

LAS has \$17.4 Million Impact on Community

2013 year-end results reveal Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberlandands, along with pro bono attorneys, provided more than \$17.4 million in free civil legal advice and representation in 2013.

Throughout the year, Legal Aid Society handled a total of 7,709 cases for low-income individuals and families and received more than 18,000 requests for assistance.

“These numbers not only reflect Legal Aid Society’s dedication to work toward fairness for all people in the civil justice system, they also speak to the continual need for our services,” said Gary Housepian, executive director of Legal Aid Society. “Our staff and volunteers work tirelessly to achieve justice and make a real difference in people’s lives, but our work is never finished. We are committed to finding new ways to expand our reach and serve even more people with the greatest need. While it continues to be a challenge, we also see this as an opportunity to restore hope.”

One way Legal Aid Society works to bridge the gap of legal assistance is through education. In 2013, Legal Aid Society presented 150 community education programs that reached 6,362 people in Middle Tennessee communities. Legal Aid Society also distributed 30,279 self-help brochures on common legal problems and 221,637 more were downloaded from its website, www.las.org.

Legal Aid Society’s 75 staff and over 950 pro bono attorneys were able to provide legal advice and representation for a wide variety of civil legal issues in 2013, including: family (28 percent), housing (16 percent), income maintenance (14 percent), miscellaneous (12 percent), consumer (11 percent), health (7 percent), wills/estates and advance directives/powers of attorney (7 percent) and employment (5 percent) issues.

Robert Jones (not his real name) is one of more than 800 people Legal Aid Society helped with housing issues in 2013. Though he was an auto mechanic at an established garage, Jones and his wife were unable to keep up with rent payments after he began having heart problems, making him unable to work. Eviction notices soon came.

Legal Aid Society was able to negotiate an agreement with the landlord to not pursue an eviction, reduce the rental rate for payments that were past due, and allow time for Jones and his wife to secure housing assistance. The two were able to remain in their home.

“We had no idea how to handle this situation,” said Jones. “We have never in our lives had this kind of problem and thought we would be homeless. We didn’t know how we would survive.”

The Nashville Pro Bono Program, a joint venture between Legal Aid Society and the Nashville Bar Association, had a record-breaking number of volunteer lawyers donate time and assistance to the community. In 2013, 931 Nashville lawyers (which includes 93 new attorneys for the year) handled 2,883 cases, equating to 6,023 pro bono hours.

“Our Middle Tennessee volunteer lawyers provided more than \$1.6 million worth of free legal help throughout our 48-county service area in 2013,” said Lucinda Smith, director of the Volunteer Lawyers Program, the successor to the Nashville Pro Bono Program. “As we’ve moved forward into 2014, Legal Aid Society’s pro bono work is now being provided through the Volunteer Lawyers Program, which is a new regional program designed to connect volunteer attorneys with clients throughout our service area. Our goal is to reach even more clients in under-served, rural areas where it’s sometimes harder to find free legal assistance.”

Additionally, in 2013 the Legal Aid Society and Nashville Pro Bono Program:

- Held 97 pro bono clinics throughout the 48 county service area, helping more than 1,800 clients.
- Obtained more than \$3.3 million in federal income tax benefits for low-income families through the Tennessee Taxpayer Project.
- Recovered \$247,805 from the IRS for clients.

[Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland](#)s advocates for fairness and justice under the law. The non-profit law firm offers free civil legal representation, educational programs and advice to ensure people in its region are able to protect their livelihoods, their health and their families. It serves 48 counties from offices in Clarksville, Columbia, Cookeville, Gallatin, Murfreesboro, Nashville, Oak Ridge, and Tullahoma. Legal Aid Society is funded in part by United Way.

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