristown.

Chester County

Encore Event! To **benefit LASP** and the **Chester County Paralegal Association**, join us at Uptown! Knauer Performing Arts Center in West Chester **Wednesday, Oct. 18**. \$20 admission at the door includes food, beer and wine. Hope to see you from **4:30- 7:00 p.m.** Also on deck for this event: a live auction, 50/50 and wine grab featuring local businesses and restaurants. Uptown is at 226 N. High St., West Chester. For more info, please call Tracy Dussell or Karen Carter at 610-696-8225.



Chester County Paralegal Assoc. Encore Event, benefiting LASP and CCPA.

Bucks County

Profiles: LASP staff attorneys Tesla Thomas & Robert Kim

Legal Aid of Southeastern PA welcomed two new attorneys to Bucks County's Bristol Office this spring. In September, they provided an update on their work with LASP.

Robert Kim

A mother recently gained custody of her son through a court order. She believed Section 8 housing rules required simply that she tell the social worker about the court order. Instead, her housing voucher was terminated. LASP staff attorney Robert Kim is working to preserve the voucher so that she and her son can stay in their current residence. "I am fighting to keep clients from losing their potential source of housing stability," Kim noted. "When housing is stable, the clients can focus on other important aspects of providing for their families physically, emotionally, and spiritually."

In working with with subsidized and public housing clients, Kim assists many whose main source of income is Social Security and disability. Clients pay 30 percent of their income toward the rental rate, and Section 8 covers the rest of the rental rate.

In the area of consumer law, Rob discusses options with clients to determine

whether bankruptcy is right for them. Clients then can make the best decision for them and their family.

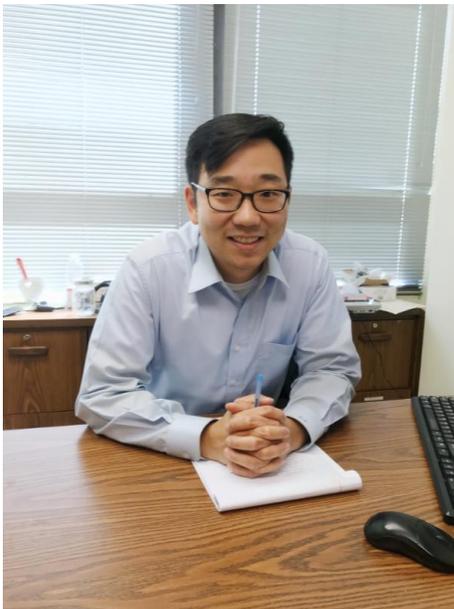
Rob grew up in New York City and attended Long Island schools. After studying at Boston University as an undergrad, he worked with after-school youth in Washington, D.C. "I saw the great benefits of stable housing," he said. Upon graduation from City University of New York School of Law, Rob worked for Legal Aid of Western New York. After getting engaged he moved to PA, where he finds the "best of both worlds" in parks, hiking trails, ocean, lakes and rivers, with Philly and New Hope readily accessible. He enjoys photography and snowboarding.

Tesla Thomas

An elderly client who'd been in and out of hospitals found herself cut off from medical benefits. She was without benefits she needed. LASP staff attorney Tesla Thomas helped her client get the benefits restored retroactively and quickly. Tesla's work involves SNAP (food stamps), medical and cash assistance cases, along with unemployment compensation, SSI / SSD (Social Security and disability) and some expungement cases.

A native of northeastern PA, Thomas attended La Salle University and Widener Law School (now Delaware Law School). "I always knew since I was young that I wanted to connect people facing poverty to resources," she said. After law school she worked pro bono on custody cases for Philadelphia VIP (Volunteers for Indigent Persons). As a caseworker at the Department of Human Services, she learned about the people who are helped by the benefits programs and how the system functions.

Thomas likes to advocate for clients who have had benefits denied or closed out too early. She enjoys seeing "how much of a difference I can make in people's lives. ... I feel so blessed, so grateful" to do this work. "My clients are teaching me so much. It's a wonderful feeling."



Robert Kim



Tesla Thomas

LASP sees the issues confronting poor people every day – unstable or unsafe housing, limited access to health care, hunger, and domestic violence.

The civil legal services that LASP delivers can provide the first step to a better life for residents like these:

PROTECTION FROM ABUSE

Ms. H almost lost her son to the little boy's abusive father. LASP quickly stepped in, obtaining custody for the mother and protection for the child.



HELPING VETERANS STAY IN THEIR HOMES

When veteran Mr. B was threatened with a wrongful eviction, LASP was there to fight for him and ensure that he stayed safely in his home.

RESTORING BENEFITS FOR SENIORS

With the help of a LASP attorney, Mr. K, a senior citizen, had his unemployment benefits restored after they were contested by his former employer.



LASP's Delaware County division handled cases in 2016.

By supporting LASP, you protect Delaware County's poorest and most vulnerable residents – and support the fairness of our justice system.

Without you, LASP would have to say "no" to people who are facing crises of financial stability, custody, or safety.

Family Law



Housing



Public Benefits/Health



Consumer



William J. Gallagher, Esq.
President, LASP Board of Directors

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Executive Director
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[Click to download the Delaware County Fact Sheet.](#)

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