

Legal Ease

The Legal Aid Society of Roanoke Valley's Bi-Monthly Newsletter



MONA RAZA,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/
GENERAL COUNSEL

- Began her legal aid career in 2005.
- Previously worked at Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society, as a Guardian ad Litem, and a judicial law clerk.
- Joined LASRV as a staff attorney in 2019.
- Loves spending time with her family, biking, painting, knitting, and playing guitar.



DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS OF THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF ROANOKE VALLEY,

I hope this letter finds you in good health and fine spirits. It is both an honor and a privilege to introduce myself as the new Executive Director and General Counsel of The Legal Aid Society of Roanoke Valley.

My name is Mona Allia Raza, and I have come to this position with over a decade of experience as a legal aid staff attorney. I am eternally grateful to my predecessor, David Beidler for his years of dedicated service and mentorship. I am excited to embark on this journey with you as we chart a course towards an exciting new future for our organization.

As I step into this role, I am inspired by the remarkable work that has been done, and I am deeply committed to building upon our successes. My vision for The Legal Aid Society of Roanoke Valley is to not only continue our crucial mission, but also to expand our reach and impact in innovative ways. I firmly believe that together, we can continue to make The Legal Aid Society of Roanoke Valley a beacon of hope and support for our community. I invite you to join me in this exciting journey towards a bright future for all those who depend on our services.

Your continued support is invaluable to our mission, and I would be honored if you would consider contributing to our cause once again. Your generous donations enable us to continue our mission to provide legal assistance to those who need it most. Please feel free to reach out to me personally at info@lasrv.org if you have any questions, suggestions, or if you would like to discuss how you can get involved. Thank you for your commitment to justice, and I look forward to working together to make a lasting difference in the lives of our neighbors.

MONA



Four Program Goals for the Future of LASRV

1. ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY

We will work tirelessly to ensure that our legal services are accessible to everyone in need, regardless of their background. This includes exploring new avenues for outreach, such as mobile legal clinics to reach underserved populations in urban and rural areas.

2. COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

I believe that collaboration is key to achieving lasting change. We will seek to forge strong partnerships with local organizations, legal professionals, and community leaders to amplify our impact and address systemic issues together.

3. ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION

We will continue to advocate for policies and reforms that promote equal access to justice. Additionally, we will prioritize community education initiatives to empower individuals with legal knowledge and resources to navigate their own legal challenges.

4. SUSTAINABILITY

To ensure the long-term sustainability of our organization, we will focus on strengthening our fundraising efforts, diversifying revenue streams, and continuing to use a robust volunteer network.



LEGAL AID IMPACTS LIVES

With the help of an LASRV attorney, one of our clients recently received approximately \$10,000 of unpaid unemployment funds that she had been fighting for since May, 2021. Through multiple levels of the Virginia Employment Commission, numerous attempts to prove her identity, countless phone calls, and immeasurable frustration, this client and her attorney stuck with the process to finally get those benefits to which she was entitled. In cases like this, unrepresented individuals often give up because the system and process can be so daunting. When people are represented by counsel, the task becomes a joint effort and the client has an advocate at their side to fight for them, often making all the difference.



THANK YOU &
Congratulations!

After working at The Legal Aid Society of Roanoke Valley for nearly forty years, David Beidler retired on October 31, 2023. David has been in the role of General Counsel/Executive Director since 2010, and was a staff attorney prior to that. Having joined LASRV right out of law school in 1984, David dedicated his entire legal career to championing the rights of low income clients, providing an immeasurable impact on those he directly represented as well as benefiting others indirectly with policy changes and impact litigation. Staff members, friends, and family gathered to celebrate David's achievements at Montano's where he was presented with a Board Resolution thanking him for his dedication to LASRV, our clients, and the community. While we already miss him, we know this retirement is well deserved and will be full of lots of family visits and fishing trips.



Access to justice should be available for everyone, regardless of ability to pay.

To see if you qualify for free civil legal services, please call Blue Ridge Legal Services to apply at (540) 344-2080.

www.lasrv.org



Out and About with Legal Aid

STATEWIDE LEGAL AID CONFERENCE

Our legal aid team attended the annual Statewide Legal Aid Conference. It is a great place to gather with other Virginia legal aid staff, discuss poverty law issues, and network (and dance!).

TEA FOR JUSTICE

On November 8th, we held our second annual Tea for Justice fundraiser. It was a gorgeous day to socialize, support access to justice, eat delicious food, and win fabulous raffle prizes. We earned \$6,051 from this event which remains 100% local to support our services.

STAND DOWN FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

LASRV participated in the Veteran's Stand Down event that was full of vendors spanning a wide variety of services, including eye screenings, hair cuts, new clothing, employment services as well as vendors from the Dept. of Veteran's Affairs, mental health services, homelessness services, and many more.

HOUSING WORKSHOP WITH ROANOKE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOL'S MCKINNEY-VENTO PROGRAM

Four legal aid attorneys attended a program coordinated by the RCPS McKinney-Vento program for homeless students and their families. We gave a tenant's rights presentation, provided hand outs, and offered free budgeting software to attendees.



BY THE NUMBERS

According to the 2022 Justice Gap Study from the Legal Services Corporation, low-income Americans do not get any or enough legal help for 92% of their substantial civil legal problems.