

Quarterly Report

Spring 2009

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Special points of interest:

- Staff highlights Cecy Roa.
- Pro Bono attorney highlights Christian Hale.
- Save the Date! Don't forget the Champions of Justice Luncheon in October!
- NLS says hello to 2 new staff members.

Lionel Sawyer & Collins Hosts Mortgage Foreclosure CLE

On June 24, 2009, David Olshan and Rhea Gertken presented a CLE to over 100 private attorneys regarding foreclosures and recent legislative changes to foreclosure and landlord-tenant law.

Lionel Sawyer graciously allowed NLS to use one of its rooms for the presentation. The program was an enormous success, greatly surpassing the number of participants expected for the event.

In a 3 hour presentation, David and Rhea gave an overview of the process for instituting foreclosure proceedings in Nevada and began the discussion of the new mandatory mediation program that will begin in Nevada effective July 1, 2009, with mediations to begin August 1, 2009, after the new mediation rules recently adopted by the Supreme Court take effect.

The presentation also covered recent changes to landlord-tenant law governing evictions post-foreclosure



Steven McDonald passes out the written materials before the presentation.

Nevada Legal Services received a grant to begin providing assistance to delinquent homeowners facing foreclosure. Housing counselors will begin helping homeowners with foreclosure counseling and also negotiating with servicers on July 1, 2009.

Another CLE is planned for July and we will continue to plan on presenting updates to the changes in foreclosure law throughout the year.

David Olshan and Steven McDonald at Lionel Sawyer & Collins before the presentation.

sale and highlighted the new federal law, Protecting Tenants At Foreclosure S.896, which gives tenants 90 days in which to vacate the home following a foreclosure sale or even stay for the remainder of a lease.



Homelessness Prevention & Rapid Re-housing Program Funding

In cooperation with the Washoe County Senior Law Project and Washoe County Legal Services, Nevada Legal Services requested Washoe County apply for the legal services funding available under the economic stimulus of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. \$150,000 in legal services specific funding will be available to NLS, WCSLP, and WLS this summer.

The legal services funding may be used to help people stay in their homes, which essentially supports our LSC funding in order to provide assistance in eviction and subsidy termination cases. The funding is not available for homeowners. Rather, this funding specifically targets renters and helping to prevent families in rental housing from experiencing homelessness.

The funding is part of the 10 year plan to end homelessness in Washoe County. In addition to the funding for legal services in Washoe County, Washoe County will receive HPRP funds in the amount of \$200,000 for Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing to be provided to current clients working with Washoe County Social Services and Senior Services Departments.

Senior Helpline Takes It On the Road

The Senior Helpline provides free legal assistance to any Nevada senior, age 60 or over.

As part of the Helpline's outreach efforts, Helpline advocates have visited 60 senior centers and helped 659 clients so far in 2009. We have visited senior centers in Wells, Austin, Laughlin, Carlin, and Virginia City. We have established monthly visits with the Mesquite, Pahrump, and Carson City senior centers.

When visiting these centers, many seniors are amazed that free legal assistance is available. We are

finding legal help is not provided in many rural areas of the State and the Helpline is a vital link between Nevada seniors and legal assistance.

The Senior Helpline is funded, in part, through a grant from the Nevada's Division for Aging Services and the Federal Administration on Aging.

Liz Root has been tireless since she began working for Nevada Legal Services in travelling across Nevada to visit with as many seniors as possible. Liz has begun to forge relationships with judges

in the rural areas, including most importantly, Judge Davis in Tonopah.



Liz Root, attorney for the Senior Helpline, visits the Senior Center in Pahrump in January.

The Reno Office Gets United Way Funding

Although funding sources are facing the same budget problems as the state, the Reno office continues to get funding through the United Way for the Sierras. The grant will supplement the funding NLS receives to provide legal services to low income residents of Washoe County.

The funding will be used to assist those clients we were previously unable to assist, including those clients who are just over our income limits, and to expand into areas new to the Reno office, such as foreclosure counseling in

Northern Nevada.

In August, Jessica Hurtado from the Reno office will attend training on the new TapCare system used to report outcomes and provide information regarding the work we do to the United Way while maintaining client confidentiality.

The Reno office will be able to begin utilizing this funding in October 2009.

"The grant will supplement the funding NLS receives to provide legal services to low income residents of Washoe County."

Pahrump Visits Start Again for the Las Vegas Office

Starting in January 2009, staff from the Las Vegas office will begin regular visits to Pahrump to meet with clients and do intakes for potential clients. The Nevada Training Outreach Organization, located at 621 S. Blagg, has graciously provided NLS with an office in their building so that the staff at NLS can meet confidentially with clients and potential clients.

NLS looks forward to maintaining

this partnership and wants to give a big thanks to Clelia Garrity, Executive Director of the NOTO.

NLS staff members will travel to Pahrump the last Wednesday of every month. Prior to the visit NOTO will have potential clients sign up for interview slots so the staff member knows who will show up for intakes that day.

While Pahrump remains a large population center for the Las

Vegas office, NLS hopes to start getting filing fees from Nye County in the future to aid NLS in our efforts to reach out to the rural population in Southern Nevada.

Due to the increased outreach in Pahrump, staff attorneys have seen a dramatic increase already in the number of cases taken and court appearances made in Pahrump in the last 3 months.



Clients visit with a staff attorney at the Nevada Training Outreach Organization in Pahrump.

HR Corner

HR Notes and News

NLS recently went through a major revision of our personnel manual. All employees will have their salaries adjusted when they are placed on the new pay scales and will begin accruing sick leave effective July 1, 2009.

Staff Additions

NLS would like to welcome 2 new employees to the Las Vegas office. Kristina Moore-Swift joined NLS as the Las Vegas Outreach Coordinator. Kristina worked for Catholic Charities in

the Homeless to Home program. We are sure Kristina will be an excellent addition to our staff.

Steven McDonald joins us from the McFarling Law Group as our new Pro Bono Coordinator. Steven has been a member of the Las Vegas community for over 30 years and brings a wealth of experience to NLS.

Staff Losses

Pam Everett, Staff Attorney in the Reno office left Nevada Legal Services after only a brief time for a teaching position.

Staff Highlight

Cecy Roa, Intake Specialist

Cecy Roa has worked at NLS since 2007. She had to leave us for a brief time to move to California. Cecy rejoined the staff of Nevada Legal Services in 2008. Cecy began working for NLS as our receptionist providing excellent support to all of our advocates in a very demanding job. Recently, Cecy was promoted to Intake Specialist when Zoraida Cruz became a full time advocate. We are extremely excited to have Cecy back with NLS.



Cecy Roa, Intake Specialist

Pro Bono News

Steven McDonald began working immediately to create and establish the NLS pro bono program and has worked tirelessly since he started in May. Already Steven has set up a Foreclosure CLE to recruit attorneys to assist with our foreclosure project starting in July. Over 30 attorneys volunteered to take a case pro bono to attend the Foreclosure CLE for free.

Steven will also begin working in the months ahead in expanding our pro bono activities. In addition to recruiting attorneys to

assist in our foreclosure counseling efforts, Steven is also working to expand the number of attorneys assisting in the Tenant's Rights Center and begin recruiting attorneys to assist take calls on the Senior Helpline.

We all look forward to hearing more from Steven regarding our pro bono efforts as we start reaching out into the legal community to assist our low income clients.

Pro Bono Attorney Highlight

As always we must give our sincere thanks and appreciation to Christian Hale, attorney with Lionel Sawyer & Collins. Christian's dedication to assisting low income tenants has been a major help to the Tenant's Rights Center.

Christian is growing quite a fan base among our clients, all of whom are extremely appreciative to have the ability to sit down and talk over their problems with an attorney during the stress of facing eviction from their homes.

"Over 30 attorneys volunteered to take a case pro bono to attend the Foreclosure CLE for free."

Notes from the Executive Director

The past two years have been very difficult with the Legal Services Corporation putting NLS on restricted funding and issuing a corrective action plan. The corrective action plan meant many changes at NLS and at times it has felt like the program was not going to survive.

NLS did survive, however, and we are no longer under restricted funding and the corrective action plan has been completed. This is

due entirely to the hard work, talent, and dedication of NLS' staff. Through all the difficult days between January 2007 and May 2009, our staff never lost sight of their mission to provide access to justice for the low-income residents of Nevada.

In truth, NLS has provided assistance to more people at mid-year in 2009 than it has at the mid-year point in any year in the past decade. The quality and complexity

of the work being done by NLS staff was noted by the Legal Services monitoring team when they completed their last visit in May 2009. I want to give my congratulations to the staff for their achievements over the past two years. NLS is a stronger, better program because of you.

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We are on the web!

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The mission of Nevada Legal Services is to strengthen the community by ensuring fairness and providing equal access to justice for low income Nevadans.

Nevada Legal Services (NLS) is a non-profit organization providing free legal services to low income Nevadans. NLS is a state wide organization assisting every county in Nevada. We have 3 main offices located in Las Vegas, Reno, and Carson City and have an outreach office in Elko. We are funded through various sources but are primarily funded through a grant from the federal government by way of the Legal Services Corporation (LSC).

The staff of NLS has represented clients in federal courts, state courts, and in administrative hearings. We have provided legal advice, assistance, and representation to countless Nevadans seeking our assistance over the years in a variety of legal issues.

Save the Date!

Champions of Justice Luncheon

As part of the celebrate pro bono week October 26-30, NLS is hosting its Champions of Justice Luncheon at Springs Preserve on October 28, 2009, starting at 12:00 p.m. NLS will be giving an award to Chief Justice Hardesty and Justice Douglas for their tireless efforts and support for the Access to Justice Commission.

Tickets may be purchased by contacting Steven McDonald at (702) 386-0404. The cost for a table is \$1500 and individual tickets are \$150. Checks to be made payable to Nevada Legal Services.

Springs Preserve has also made available discounted tickets for the afternoon.

LITC Tax Forum

The Tax Forum will take place July 8-10 at the Mandalay Bay Convention Center. Roxana Castillo and Steven McDonald will represent NLS and our LITC clinic during the Forum.

Small Claims Classes

NLS will again begin hosting the Small Claims Class in partnership with the UNLV Boyd School of Law and the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada (LACSN). The classes are taught by UNLV law school students under the supervision of NLS and LACSN attorneys. The classes will be held in the NLS conference room beginning Friday, September 18, 2009, from 3-5.

Foreclosure Seminar

NLS is partnering with the CCBA to host a seminar on the updates to foreclosure law in Nevada including the new mandatory mediation program. A 1.5 CLE seminar is planned for September 25, 2009, at 12:00.

In Reno, NLS plans on presenting its foreclosure CLE to attorneys in September. Stay tuned for updates on our Reno presentation on the updates to foreclosure law in Nevada.

The Gift of Giving

The attorneys at NLS provide services at no cost to our clients. Your help in advocating for the rights of low income children, families, seniors and unemployed workers will profoundly and positively affect their lives and benefit the communities we serve.

NLS is a non-profit organization and your gift is tax deductible. To make donations, please contact Roberta O'Hara at (702) 386-0404.