

Community Health Systems Attorneys Provide Free Legal Help

Rachel Seifert, Executive Vice President & General Counsel Community Health Systems

FRANKLIN, Tenn., June 30, 2011 - By day they deal with multi-million dollar deals. By night they help low-income people deal with their legal problems.

They are the superhero lawyers of Franklin-based Community Health Systems Professional Services Corporation - helping low-income Williamson Countians leap over tall legal problems at no charge.

And you can catch a glimpse of their superpowers in action the first Tuesday of the month at the Williamson County Public Library, 1314 Columbia Avenue, when they hold a free legal clinic from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m.

The monthly clinics, which began in January, offer free legal advice to any resident of Williamson County. They are staffed by CHS attorneys in partnership with the Williamson County Bar Association and Nashville Pro Bono Program. Four attorneys, at least one of whom has litigation experience, staff the clinic each month.

"This program gives our attorneys a chance to give back to the community in a way that directly helps people, which is wonderful. We're grateful to the Nashville Pro Bono Program for this opportunity to help assure that access to justice is available to everyone, not just those who can afford it. I believe it's been as rewarding for us as it has for the people who have come to the clinics," said Rachel Seifert, executive vice president and general counsel - and one of the six CHS attorneys who staff the free clinics.

Since the program began, 163 Williamson Countians have received free legal advice and counsel, according to Lucinda Smith, director of the Nashville Pro Bono Program. Typical legal problems include employment disputes, housing issues and broken contracts, she added.

Seifert said the program grew out of attorney Justin Pitt's need to leave a meeting promptly at the scheduled end time.

"I asked Justin where he was going and he said to work on a pro bono project he had begun while working at Bass, Berry & Sims, his former law firm, which has a very active pro bono program. I was impressed by his dedication and it brought back memories of the pro bono work I undertook while working at a law firm earlier in my career," she said. "It also made me realize that lawyers don't need to work at a law firm to do pro bono work, and that it would be a unique way to give back to the community by actually providing the services needed. So we contacted the Nashville Pro Bono program and asked them to put us to work. This monthly free clinic was their suggestion.

It's been a great experience for everyone."

About Nashville Pro Bono Program

The Nashville Pro Bono Program is a joint venture of the Nashville Bar Association and the Legal Aid Society. Through the program, in 2010, more than 800 lawyers have provided free legal help to more than 2,000 individuals with no place else to turn. Additionally, lawyers working through the program provided help to more

than 550 individuals affected by the May 2010 flood.

About Legal Aid Society

Legal Aid Society gives free civil legal aid to people who have nowhere else to turn. It has 34 attorneys working out of eight offices in Clarksville, Columbia, Cookeville, Gallatin, Murfreesboro, Nashville, Oak Ridge, and Tullahoma. The Legal Aid Society is funded in part by United Way.

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