

---

## Pro bono clinics will offer valuable legal assistance this weekend

By Tom Bailey Jr.

Friday, April 3, 2009

Annie F. Newsom's case is a testament to the free legal help like that being offered across Tennessee on Saturday, "Pro Bono Public Service Day."

A few years ago, Newsom's neighbor started to build a fence that encroached more than two feet onto her property.

The 77-year-old retired cook for Alfred's on Beale knew better than to take the law into her own hands.

"I'm old enough now to be able to avoid trouble," said the resident of Baron Heights, a neighborhood sandwiched between South Memphis and East Memphis.

Newsom had no money for a lawyer, but someone referred her to Memphis Area Legal Services.

The agency contacted private attorney Kacey Faughnan, asking if she would represent Newsom pro bono, which means "for the public good."

"It sounded interesting and I took it," recalled Faughnan, who practices with Wyatt, Tarrant & Combs. "We got an injunction to stop the fence from being built."

Meanwhile, Memphis Area Legal Services paid for a property survey that showed Newsom was in the right.

"With the survey, we could prove it was her property and get her neighbor off her property," Faughnan said.

Legal Services and the Tennessee and local bar associations are organizing dozens of free legal clinics this weekend, including five in Memphis:

Legal Lines Call-In Program, WREG-TV Channel 3, 4 to 6 p.m. today. Call (800) 753-9734.

Wills for Heroes at Benjamin L. Hooks Central Library, 3030 Poplar. Simple wills for police, firefighters and emergency workers. 9:15 a.m. Saturday.

Legal Clinic, also at Central Library, 9 a.m. to noon Saturday.

Juvenile Court Clinic at Binghamton United Methodist Church, 258 N. Merton, 1-4 p.m. Saturday.

Advanced Directives (including living wills and powers of attorney), 2-4 p.m. Saturday at Signature Nursing Home, 1150 Dovecrest; St. Frances Nursing Home, 5959 Park; King's Daughters & Sons Nursing Home,

3568 Appling Road; Cordova Estates Assisted Living, 1535 Appling Care Lane; and Germantown Plantation Senior Living, 9293 Poplar.

"The need for free legal services has become more critical as our community's economic conditions have worsened along with the national economic crisis," said Linda Seely of Memphis Area Legal Services.

Her agency is leading the clinic at the library.

"If someone has a legal question he or she wants answered, hopefully one of our volunteer professionals can help. The clinic is designed to help people get an idea about what legal steps they need to take or where they should go to resolve their problems."

Newsom got her justice and sings the praises of her pro bono experience.

"She did a beautiful job," Newsom said of Faughnan.

The attorney, who normally charges \$220 an hour, estimates she volunteered 60 hours of her time to the case.

But she received the kind of payment she'll never forget.

"It was the first time a client has ever hugged me," Faughnan recalled. "She hugged me in court. She was incredibly appreciative."

-- Tom Bailey Jr.: 529-2388

### **Go pro bono!**

The Tennessee Supreme Court will adopt three rules today to encourage more lawyers to volunteer legal services to Tennesseans who cannot afford them. The changes:

Encourage but not require lawyers to provide 50 pro bono hours of work each year.

Enable lawyers to provide limited-scope legal assistance to people without formally becoming their attorney of record.

Enable lawyers to earn one hour of continuing legal education credit for every five hours of pro bono services they provide.



© 2009 Scripps Newspaper Group — Online