

Save The Date

Wednesday, September 16
and
Thursday, September 17,
2015
THE AMAZING RAISE!

It's The Amazing Raise,
a 36-hour online giving
event, hosted by
GiveRichmond.

Get involved. Give back.
A gift today may benefit
you,

or a loved one, tomorrow.
www.GiveRichmond.org

Thank You!

To our donors, volunteers,
business community sup-
porters and friends...thank
you for making the Commu-
nity Give and Give Local
Piedmont on May 5th a great
day to ensure equal access to
justice for ALL! The board of
directors of RLS, the staff
and our clients join together
in sending you our most
heartfelt thanks for your
continued generosity!



RLS | *Because Justice Really Should Be For All*

When Should You Leave Well Enough Alone?

Here's a great example of how RLS' legal expertise saved the day for our client.

The advocates at Rappahannock Legal Services sometimes play “offense” and sometimes play “defense”, depending on the legal needs of our clients. For “Rachel”, we definitely needed to play defense, because her ex-husband, “George”, repeatedly filed motion after motion to request that his obligation to pay spousal support should be reduced. Over the course of several years, RLS staff attorneys were able to defend against several motions filed by George in which he tried to convince the court that he should pay less in spousal support to Rachel, who is his ex-wife and mother of his children.

George filed one more motion that probably, in hindsight, he wishes he had not filed. This time, he filed to terminate spousal support altogether, claiming falsely that Rachel had “agreed” to that. One of our RLS Fredericksburg attorneys filed a counter-motion to amend the child support calculation in the event that George would be successful in his motion to end spousal support.

At the final hearing on both motions, the judge did finally agree with George that the time had come for spousal support to terminate because Rachel had started new employment and the marriage had been relatively short. However, because our attorney had had the forethought to file that counter-motion to recalculate child support, the judge could consider the impact of losing spousal support in recalculating the amount of child support

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that George would have to pay.

With George starting a new, higher-paying job recently, the recalculated amount of child support jumped significantly...so much so that the court actually ended up ordering him to pay more in just child support than he had previously been paying for child and spousal support combined. This turned into a net gain for our client, Rachel, even with the loss of spousal support. While George definitely got what he wished for, the end of paying spousal support to Rachel, our attorney was able to deploy an effective counter-motion to make sure that Rachel and her children were properly protected.

[Link Between Poverty
And Disability](#)

The poverty rate for working-age people with disabilities is nearly two and a half times higher than that for people without disabilities. Indeed, recent research finds that [half](#) of all working age adults who experience at least one year of poverty have a disability, and nearly [two-thirds](#) of those experiencing longer-term poverty have a disability.



Thanks, **River Counties Community Foundation!** RLS received a grant from RCCF to support a monthly outreach visit in Kilmarnock by our Tappahannock office paralegal. Once a month, Desi Harley holds office hours in a space donated by the Northern Neck Free Clinic so she can interview prospective clients, offer assistance to those who are thinking of filing for disability benefits, and see her current clients, saving them the long trek from Lancaster or Northumberland County to Essex County. For more about this program, please call our Tappahannock Office at (804) 443-9393.



Message from a grateful client who was helped by RLS:

“Dear Mr. Rellick, I just wanted to say “Thank You” sincerely for helping me with my landlord/tenant situation. I couldn’t have done it without you!”



Goodbye and Hello

Brenda Born retired after 11 years as the Pro Bono Coordinator in our Fredericksburg office at the end of June. Brenda came to RLS from many years of experience as a legal secretary for various law firms, so she was perfectly positioned to perform the delicate task of recruiting and supporting private attorneys who took on pro bono cases for clients RLS did not have the resources to assist.



Although she was a part time employee, Brenda worked like a full time employee, cheerfully multi-tasking, assisting others in the office and providing a level of kindness and professionalism we are all better off for having observed. Many area attorneys and their staff got to know her pleasant and cheery voice as she did her best to foster an atmosphere of pro bono service among the attorneys in our community. Her contributions to staff potlucks are the stuff of legend, and her sweet and funny personality will be greatly missed, but we are happy to know she is enjoying a well-deserved retirement.



We were fortunate that Brenda's replacement was found exactly where we found Brenda: Carolyn Ross, like Brenda, is a former patent law paralegal, and we are thrilled that she joined us at the end of June as our new pro bono coordinator. Carolyn hails from Washington State (fun fact: she knows how to correctly pronounce the town of Puyallup!) and back in the 1980's was an administrative assistant for a legal aid office. She is eagerly awaiting the birth of her first grandchild in September. Welcome, Carolyn!

In a few extraordinary years as a volunteer, an AmeriCorps VISTA and finally as our first-ever Development Director, Grace McCormick has personified her name by gracefully charting our course with effective fundraising strategies that helped us grow, make new friends, and spread the mission of equal access to justice for all. Grace resigned in August to pursue other opportunities and we are so grateful for her professionalism, energy and team spirit. Please let us know if you have a good candidate in mind who can continue the strong legacy of achievement Grace accomplished.



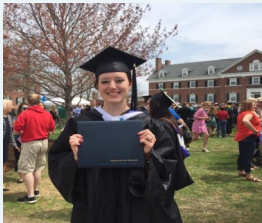
Christina Martinez started at RLS in March of 2012 as her first job after obtaining a paralegal certificate. In the three years she worked in our Fredericksburg office, Christina became an expert on how immigration laws can assist domestic violence victims. We are thrilled for her that she has been hired by a lucky immigration firm in Richmond which will allow her to further her career goals; and we are sad that we are saying goodbye to a smart, empathetic and hard-working champion for our clients. Before she left in July, she worked extremely hard to produce a comprehensive handbook for her successor which outlines all the law, forms, procedures and information needed to perform her duties. If you know of a bilingual (English/Spanish) paralegal looking for a challenge, please let us know!

Hail and Farewell to RLS Staff

FAREWELL TO OUR SUMMER VOLUNTEERS!



Ellen Rowedder



Ashley Kangas

Ellen Rowedder had just relocated from Georgia to the University of Richmond School of Law in February where we interviewed her at a Public Interest Job Fair. After taking some time off between first and second year, she completed her first semester of second year in May and was eager to see the inner workings of a busy legal aid practice. Over the entire summer, Ellen worked full time (and then some) as a law clerk in our Fredericksburg office, organizing files, meeting with clients, drafting pleadings, indexing discovery responses, researching legal issues and witnessing first hand all the ways that a lawyer practices law from the beginning to the end of a case.

The first task each summer for every law clerk at RLS is to help update our Housing Guide, which helps tenants understand their rights and responsibilities and includes a list of every affordable housing option in our service area. Ellen did the research to be sure our current version includes all recently enacted laws. It was also a great way for her to figure out the do's and don'ts of being a tenant, something a lot of students struggle with when they move from dorm life to apartment living. Being exposed to a lot of grueling family law fact patterns this summer, Ellen stated, "It has been nice to get out of the classroom and get out into the real world. It has been fun, but I did not expect some of the cases to tug at my heart strings like they have." Any law clerk who shadows our attorneys and works closely with our clients leaves with a much clearer understanding of the effort that goes into each legal matter we handle for our clients. Ellen had a front row seat and left with a renewed sense that family law practice is a real possibility for her future.

Ashley Kangas came to RLS "out of the blue". After her May graduation from Colby-Sawyer College in New Hampshire, she was looking for a way to fulfill an internship requirement while she took five remaining summer classes to formally complete her degree by October. The History and Political Studies major had done her senior thesis on the topic of providing incarcerated adults with the chance to gain a college degree, and that got her thinking about human rights and social justice. Born in Arlington, VA, Ashley decided to relocate to Culpeper for the summer, and saw our ad for volunteers.

"I am so thankful for the opportunity," Ashley remarked recently. "I learned more than I could have imagined." In our small Culpeper branch office, Ashley got to have one-on-one contact with clients, researched, took notes, and had the incomparable opportunity to watch an experienced attorney practice. The two intriguing research assignments Ashley enjoyed the most were finding out the custody rights of non-parents and beginning to develop a resource guide for rural DV victims who need to find a temporary home for their animals (pets range from cats to cattle). She squeezed eleven hours of volunteer time at RLS into a week that also included taking five online classes and working as a waitress for up to forty hours per week.

Ashley sings the praises of the extraordinary staff at the Culpeper branch office. She describes Gloria Ferguson, our intake specialist and pro bono coordinator, as "fun to talk to" and personally witnessed how often other attorneys and community activists would drop by to touch base. Ashley mentions that seeing managing attorney Tamara Moore at work was one of the highlights of her internship: "She is so professional and it was great to see her brain work and how she could keep up with so many cases." After her final day at RLS at the end of August, Ashley will set her sights on studying for the LSATs in preparation for applying for law school. Who knows? We might just see Ashley Kangas in court as an attorney in a few short years!

Our busy attorneys welcome the chance to mentor law students and undergrads interested in legal careers, and certainly appreciate the many ways in which our volunteers lighten the heavy caseloads we need to carry to keep up with the demand for our services. Thank you, Ashley and Ellen!

Want to know more about volunteering at RLS? Visit RLS' volunteer page on our website at: <http://tinyurl.com/nnfmw3r> to find out more. So many ways to help, so much to do!

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