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Legal Ease

The Legal Aid Society of Roanoke Valley's Bimonthly Newsletter

May 2021



Every Legal Ease issue will feature an interview, story or information about one of our attorneys, a volunteer, or even one of our donors. This month we meet staff attorney Elizabeth Barbour.

What caused you to become a lawyer and why do you primarily work in family law with victims of domestic violence?

Serving with Legal Aid as a domestic violence attorney is a tremendous privilege and one my parents and experiences in life prepared me for. When I became a 1L at Washington and Lee in 2010 I had no set course of interest. But in time it became apparent family law would be a good fit for me. Prior to law school in Roanoke, I served as a Children's Trust Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) and family case manager with the Rescue Mission. And during a law school internship, the legal counsel of the office I was in suggested family law was the place she saw my career heading. And, she was right.

How would you describe domestic violence to someone who isn't familiar with that phrase?

In domestic violence, intractable power is achieved by one partner over the other using physical, emotional, and/or financial violence. Perpetrators of domestic violence steal their partner's autonomy by harming their person, controlling them emotionally, and/or isolating their access to social, financial, and other resources.

How has COVID-19 impacted your work, your clients, and victims of domestic violence?

Covid-19 caused our work with clients to be on the telephone and allowed me to become better skilled with the trauma-informed approach to gather in-depth versions of experiences of domestic violence and stories of navigating and surviving it.

In this period I have detected an immediacy in my clients to better their situations and break free of the cycle of violence which I attribute to one of two things. Either, Covid gave them alone time to form an unfettered decision about their situation or Covid made for tight quarters with their abuser and the last straw fell.

What are important things the public should know about domestic violence?

1) Domestic violence is hidden in plain sight everywhere. It has no boundaries based on status, education, or neighborhood 2) It impacts our entire economy, public education, whole generations of children, public health systems, and so much more 3) Domestic violence does not happen in isolation. It affects all of us, so all of us need to be aware of domestic violence

What are important things for a victim(s) of domestic violence to know?

1) Help is a phone call away. 911 or any domestic violence Hotline 2) You need to form a relationship with a domestic advocate or domestic agency 3) You need to create a safety plan - not just a piece of paper - but an action plan that allows a safe, organized escape from the violence and abuse. Any qualified domestic violence agency can assist you.

What do you think would happen if there was no Legal Aid and you were not there to represent your clients? How might that impact domestic violence cases/situations in our community?

Without Legal Aid, domestic violence victims who need a protective order may be hard-pressed to offer the court sufficient evidence to satisfy the standard a judge must have to enter a protective order. Also, a victim without legal assistance in a child custody proceeding may fall short of addressing the factors and other nuanced complexities a court must take into consideration in making custody determinations.

Legal Aid is an important check on domestic violence in a number of ways. We have seen this first hand in our 175 cases here at Legal Aid this past year. Without a legal leg to stand on victims of domestic violence in our service area would be bereft of legal services that keep them safe from harm and help them manage the custody of their children. Statistically, victims of domestic violence are more likely to obtain a protective order with legal representation; and, the stakes in child

custody decisions are too high to leave to chance. With Legal Aid's two full-time attorneys specifically trained to serve victims of domestic violence with family law issues offering FREE advice, resources, and in court representation, we not only give our clients a legal leg to stand on, but we also give them the resources to safely walk down a new path.

A special thanks to staff attorney Tonia Drewery for her participation and expertise in domestic violence. We will **feature Tonia in a future Legal Ease-newsletter.**



**Look for Legal Aid Society's NEW
"Victim to Victor" booklet coming soon!
It's FREE and will be available in both
print and online. info@lasrv.org**



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Your new Legal Ease newsletter will bring you closer to our attorneys and staff and the people they help each and every day. Along the way, you will also learn about our volunteers, board members, and supporters. We can't fit everything we do into your bi-monthly newsletter, so you can think of Legal Ease as your ongoing dialogue and info center you share with the Legal Aid family.

For example, Elizabeth and Tonia have much more to share with you about domestic violence and family law. Legal Ease will welcome them back several times to perhaps introduce you to one particular aspect of domestic violence. We know they will be back to talk to you about the new "Victim to Victor" booklet arriving soon.

With every issue, we hope you start looking for ways you can join our Legal Aid family. We look forward to our journey with you!



Legal Food Frenzy ^{15th Annual Statewide}

It's the LAST WEEK of Legal Food Frenzy!

Pick your favorite law firm or non-profit legal service agency (hint-hint) and help the valley "Close the case on hunger!"

Do You Need Help Managing Your Money?



Legal Aid Society and You Need A Budget (YNAB) have joined forces to offer current and previous Legal Aid participants FREE access to the YNAB App. It can teach you how to manage your money and get ahead—for good.

What makes this app and software program different? It's proven to work.

YNAB also has videos, blogs, podcasts, and other resources to help you get started. Want to know a secret and another reason why we know it works? One of our staff attorneys has used YNAB in her personal life for the past 5 years! To learn more email info@lasrv.org



YNAB.

Won't you please join us in our work to ensure justice for all?



Your small gift can add up!
You can turn your \$5 gift into \$60 by making a recurring or monthly gift.

Thank you!

If you currently support our work, thank you so much! At every turn, in person, on the phone, or in the court room, you are the reason we can provide FREE legal services to low-income residents in our community.

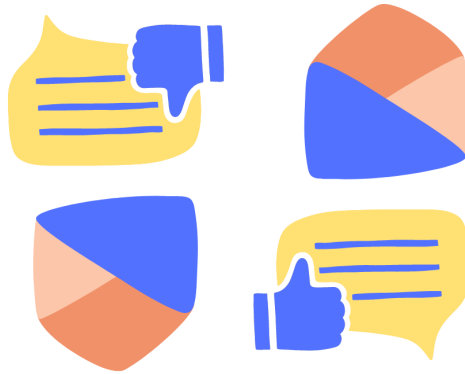
You are legal aid heroes and we can't thank you enough!

If you do not currently support our work, won't you please consider a [gift](#), of any size, today? Your gift today helps us provide legal services to low-income residents and their families tomorrow.

Thank YOU!

If you only want to receive our free Legal Ease-newsletter, that's okay!

We're just so glad you're here!



We hope you enjoyed reading your Legal Ease. This is a new publication for the Legal Aid Society of Roanoke Valley and **we need your help**. This is a community newsletter and we would like to reach the following audiences:

- the individuals and families we serve
- our partner agencies
- our volunteers and supporters
- the public at large

We also want to raise awareness about Legal Aid services and programs as there are many low-income residents right here in our valley who may need legal assistance but do not know we are here. We want to help them, and our services are FREE.

This is where YOU come in. Please send your comments, ideas, and suggestions about how we can make Legal Ease better for you, people you know who might need our services, and our community. Your input is very important to us. Please contact Laura Rawlings laura@lasrv.org with your thoughts on this Legal Ease issue or other issues moving forward. Thank you!



For more than 50 years, Legal Aid Society of Roanoke Valley has been providing free civil legal assistance to low-income residents throughout the Roanoke Valley. We are the only legal services organization serving the Roanoke Valley and surrounding areas of the Blue Ridge providing a full range of civil legal services include issues involving housing, protection from abuse, custody, divorce for victims of domestic violence, employment and unemployment, consumer problems like debt collection defenses and actions against predatory lenders. If you or someone you know who can't afford a lawyer and is in need of legal assistance please visit our website. lasrv.org



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