

Conway Brings Compassionate Nature, Diverse Interests To Memphis Area Legal Services

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REBEKAH HEARN | The Daily News

Liz Conway has joined [Memphis Area Legal Services Inc.](#) as director of development. In that capacity, she will oversee MALS' annual Access to Justice Campaign.

Previously, Conway served as marketing director for Accelerated Community Oncology Research (ACORN) and its affiliated companies, [ACORN CRO](#), [Supportive Oncology Services](#) and [World BioBank](#).

These companies have a joint mission to improve cancer patients' quality of care and prognoses, while improving the efficiency and productivity of cancer clinics. Conway also served as public affairs director for the Memphis Cancer Center and its affiliates.

For 13 years, Conway provided marketing communications services for various local nonprofit agencies, including the Memphis Brooks Museum of [Art, The Dixon Gallery & Gardens](#), [Memphis Botanic Garden](#), [Memphis Food Bank](#), the National Civil Rights Museum, Wonders International Culture Series, Memphis Partners and the Hyde Foundation. Conway has served as a grant writer, project manager and catalogue exhibition editor.

Conway volunteers for many local organizations, including Diversity Memphis, RiverArts Festival, Mid-South Peace & Justice Center and the Pink Palace Crafts Fair.

She is a regular facilitator for Common Ground, a group that focuses on racial understanding. She is a board member of WUMR (The University of Memphis' jazz radio station) and a past board member of Wings Cancer Foundation, the Tennessee Leukemia-Lymphoma Society and the University of Memphis Art Museum.

Q: You certainly have a broad background with oncology-based organizations. Can you tell me a bit about why you became involved in that area?

A: It is as simple as wanting to give back – which has been one of the guideposts of my life. I also wanted to help make the cancer journey as obstacle-free as possible for patients and their loved ones.

Q: Do you think your successful battle against breast cancer and your work with groups such as Memphis Cancer Center will inform your work at MALS?

A: There's quite a correlation between the two areas in that Memphis Area Legal Services provides a voice to those who would not have been represented in the legal system. It's about empowerment. Likewise, my work in oncology helped empower patients at one of the most difficult times in their lives, when they often feel the most helpless. Compassion, sensitivity and determination are key qualifiers for both groups.



Liz Conway

Position: Director of Development
Company: Memphis Area Legal Services Inc.

Basics: Conway, who has an extensive background in nonprofit promotion and involvement, has signed on to help with MALS' annual Access to Justice campaign.

Q: One of your tasks is to help plan for MALS' 40th anniversary celebration. When will that take place, and have you started thinking about what that celebration will involve yet?

A: We are at the formative stages of planning now. I don't have specific details, but I do know that it will be a year worth watching what is happening with MALS and the clients it serves. The most important thing, however, is that MALS continues to provide services to an unfortunately ever-growing population which needs access to equal justice. Upon joining MALS, I was stunned to learn of the depth of that need. For instance, the private community has approximately one attorney per every 300 people, while those living at the poverty level or below have access to one attorney per 10,000 people. To me, that simply isn't right or fair.

Q: How do you think having a marketing/communications background will help you as the development director for MALS?

A: Whether you are communicating the need for a nonprofit to receive financial support or whether you are attempting to distinguish your brand, it's all about passion. You must believe in your mission, and you must consistently communicate it with enthusiasm, integrity and intensity. When you do, it matters not whether you are raising funds, creating public awareness, providing patient education or selling services.

The other factor is that I have extensive nonprofit experience that ranges from being a volunteer, donor, participant, board member, staff member and consultant. I know the playing field and I've played every position.

Q: You're currently completing your master's degree in executive leadership at Christian Brothers University's Center for Ethical Leadership. As the single mother of two young men, have you found a best way to balance work, family and school??

A: Even though I might be one of the world's oldest graduate students, the degree program simply was something that I wanted to do for myself. The academic offerings ideally suited my interests. The decision to go back to school wasn't about money or success – it was about self-discovery. My sons are grown, so it was not a hardship on them – the course schedule was one four-hour class per week in eight-week sessions throughout the year, so it didn't interfere with my work. I have gained far, far more than it ever cost me in time or dollars. But throughout my career, I have always regretted not having gone to law school.

Q: You are very involved in community arts groups and museums. Are you an artist yourself?

A: I am a dabbler – by no means an artist, but I love and admire those who are. One day, just maybe, I'll paint!