

TALS Announces 2019 Access to Justice Award Recipients



Access to Justice Awards 2019 Honorees

TALS Commemorates History, Celebrates Leaders in Access to Justice

NASHVILLE - The Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services (TALS) will host its annual Equal Justice University for lawyers, advocates, social workers, and others August 28 -30 in Murfreesboro. This year's theme is *One Voice, One Person, One Vote: Reflecting on Tennessee's Role in the 19th Amendment and Exploring New Voting Rights Frontiers*, focusing the state's role in suffrage, the progress and opportunities that exist a century later, and the power everyone has to effect positive change. The United States Congress passed the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote 100 years ago, igniting the historic events that led to Tennessee becoming the 36 state to ratify the 19th amendment one year later.

Outstanding keynote speakers and expert presenters will explore legal history, advances in the law to protect the rights of traditionally marginalized people, and the challenges that remain.

Equal Justice University combines cutting edge programming with an inspiring celebration of seasoned leaders and new advocates who are making our civil justice system in Tennessee stronger and more accessible to those who would otherwise be left to navigate the courts alone.

Access to Justice Awards

At the conference, TALS presents prestigious Access to Justice Awards to recognize outstanding service to the equal justice community.

“A highlight of EJU is celebrating advocates who make our civil justice system available to people who are marginalized and would otherwise have no voice in navigating our complicated legal system to protect their rights,” Ann Pruitt, TALS Executive Director, said.

During Equal Justice University, TALS will recognize four attorneys for their extraordinary work to promote access to justice in Tennessee. **Deborah Taylor Tate**, Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts, is the 2019 Janice M. Holder Access to Justice Award recipient for her strategic leadership to ensure the legal system is open and available to all. The award was created in honor of Janice Holder, the first female Chief Justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court, who spearheaded the creation of Tennessee’s Access to Justice Commission during her tenure as Chief Justice. Recognizing that the court system impacts the lives of all Tennesseans, Director Tate drives innovative solutions to make the civil justice system more accessible, especially to the most vulnerable people in our state. Her ability to see the big picture and potential connections between the access to justice community, other state agencies, national groups and funders is a tremendous asset to the state. A shining example of this is her leadership in identifying and developing court

related resources to address the opioid epidemic in Tennessee and nationally.

“She has provided indispensable leadership and guidance to the LSC task force and has fostered close collaboration between the National Judicial Opioid Task Force and LSC Opioid Task Force. Director Tate’s leadership resulted in the LSC selecting Tennessee as one of four locations around the country to hold a program to publicize the release of the LSC Opioid Task Force Report,” said James J. Sandman, President of Legal Services Corporation.

Jeannie Kosciolk, Managing Attorney of Memphis Area Legal Services’ (MALS) Family Law and Senior Law practice groups, is the 2019 B. Riney Green Access to Justice Award honoree based on her leadership in promoting inter-program cooperation within the access to justice community statewide. The award was created in the honor of Nashville attorney B. Riney Green, who successfully engaged a bipartisan group of stakeholders from across Tennessee to ensure continuation of critically needed funding for legal aid programs during the late 1980s. In addition to maintaining a full caseload, Kosciolk has dedicated significant time sharing best practices in medical legal partnerships and family law with her colleagues statewide. Kosciolk’s exemplary work on an innovative new legal services delivery model to address second generational poverty in partnership with TALS and the Tennessee Department of Human Services led to a statewide expansion of the project to assist TANF eligible families that will launch in 2020.

Lucy Boateng, attorney with Community Legal Center in Memphis, and **Benjamin Danford**, staff attorney at Legal Aid of East Tennessee, will be recognized as the 2019 New Advocates of the Year, highlighting future leaders of legal aid. The award recognizes top advocates practicing for up to five years in a legal aid firm who actively and creatively use their legal skills to make tremendous positive impact in their clients’ lives and the communities in which they live. Boateng focuses her practice at Community Legal Center in Memphis on assisting clients applying for immigration relief. Many of Boateng’s clients were forced to leave their home countries due to violence, extreme poverty and oppression, which can make the vitally important work grueling and draining. Boateng is a stellar example of what all

attorneys should aspire to in terms of work ethic, dedication to their clients and commitment to access to justice. Danford is a staff attorney with Legal Aid of East Tennessee in Chattanooga. He is known far and wide in the rural Appalachian counties as someone who is there to energetically help clients solve legal problems, and people are lined out the door of the courthouse for his “rural intake days”. Danford also works intensively with inner-city Chattanooga neighborhoods designated as “Building Stable Lives” neighborhoods to identify systemic opportunities and to partner with coaches and community leaders to find lasting solutions.

How to Participate

To learn more about TALS, register for the conference visit <https://www.tals.org/eju>.

Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services (TALS) is a statewide non-profit organization that builds partnerships to support the delivery of effective civil legal services for low-income and elderly Tennesseans. TALS manages a web portal providing legal information- www.HELP4TN.org, and staffs 1-888-HELP4TN, a toll-free civil legal services referral and information phone line. Learn more at www.tals.org.

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[Print](#)

[Table of Contents](#)

[NEWS](#)

[News & publications](#)

[More News](#)

2 Aug 2024

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