

Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services

Strengthening the Delivery of Civil Legal Help to Vulnerable Tennesseans

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LAET's Family Stabilization Project Benefits Local Economy

CHATTANOOGA – What began as a response to the recession in 2010 continues to reap great benefit for the local economy. Legal Aid of East Tennessee's **Family Stabilization Project** focuses on the recently unemployed in the Chattanooga area to identify those who lost a job through no fault of their own, and yet were denied unemployment benefits. The program provides legal services to help low-income residents appeal wrongful denials by the Tennessee Department of Employment Security, and is currently funded locally by a \$34,000 anonymous grant. In the past year alone, \$839,078 in employment benefits has been won for 168 low-income clients and their families.

“The money won put food on tables, prevented evictions and foreclosures, kept families together, and alleviated suffering due to the economic downturn,” says Russell Fowler, Attorney at Law and Associate Director of LAET's Chattanooga Office. “This money would not have come into the community and been swiftly spent on necessities of life if it had not been won.” Fowler went on to say that studies show monetary benefits have a magnified stimulus effect, and turn over at least 10 times in a local economy.

In its four-year history, the **Family Stabilization Project** has appealed and won 744 cases, bringing \$2,465,471 into the Chattanooga economy. Fowler points out that this money was spent on local goods and services like food, clothing, housing, transportation, and day care, providing Chattanooga's economy a \$24.6 Million boost.

For more information on this program, contact LAET's Chattanooga office at (423) 756-4013.

Legal Aid of East Tennessee's mission is to ensure justice for elderly, abused, and low-income people by providing a broad scope of civil legal assistance and advocacy. LAET serves eligible persons in 26 counties through offices in Chattanooga, Knoxville, Johnson City, Maryville, and Morristown.

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