

Save The Date

Tuesday, May 3, 2016

It's *The Community Give and Give Local Piedmont*, two discrete 24-hour online giving events, hosted by The Community Foundation of the Rappahannock River Region and the Northern Piedmont Community Foundation, respectively.

The clock starts ticking at *midnight* May 3rd. It's a fast-paced, exciting 24-hours of online giving, match grants and prizes as donors sign in and donate to their favorite charity (or charities)! We're hoping you'll join the fun and go online for RLS May 3rd. More information will be coming your way!

Get involved. Give back.
A gift today may benefit you,
or a loved one, tomorrow.

Thank You!

business community supporters and friends...thank you for your many efforts in making 2015 a great year for our journey to ensure there is equal access to justice for ALL!

The RLS Board of Directors, the staff and our clients join together in sending you our most heartfelt thanks for your continued generosity. We can't do it without you!



RLS |

Because Justice Really Should Be For All

A Case of Tragedy, Betrayal and Redemption

How RLS' legal expertise ensured justice prevailed for a client and her daughter.

In 2004, "Marcy's" world unraveled. Her beloved husband died unexpectedly. Overwhelmed with grief, she started drinking heavily. After a certain point, she was charged with two separate DUI (Driving Under the Influence) offenses in one week. Her two young daughters were taken away and put in foster care until her sister was ultimately granted custody of the girls. Because she was in jail at the time of the hearing, Marcy was denied any visitation rights.

Over the course of several years, Marcy did a remarkable job of redeeming herself and turning her life around. When she got out of jail, she worked hard and focused on her sobriety. She also filed for visitation of her girls and was given one weekend a month supervised by her sister. Finally, in 2011, she filed a motion to amend the visitation arrangements and was rewarded for her hard work by being granted unsupervised visits with the younger daughter, "Donna" (the older one turned 18 soon after that hearing).

Under the sister's care, Donna was struggling at school, involved with drugs and using promiscuity to act out and seek approval from the wrong group of students. The sister agreed to let Donna stay with Marcy full time, but only during the summer of 2012. When Donna returned to the sister's home at the end of the summer, the same problems started again. At that point, the sister agreed once again to let the unruly Donna live Marcy. However, the original order giving the sister custody of Donna and ordering Marcy to pay child support was never modified when Donna returned to live with her mother.

With more than five years of sobriety, regular attendance at AA meetings and a supportive sponsor, Marcy decided it was time to fix one more problem. Marcy had been ordered to pay child support when her sister was awarded custody of Donna. Marcy kept her support payments up-to-date and even had the support regularly taken out of her paycheck.

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From December of 2012, when Donna returned to live with her, Marcy continued to pay her sister child support, right up to 2016, even though her sister would have very little to do with the girl. The sister begged Marcy to keep the original order in place with no changes. That meant she would continue to receive the Donna's SSI (as the child of her deceased father) and continue to claim Donna as a dependent on her tax returns.

With the encouragement of her AA sponsor, Marcy began to set the record straight. She reported to the Social Security Administration that Donna's check was going to her sister who had not taken care of Donna in four years. Marcy filed for a change in custody and requested the support obligation be terminated. The Department of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE) told Marcy if she prevailed in court, she would get a refund of the back child support. With the advice of an RLS staff attorney, Marcy was able to obtain an order giving her full custody of Donna and ending her obligation to pay support. With that ruling, DCSE refunded Marcy the money they had been holding on her behalf after being notified that her sister was no longer the child's caretaker.

Since December 2012, with Marcy's help, Donna has turned her life around. Marcy has been watching proudly as this young lady fulfilled her dreams of finishing high school, attending college and serving in the military. Marcy's sister is now having to answer for her actions in receiving child support and SSI benefits for a child who had not been living with her for years.

"...with liberty and justice for all."

Yet, there is no right to counsel in civil disputes in the U.S., unlike the promise of a lawyer for people with criminal cases.

Did you know in VA there is:

- ◆ 1 private attorney for every 364 individuals
- ◆ 1 legal aid attorney for every 6,000 low-income individuals

Did you know RLS has:

- ◆ 5 attorneys to cover 17 counties with 51 courts
- ◆ to turn away 2 out of every 3 low-income applicants due to lack of staffing—resulting in those applicants having no where else to turn for legal support
- ◆ *closed 1,074 cases, helping 1,472 people in 2015.*

RLS is the only agency that offers these services!



Looking Forward—Save the Date

Jazz 4 Justice™

Saturday, November 5, 2016
UMW—Dodd Auditorium

To benefit RLS and the UMW Jazz Ensemble
Scholarship Fund

Message from a grateful client helped by RLS

"My representative was very nice, listened and took the time to get all the info and was very professional. I am so glad there is a place to go for people who do not have the means to pay for legal services."



Profiles in Service

What kind of person volunteers to spend her winter break during the stressful first year of law school at a nonprofit? Let me introduce **Christina McLeod**. “The power to change a situation” is how Christina defines law. A native of Fredericksburg, she has always wanted to help those in her community who wouldn’t otherwise have their voices heard.

With a passion for law since 8th grade, yet drawn to the challenges of business, Christina found a way to balance the scales. She pursued her undergraduate degree at University of Virginia’s McIntire School of Commerce and spent her summers working in a law firm. For three years after graduating from UVA, Christina worked at the State Corporation Commission, applying her business acumen in a legal setting.

That experience, together with her commitment to affect change, made her realize she could best achieve her goal as an attorney. As busy as she continues to be, her dedication to volunteerism has never wavered. Whether providing free trumpet lessons at a local elementary school, completing tax returns for low income individuals through the IRS’ Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program, or working on pro bono projects at law school, Christina has always been deeply involved in helping others make a change so their voice might someday be heard. Her internship at RLS reflected that spirit as she supported the staff



Alexis Patillo, a law school graduate, volunteered at RLS while searching for a job. “Working at Rappahannock Legal Services has been a great experience. During my time here I have been able to gain a deeper appreciation for the attorney/client relationship. Having the opportunity to see how clients rely on the attorneys here not only for legal support, but at times for emotional support, affirms my belief that the role of an attorney is important. Most of the clients I have had interactions with are dealing with extremely stressful life-changing situations, and they often need reassurance that things are going to be okay. I believe that the attorneys here do an excellent job of maintaining a professional relationship with each client, but are still able to provide each client with reassurance that they will be able to get through their legal troubles. I have always respected non-profit organizations but I really admire Rappahannock Legal Services for the work they do and the cases they take on.”

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 keep up with the demand for our services.

Welcome Bilingual Paralegal, Patricia Herlihy

You would never know from her Irish-sounding name that Patricia Herlihy is bilingual in Spanish. Pat is a very busy lady since joining RLS in October. Using her skills as an interpreter, translating documents, and working with the attorneys, she is able to help Spanish-speaking clients with the legal process in their native language. Most are frightened and intimidated by the legal system. Often, they have been told they won’t win and will lose their children. But when they hear Pat speaking in their native language, they are comforted that someone can understand and is willing to help them. Pat bridges the language barrier in a reassuring manner so that the clients can work better with the attorneys in presenting their cases.

Originally from Ecuador, Pat has lived in Massachusetts and Florida. Most recently, she worked in Caroline County at the regional jail as a translator. As Executive Director Ann Kloeckner pointed out, “I figured if Pat could handle working in a jail she could handle the stress of working here.”



Take a *NAP* While Supporting RLS!



While taking an afternoon nap may be beneficial to one's health, making a donation through the Virginia Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP) is *really* beneficial. The program was created to encourage private sector donations to help alleviate poverty in Virginia. Each pre-approved non-profit receives an annual allocation of tax credits based on a formula administered and monitored by the state.

The pre-approved nonprofit organizations (such as RLS) are able to offer these tax credits on Virginia tax returns on a first-come, first-serve basis to donors (individuals or businesses) that give time (ex., pro bono attorneys) or monetary donations. To qualify, individuals must donate at least \$500 and businesses a minimum of \$616. Once the nonprofit organization has the required documentation, it is forwarded to the state, which then issues the certificate of tax credits directly to the donor. **The tax credit is 65% of the qualified donation.** Pro bono hours are valued at \$125/hour. Once the hourly contribution reaches \$625 (5 hrs. x \$125) or more within the fiscal year, 65% of that amount may be used as a state income tax credit. The added benefit is that the entire donation amount can be claimed on the federal income tax return.

One of our donors initially wanted to make a donation but wasn't familiar with how the NAP process worked. During our conversations about the program, I suggested he check with his tax accountant to determine what the impact would mean for his particular state tax obligation. When he called back, we talked a little more and I was able to confirm that RLS had enough tax credits left to cover his newly proposed donation of \$20,000. The resulting NAP tax credit he received was \$13,000. It was obviously a win-win situation for both RLS and the donor!

While most of the RLS' NAP donations are not in that range, the NAP tax credits are a sought-after means for both individuals and businesses to support the work we do, while deriving tax benefits beyond the standard charitable deduction on the federal tax return. Another donor pointed out that NAP tax credits actually stretched her charitable donation dollars and allowed her to increase the amount she was able to give nonprofit organizations.

*If you want to know more about all of the different ways you can make a donation to RLS, please visit RLS' donation page on our website at: <http://tinyurl.com/jhemo67>
So many ways to help, so much to do!*

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