

Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania

LASP



annual report

2018-19

Fresh starts & second chances



County Bar Association executive directors (from left) Wendy Leeper, Chester County Bar Association; Greg Nardi, Bucks County Bar Association; William Baldwin, Delaware County Bar Association; and Nancy Paul, Montgomery Bar Association; joined Shawn Boehringer (at right) of LASP at the Pennsylvania Bar Association's Conference of County Bar Leaders (CCBL).

To LASP friends and partners:

One of the wonderful rewards of a career in civil legal services is the opportunity to provide second chances for clients. Whether it be through assisting with a bankruptcy to reorganize debt to prevent the loss of housing, expunging criminal arrest records which negatively affect a client's ability to secure employment or obtain decent housing, or seeking a Protection from Abuse order so that a victim of domestic violence can safely leave an abusive relationship, LASP offers second chances and fresh starts every day.

In 2018-19, LASP intensified and strengthened its "second chance" work, engaging with community partners and state and local government leaders to show the many ways in which LASP assists constituents. From Pottstown to Bristol, from Kennett Square and Coatesville to Norristown, from Chester and Upper Darby to Lansdale and many places in between, LASP staff and volunteers, including local law students and lawyers from the private sector, conducted outreach, community education, and clinics providing valuable information to empower clients to access new opportunities to improve their lives.



LASP executive directors, past and present: Harvey Strauss (at left), Elizabeth Wood Fritsch, and Shawn Boehringer

significant passage of time and proven commitment of the individual to be a law-abiding, productive member of the community.

Pennsylvania established itself as the national leader in second chance work with its passage of Clean Slate legislation in 2018, implemented in large part in 2019. The law provides for automatic sealing of records for cases which resulted in a not guilty verdict or other dispositions short of conviction, for old convictions for summary offenses and most misdemeanors which no longer should impact an individual due to the

The Montgomery Bar Association has made reentry advocacy a priority, a worthy endeavor which LASP will continue to support. The MBA's Access to Justice Summit and Reentry Simulation in May highlighted the challenges that those recently released from incarceration face, including the fundamental need for identification documents such as birth certificates. With generous financial support, LASP is working to address that need. LASP has an exciting partnership in the works with the Montgomery County Public Defender's office to provide needed civil legal services to clients of the public defender's office to help turn their lives around, and we've now established a Community Engagement Unit to strengthen and grow partnerships, to enhance the visibility of our services, and to bring second-chance services to clients in their neighborhoods.

Your volunteerism and support through pro bono service and contributions inspire us and make it possible for LASP to do its important work throughout Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery counties. In the last year, you've fueled LASP's growth, the recruitment and retention of excellent staff, innovations in service delivery, and relocation to improved working space to help clients. Please continue to support LASP and help it be the best civil legal services provider it can be – to advance the mission of providing second chances and fresh starts for our clients every day.

C. Shawn Boehringer, Esq., Executive Director
Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania

our mission

The mission of LASP is to provide quality legal representation to low-income and vulnerable people from Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery counties, to empower them to solve problems without legal representation through legal education and increased access to the courts, and to change community practices and systems that aggravate poverty.

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP (photo IDs from left): 2019 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service Expungement Clinic in Delaware County: Deon Browning, volunteer; Kevin Fassett, Community Outreach for State Sen. Anthony Hardy Williams; State Rep. Joanna McClinton; Erica Briant, LASP attorney; & Cortez Patton, Chief Counsel for Sen. Williams. Expungement Workshop in Exton, with PA CareerLink of Chester County & United Way of Chester County: Deborah Steeves, LASP Staff Attorney, & Darshana Shyamsunder, UWCC Manager of Community Impact. Reentry Day in Norristown June 2019, with Montgomery Bar Association & Montgomery County Public Defenders: Juliana Muhaj, LASP / PLAN Martin Luther King, Jr. Fellow; Nicole McCoy of LASP's Regional Housing Unit; & Kesha James, Deputy Director for Advocacy. Second Chance Expo in Bristol, sponsored by PA Rep. Tina Davis, in March 2019: Tesla Thomas, Staff Attorney, & Erica Briant.

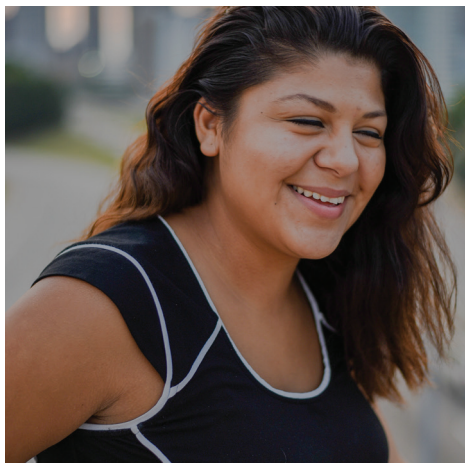
fresh starts

addiction

expungement

From the outside, it looked as if Ellen* had a good life.

She was married, had great kids, and a stable, professional job. However, her husband was abusive. As she tried to escape the relationship, he became more violent. Near the end of their difficult divorce, his violence caused her to fight back. When police were called, she was arrested. Over a period of months this happened several times, leaving her with a criminal record.



As she tried to rebuild her life after the divorce, she found she couldn't get another well-paying job. Her arrest record meant that minimum wage jobs were all that were open to her. Supporting herself and her children was very difficult.

When Ellen learned that arrest records could be expunged, she came to LASP. Her attorney helped her file the petitions and represented her in court when the District Attorney challenged the expungements. Ellen's attorney helped the judge understand the situation Ellen had faced, and he expunged the arrest records. Without the stigma of an arrest record, it will be much easier for Ellen to obtain a job that pays a living wage.

mobile home taxes



Mary* inherited her mobile home after her mother passed away.

The home wasn't big, but it was better than any of the apartments where she had lived in town, and it was hers. When Mary became disabled, she found her modest Social Security income wasn't going to go far enough. Mary faced choices between food, electricity and heat, and her property taxes fell by the wayside. After a few years of struggling just to get by, she received a notice that her home would be sold at sheriff's sale.

What Mary didn't know was that a mobile home should be not taxed in the same way as other real estate. Like a car, the value of a mobile home depreciates at a steady rate over time. Neither Mary's mother, nor Mary, had ever appealed the county's assessed value of her home. As a result, Mary had paid thousands of dollars more in taxes than if her home had been assessed fairly.

With the help of a LASP attorney, Mary appealed her property tax assessment. LASP also coordinated with expert volunteer attorneys to assist Mary in protecting her home from sheriff's sale. As a result, Mary will no longer be faced with the cruel choice between providing herself with necessities or losing her home.

Sadly, Mary's story is not unique. Hundreds of vulnerable residents of Chester County find themselves in similar situations. In 2019, LASP, along with United Way of Chester County and Honey Brook Food Pantry, helped 177 mobile home owners like Mary whose homes are being over-taxed. LASP, together with partner organizations, hope to help 1,000 more mobile home owners in 2020.

Please see page 14 for more on the Chester County Mobile Home Tax Appeal Project.



Marie* was determined to beat her drug addiction.

She used opiates and had tried several rehab programs. Each time, she relapsed. So, she signed herself into a long term residential program. This meant doing the hardest thing she'd ever done – letting the county place her four children in foster care. But Marie knew her children needed her to get clean.

In Bucks and Montgomery counties, LASP attorneys are assigned by the court to represent parents when the county takes custody of their children. LASP attorneys protect parents' rights and help them address the very serious problems that lead to losing custody. "We're a combination of attorney and social worker," says Jennifer Pierce, LASP Doylestown Managing Attorney.

In Marie's case, Jennifer's first challenge was obtaining a good placement for her as she neared the end of her residential program. Marie wanted to go to one of the step down programs that would let her have her children with her. There was an open spot, but to be admitted, she had to have custody of one of her children. She had nowhere else to go, so obtaining a placement was crucial. If Marie became homeless, her chances of maintaining her recovery would plummet.

"I advocated for her with the county and the courts," says Pierce, "but she did the rest of the work herself. When they learned how well she was doing, they began to see that she could parent her children." Pierce got the OK for Marie to regain custody of her youngest child, who accompanied her to the step down program. Marie continued to do well, and Jennifer helped her reunite with her other children. Marie is living with them in an apartment, enjoying the simple daily routine of being their mom, and maintaining her recovery.

Legal aid changes lives

With the support of many generous donors, law firms, bar associations, pro bono volunteers, community partner agencies and friends, LASP is able to give low-income people the legal representation they need to protect their families, their homes and their livelihoods. During 2018-19, your help and support changed lives. THANKS TO YOU, many families are in better situations today.



Thomas Dreyer (second from right) received a Pennsylvania Bar Association Pro Bono Award for his work in handling divorce matters. The award was presented at the Delaware County Bar Association President's Dinner Jan. 11, 2019. Pictured (from left): Thomas Kerstan, LASP Staff Attorney & Delaware County Pro Bono Coordinator; David Keller Trevaskis, PBA Pro Bono Coordinator; Shawn Boehringer, LASP Executive Director; Dreyer; and Charles Eppolito, 2018-19 PBA President.

New Pottstown location improves accessibility

Maintaining its longtime presence in Pottstown, while providing full handicapped accessibility, LASP moved its western Montgomery County office from King Street to 933 N. Charlotte St., Suite 2-A in Pottstown on April 25, 2019.

Shawn Boehringer, Executive Director, observed, "LASP's move in Pottstown answers questions we regularly ask: 'What may be done to enhance services to clients, and how do we provide those services with the highest level of professionalism?' The new office answers those question in a positive way. Staff have improved space in which to work to address the difficult issues our clients present, and clients have a better appreciation that their cases are handled in an environment befitting a well-respected and established law firm."

Pottstown Office Manager Jean Gauger noted that she'd worked out of 248 King St. for 38 years with both LASP and its prior iteration, Montgomery County Legal Aid Service. Catherine Guido, Managing Attorney for the Pottstown office, and Donald B. Cheetham, 3rd, Staff Attorney, also are longtime members of LASP's dedicated Pottstown team.



55 birth certificates requested at a clinic Nov. 9, 2018 at Levittown branch of the Bucks County Free Library! Hill Wallack LLP and Penn Community Bank sponsored the birth certificate fees. Pictured from left: Francis J. Sullivan, Founding Partner at Hill Wallack; Tesla Thomas, LASP Staff Attorney; Randi Riefner, LASP Paralegal & Bucks County Assistant Pro Bono Coordinator; Todd Hurley, Chief Relationship Officer for Penn Community Bank; Rosemary Sullivan, LASP Board of Directors; Breandan Neme; Jeremy Puglia; & Jennifer Pierce, LASP Doylestown Managing Attorney. Volunteers not pictured: Robin Holmes; Dawn Burke; Josephine Lee Wolf; & Cheryl Chamberlin, LASP Paralegal Intern.



Jean Speiser received a Pennsylvania Bar Association Pro Bono Award at the Chester County Bar Association President's Dinner Jan. 18, 2019. Recognized for her commitment to the Chester County Access to Justice program and to LASP pro bono efforts, she is pictured with 2019 CCBA President Patrick M. McKenna (left), 2018-19 PBA President Charles Eppolito (center back); and PBA Pro Bono Coordinator David Keller Trevaskis.

at a glance

(2018-19)



11,257 adults and **10,045** children helped in 2018-2019



21% of clients were **60 and older**



75% of clients were **women**



45% of clients were members of a **racial or ethnic minority**

PLAN Excellence Awards honor LASP's Michelle R. Terry & Montgomery Bar Assoc.



Honored for 40 years in legal aid in August 2018, Michelle R. Terry (center) joins Judith Algeo, President, LASP Board of Directors, and William Baldwin, Executive Director, Delaware County Bar Association & Vice President, LASP Board of Directors.



Nancy O. Walsh, Nancy R. Paul, Shawn Boehringer, Michelle R. Terry, and Kesha James.

years of service with legal aid. She is Managing Attorney of LASP's Delaware County offices. Michelle remains fiercely determined to achieve justice for clients. Over the decades, she has represented clients in cases related to education, disability, unemployment compensation, SSI, housing, custody, Protection from Abuse, consumer law and more.

Michelle began her legal aid career as an intern at Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS) in Pittsburgh and in 1978 earned a Reginald Heber Smith Fellowship. She worked as a Reggie Fellow at the Delaware County Legal Assistance Association (DCLAA), a predecessor program of LASP. She has served legal aid and the client community as staff attorney, oversaw the Advice & Referral Unit, supervised law students, and led the Children's Disability unit, where she provided legal representation in education and children's Social Security cases. She also served as Litigation Coordinator. When DCLAA joined Bucks, Chester and Montgomery counties to form LASP in 2001, Michelle became Managing Attorney of the Delaware County Division, while also handling more than 2,000 cases for LASP, from 2001 to the present.

Many of Michelle's cases have led to lasting change, including a 1987 Commonwealth Court decision, establishing that when people try their best but cannot do the job, they are eligible for

Michelle R. Terry, Esq. was honored for her long and exemplary public interest legal career with a 2019 Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network (PLAN) Excellence Award in March 2019 in Harrisburg. In August 2018, the Delaware County Bar Association honored her 40

unemployment benefits. Michelle also served as an adjunct professor at Villanova Law School where she supervised and mentored numerous law students, positively influencing their lives and careers.

Nancy R. Paul, Executive Director of the Montgomery Bar Association and member of the LASP Board of Directors, and **Nancy O. Walsh**, Special Project Development Coordinator for the Montgomery Bar Association, also received PLAN Excellence Awards for their work at the Montgomery Bar on behalf of low-income county residents.

They have been instrumental in innovative projects, including the Eviction Prevention and Intervention Coalition (EPIC) under way in Montgomery County.

how to obtain services

FREE LEGAL HELP

Legal Aid of Southeastern PA provides free civil legal services for low-income and vulnerable residents of Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery counties.

For free help, call the toll-free Helpline to speak with an attorney or paralegal:

LASP Helpline

(Centralized helpline for general legal issues in Bucks, Chester, Delaware & Montgomery counties)

877.429.5994

Mon-Fri, 9 am - 1 pm (Se habla español)

To apply online:

<http://lasp.org/apply-here>

Delaware County

Protection from Abuse Helpline

855.879.3100

Mon-Fri, 8:30 am - 4:30 pm

Callers can leave a message outside of these hours.

Montgomery County

Protection from Abuse Helpline

855.980.6924

Mon-Fri, 8:30 am - 4:30 pm

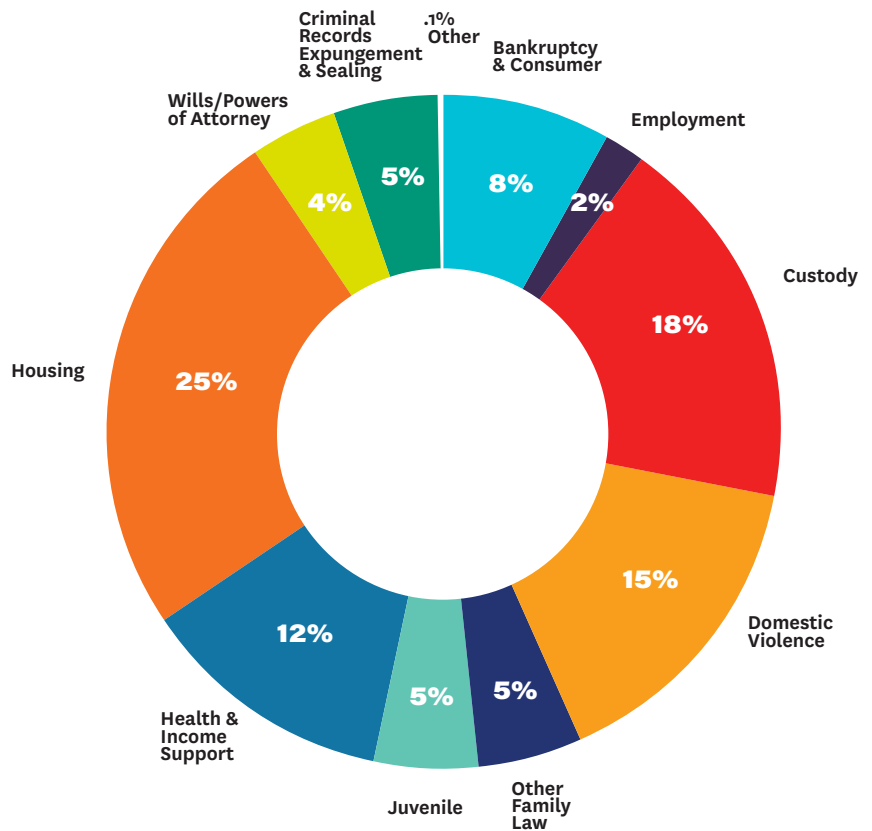
Callers can leave a message outside of these hours.

The Protection from Abuse Helplines provide legal advice and assistance in filing for a Protection from Abuse (PFA) order.

www.lasp.org

cases handled (2018-19)

In 2018-19, LASP handled 9,745 cases benefiting 21,302 clients and their families.



75 people received help filing an application for a PA birth certificate at a free clinic in Norristown in June 2019. Blank Rome LLP & LASP presented the clinic at the George Washington Carver Community Center. Birth certificates often are needed to receive medical assistance, housing and other public benefits, to obtain a Pennsylvania driver's or non-driver's license, for access to many public buildings, and for many other general identification purposes.

Juliana Muhaj (at left), LASP / PLAN Martin Luther King, Jr. Fellow; Krystal Kane, Blank Rome Pro Bono Coordinator; Sameen Oboudiyat, Pro Bono Intern; Michael E. Kelley, LASP Norristown Managing Attorney; Melissa Murawsky, Partner at Blank Rome; Jeremy Rist, Partner at Blank Rome; & Thomas Dunn, Pro Bono Intern.

Statement of Financial Position: July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019*

REVENUE

Government Funding	\$4,687,953
Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts (IOLTA)	\$583,954
Foundations & Corporations	\$307,381
Individual Donors & Annual Giving	\$131,788
Bar Associations & Bar Foundations	\$126,785
United Ways	\$28,252
Other Funding Sources	\$117,054

Total Funding** **\$5,983,167**

EXPENSES

Salaries	\$3,730,439
Employee Benefits	\$973,863
Consultants & Contract Services	\$167,022
Travel	\$32,713
Space Costs	\$291,686
Consumable Supplies	\$67,325
Equipment Rental & Maintenance	\$33,065
Other Expenses	\$233,913
Depreciation & Amortization	\$15,854

Total Expenses** **\$5,545,880**

* **Figures based on audited financial statement for FY2019**

** In addition to the board designated reserve for capital improvements, continuation of services (operational), and undesignated net assets, some funding sources allow for carryover of balances into the next fiscal year. That carry over consists of temporarily restricted and unrestricted net assets.

Change in Net Assets: \$437,287

In-Kind Resources: \$500,613

- **Donated Attorney Services** (2,803 hours & in-kind representation for LASP operations: \$427,063)
- **Donated Paralegal Services** of 430 hours: \$27,950
- **Donated Office Space:** \$45,600

Institutional, Government & Business Donors

Law Associations, Bar Foundations & Law-related Organizations

Bucks County Bar Association
Bucks County Bar Foundation
Chester County Bar Association
Chester County Bar Association – Young Lawyers Section
Chester County Bar Foundation
Chester County Paralegal Association
Delaware County Bar Association
Delaware County Bar Foundation
Delaware County Bar Association – Family Law Section & Women in the Law Committee
Eastern District of Pennsylvania Bankruptcy Conference
Doris J. Freed American Inn of Court
Montgomery Bar Association
Montgomery Bar Foundation

Government Grants & Contracts

Bucks County Area Agency on Aging
Bucks County Children & Youth Social Services Agency
Chester County Board of Commissioners
Chester County Department of Aging Services
Chester County Department of Housing & Community Development

Delaware County Office of Housing & Community Development
Delaware County Office of Services to the Aging (COSA)
Legal Services Corporation (LSC)
Montgomery County Department of Housing & Community Development
Montgomery County Office of Aging & Adult Services
Montgomery County Office of Children & Youth
Pennsylvania Commission on Crime & Delinquency
Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency
Pennsylvania Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts (IOLTA)
Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network (PLAN)

Charitable Foundations & Trusts

Bucks County Foundation
Chester County Fund for Women and Girls
Genuardi Family Foundation
Gilman-Zelitch Charitable Fund
HealthSpark Foundation
Independence Foundation
Merck Company Foundation
Montgomery County Foundation
The Pew Charitable Trusts
Phoenixville Community Health Foundation
Satterthwaite Family Fund

TD Charitable Foundation
VNA Foundation of Greater North Penn
Walter Williams Foundation

Collaborative Grants

PA Commission on Crime & Delinquency (PCCD) - Collaboration with A Woman's Place, Bucks Co.
PCCD - Collaboration with NOVA, Bucks Co.
PCCD - Collaboration with Women's Center of Montgomery Co.

Business, Service Groups, Congregations & Others

Benevity Community Impact Fund
Bottomline Technologies
Buxmont Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
First Presbyterian Church of West Chester
First Resource Bank
Innovative Timing Systems, LLC
KeyBank
Penn Community Bank
Siemens Caring Hands Giving Campaign
United Way of Chester County
United Way of Midland County
Univest Bank & Trust
Your Cause
WSFS

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this report for the fiscal year July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019. To offer feedback or to report an error, please contact Director of Development Ann Tydeman-Solomon at asolomon@lasp.org or 610.275.5400 x123.

Gifts in Memory & Gifts in Honor

In memory of Marianna Guido

Kathleen H. Waters

In memory of Maryjane B. Kelley

Jim Connell
Denise Wilcox

In honor of Joseph M. Donley & Patrick Kittredge

John Embrick

In honor of Andrew Motel

Marta Motel
Stephen Motel

In honor of Seth D. Wilson

George Audi

Thank you for Standing for Justice in 2018-19!

Champion for Justice \$5,000 & above

Lee Ciccarelli
Paul & Elizabeth Troy

Advocate for Justice \$2,500 - \$4,999

MacElree Harvey, Ltd.
James E. McErlane
John F. McKenna

Defender of Justice \$1,000 - \$2,499

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15th Annual Trial Run 5K raises \$16,475!



Lowell (at left), Kristen and Liam Ladd with Kristen's parents, Suzanne and Bob Wetzel. Liam won the 19-and-under division.

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THANKS to sponsors and runners for joining us on Struble Trail, Downingtown, on June 15, 2019, and to the Chester County Bar Association Pro Bono Committee! The Trial Run 5K raised \$16,475 for legal aid for low-income, vulnerable people. During its 15-years, the race has raised more than \$249,000.

SPECIAL THANK YOU to **Kristen Wetzel Ladd**, Esq., of Unruh, Turner, Burke & Frees for her work organizing the Trial Run 5K since 2011, and as co-chair for the past five years. "Kristen has been a huge supporter of LASP and the Trial Run for many years," noted Brian Doyle, LASP Staff Attorney and Pro Bono Coordinator. "Her devotion of time, energy, and effort

have made our race possible. We can't thank her enough for contributing her expertise and insight," Doyle said. He also thanked Lowell Ladd and 2L Race Services for donating their expert race management services.

Tom Parlapiano won first place in the men's division with a time of 16:59, and Mark Langan finished second at 18:00. Allison Hopkins won the women's division at 21:23 and Sara Planthaber, former LASP intern, was second at 23:59. The 48 runners and walkers ranged in age from 4-70, with eight competitors in the 19-and-under division and five participants in the 60-and-over division.

Encore! 2018

Thanks to CCPA



From left: Michele Luczeczko, Donald P. Bristol, Deborah Steeves, Rachel Houseman, Barb Butler, and Luciann Givonetti.

The Chester County spirit was in full force Nov. 14, 2018 at the Encore! fundraiser in West Chester, benefiting the Chester County Paralegal Association and LASP. THANK YOU to CCPA for organizing the evening and for your \$5,000 donation to LASP. Thanks also to sponsors, volunteers, and attendees!

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'A Night at the Races'

fundraiser in Delco



Rosalie Spelman (at left) and Christina Drzal

THANK YOU to the Family Law Section of the Delaware County Bar Association for hosting the Night at the Races fundraiser to benefit LASP! The April 25, 2019 event in Media featured a fabulous Italian dinner, spirits and live auction.



Women of the Law Committee members (from left) Christina Drzal, LASP Regional Housing Unit Supervisor; Patricia L. Rizzo; Tiffany T. Griffin; Pamela Van Blunk; Lisanne Mikula; Anna-Marie Murphy; Hon. Stephanie H. Klein; Lorraine M. Ramunno; Nusrat Rashid; Michelle R. Terry, LASP Delaware County Managing Attorney; and Mary Walk, Delco Register of Wills & Clerk of Orphan's Court Division.

Delaware County wine tasting benefits LASP

Thank you to the Women in Law Committee of the Delaware County Bar Association for raising \$3,200 for LASP! The wine tasting June 20, 2019 was held at the Bar Association to support free civil legal aid for low-income and vulnerable people.

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Top left: 2019 Legal Aid Golf Classic ceremonial check presentation: Carl N. Weiner (at left), President, Montgomery Bar Foundation; Shawn Boehringer, LASP Executive Director; Gregory R. Gifford, President, Montgomery Bar Association; and Nancy R. Paul, Executive Director, Montgomery Bar Association. Bottom left: Justin P. Schorr (at left), President of DJS Associates, Golf Classic sponsor, celebrates his hole-in-one with Terry Myers, Senior Forensic Investigator. Photo courtesy of Montgomery Bar Association. Above: Nancy Paul (at right), Executive Director of the Montgomery Bar Association and member, LASP Board of Directors, with Christine Walker of Haverford Trust Co., a Golf Classic sponsor.

2019 Legal Aid Golf Classic raises \$54,000

THANK YOU to the Montgomery Bar Association and Montgomery Bar Foundation for a record-setting \$54,000 donation, raised through the 2019 Legal Aid Golf Classic. Thanks also to the sponsors and golfers who made it possible! The net total includes matching funds from the Montgomery Bar Association.

In the past 11 years alone, the Legal Aid Golf Classic has raised \$422,000 for LASP!

The June 24 event featured morning sunshine and a hole-in-one by Justin Schorr, President of DJS Associates, a Golf Classic sponsor. It was Schorr's second-ever hole-in-one, and the Legal Aid Golf Classic's first hole-in-one since 2009!

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New Liz Fritsch Fund improves services for Bucks County parents



LASP established the Elizabeth W. Fritsch Fund for Child Custody to honor her 20+ year career in civil legal aid, most recently as Executive Director of LASP from 2013-July 31, 2018. Generous donations to the new fund enabled LASP to provide Bucks County parents facing child custody problems with quick access to paralegals through LASP's free telephone Helpline and online application portal. Prior to the fund's establishment, parents needed to visit a LASP office to receive help. Now, they can make a phone call or go online. **The number of Bucks County parents who used the Helpline grew by 200% in 2018-19.**

LASP deeply appreciates the generosity of the Bucks County Bar Foundation and friends of LASP.

Liz explained her inspiration behind the fund. "Having a stable custody order, particularly for a single parent with limited income, is so important, and has an impact on all aspects of their ability to be financially self-sufficient, to be safe from domestic violence, to take good care of their children and provide them with a stable home."

To directly support the Fund, please visit: <https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/LASP> and designate the fund, or send a donation to Legal Aid of Southeastern PA, 625 Swede St., Norristown, PA 19401, and specify the fund. Questions? Please contact Ann Tydeman-Solomon at 610.275.5400, ext. 123 or asolomon@lasp.org.

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LASP helps mom obtain modified custody order

Ms. F* was one of the people helped through the Elizabeth W. Fritsch Fund for Child Custody. Ms. F's two young children came back from weekend visits with their father upset, dirty, and covered in bug bites. There was no bedroom for them to sleep in at their dad's. While the children wanted to see their father, they resisted going to his apartment. Ms. F wanted them to have a relationship with their father, but was concerned about their overnight visits. Her LASP attorney helped her obtain a modification to the custody order that ended the overnight stays but ensured that the children still saw their father.

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

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Power of partnership

Chester County Mobile Home Project helps 177

Pro bono volunteers with the Mobile Home Tax Appeal Pilot Project prepare work stations for the Saturday, June 15, 2019 outreach session at Honey Brook Food Pantry. From left: Sierra Winslow Fegely, LASP Intern; Rachel Houseman, LASP Chester County Managing Attorney; Amy McCall, Paralegal with Lamb McErlane; Debbie Blough, retired chemist and Honey Brook volunteer; and Pat Klim, Paralegal with Lamb McErlane.

Through their volunteer work at Honey Brook Food Pantry helping clients with budgeting, Randy and Debbie Blough discovered that mobile homes were being assessed as if they appreciate like traditional real estate, when they actually depreciate like cars. When staff at the United Way of Chester County read a *Philadelphia Inquirer* story about the couple's successful tax appeals for 22 mobile home owners, they realized that UWCC could help scale the project through leadership and financial support, and United Way of Chester County reached out to LASP.

Working with the Bloughs, Honey Brook and UWCC, LASP attorneys provided their legal expertise for the pilot project. Members of the Chester County Paralegal Association volunteered to help mobile home owners navigate paperwork for the appeals.

The results are in! All appeals were successful!

LASP Chester County Managing Attorney Rachel Houseman, Staff Attorney Brian Doyle, and several pro bono volunteers filed 177 appeals, ahead of the Aug. 1 tax appeal deadline. The effort brought an average tax reduction of \$969, which will help mobile home owners starting in 2020. The total tax reduction is \$171,580 beginning in 2020. Chris Saello, President and CEO of United Way of Chester County, points out that this is more than \$1.7 million over 10 years.

High housing costs are one of the biggest problems facing low-income people regionally. Chester County's 3,600+ mobile homes are among the most affordable housing options in the county. The project found that mobile homes are over-assessed by 400 percent. If the home owner can't afford to pay the property tax, they risk losing their home at sheriff's sale.

The project aligns with United Way of Chester County's new strategic plan, which aggressively seeks out people who need help, Saello noted at the Sept. 18, 2019 UWCC luncheon, which honored Honey Brook Food Pantry as partner agency of the year. He recalled reading Alfred Lubrano's column about the Bloughs in the Aug. 13, 2018 *Inquirer*. And Saello noted that the project addresses the population of working people with incomes just about above the poverty line (\$25,750 for a family of four), yet still struggling. Nationally and in Chester County, United Ways are studying this population, whom they've termed ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed).

At a June 15, 2019 outreach day at Honey Brook Food Pantry, the Bloughs – Randy is a former nuclear safety inspector, and Debbie a retired chemist – shared that they have volunteered with Lord's Pantry for 13 years and Honey Brook for six years, yet it took years to recognize the problem of tax overpayments and the impact on struggling families. "We are still only scratching the surface," Randy said. There are 15 mobile home parks in Chester County, and the pilot project focused on two: Indian Run and Deer Run.

Next step: The partner organizations have opened the Mobile Home Tax Appeal Project to mobile home owners throughout the 759-square-mile county, with a goal of reaching 1,000 mobile home owners per year for the next three years.

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED IN 2020!

To scale up the project, from 177 mobile home owners in 2019 to 1,000 in 2020, will require significantly increased volunteer power. In addition to attorneys and paralegals, it's a great opportunity for law students, community members and even high school students to make a difference. Brian Doyle, LASP's Pro Bono Coordinator for Chester County, noted, "LASP will need many more volunteers to reach the goal of helping 1,000 mobile home owners." To sign up or to learn more about the project, contact him at **610.436.4510 x211** or **bdoyle@lasp.org**.

Pro bono volunteers:

Thank you for your gift of time in 2018-19!

LASP thanks board members, attorneys, paralegals, students and other volunteers for donating thousands of hours of pro bono service from July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019. Whether helping at intake or a clinic or presenting at a CLE, **YOUR EFFORTS EXPANDED ACCESS TO JUSTICE** for low-income and vulnerable residents of Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery counties!

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LASP recognizes staff for effective advocacy & service



Maryjane B. Kelley Award winners (from left): Edward Danelski, Staff Attorney; Randi Riefner, Paralegal; and Susan Rizzardi, Norristown Office Manager with Erik Hansen, Deputy Director for Operations; and Shawn Boehringer, Executive Director. The award recognizes longtime staff for empathetic and effective advocacy, ethics, professionalism, mentorship, and more.

Longtime staff members Randi Riefner, Susan Rizzardi and Edward Danelski received LASP's first-ever Maryjane B. Kelley Awards, while Erica Briant accepted the new Rising Star Award for a staff member with less than five years of tenure. The honorees, who were nominated by colleagues, received the awards at LASP's annual staff retreat on May 14, 2019.

Harvey Strauss and Elizabeth Wood Fritsch, LASP's first Executive Directors, received a warm "welcome back" at the retreat as they

helped present service pins to some of the 40 employees who have been on staff from 5-43 years. Harvey also was honored for 37 years and Liz for 21 years of service to regional legal aid.

The Maryjane B. Kelley Award is named in honor of LASP's longtime Bucks County Doylestown Managing Attorney (2002-18). Maryjane, who passed away in 2018, compiled a distinguished record of community and public interest service at LASP and as a Commander in the Navy JAG Corps.



Erica Briant accepts the LASP Rising Star Award, honoring effective advocacy for clients, challenging assignments, leadership, and more. On Sept. 1, 2019, she became Supervising Attorney of LASP's Community Engagement Unit. Keshia James (at right), Deputy Director for Advocacy, presented Erica's award.