





AWARD WINNERS



Robin Bozian was presented the Croucher Family Award for Leadership by the Ohio Domestic Violence Network in October. Bozian, who serves as project managing attorney in the Athens SEOLS office, was recognized at the Ohio Statehouse for her strong leadership in creating a positive change for domestic violence survivors and raising awareness about how others can get involved to help those in need.



Lauren Weller received the Ohio State Bar Foundation District 8 Community Service Award for Attorneys 40 & Under in September. Each year, OSBF awards the Community Service Award for Attorneys 40 & Under to deserving attorneys who are serving their communities in unique and inspiring ways. Weller is a senior staff attorney in the Portsmouth SEOLS office and Team Leader of the SEOLS Family Law Team.



Judge Dean Wilson of Perry County Municipal Court and Judge Luann Cooperrider of the Perry County Probate/Juvenile Court received the 2018 Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation Presidential Award for Pro Bono Service. The award recognizes outstanding efforts in improving access to justice through pro bono or volunteer service. In 2008, Judge Cooperrider and Judge Wilson established the Perry County Free Legal Clinic in collaboration with SEOLS. The clinic helps shrink the access to justice gap in Perry County by increasing access to legal help. From left to right: David Kutik, Immediate Past President, Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation (OLAF) Board; Judge Dean Wilson, Perry County Municipal Court; Melissa Will, SEOLS attorney; Judge Luann Cooperrider, Perry County Probate/Juvenile Court; Thomas W. Weeks, OSLSA Executive Director and Angela Lloyd, Executive Director, OLAF.

INDEX

FROM OUR LEADERSHIP 1

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2

STATISTICS 3

COMMUNITY LAWYERING 4

EDUCATION EQUITY 5

OPIOID HUB 6

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS 7

BANKRUPTCY BYPASS PROGRAM 8

FINANCIALS 9

DONORS 10

VOLUNTEERS 11

INTERNSHIPS 12

Cover photo: Tami Ty and her partner, John Ginosa, are raising her grandchildren, Jaylin (far left) and Summer (far right). They received assistance from OSLSA through one of our Kinship Care partners.



Jim Daniels, Director, Southeastern Ohio Legal Services, Thomas J. Bonasera, President, Board of Directors, Ohio State Legal Services Association and Thomas W. Weeks, Executive Director, Ohio State Legal Services Association.

Pursuing Justice: Inside and Outside the Courtroom

After year-long conversations with community leaders, clients, and staff, the OSLSA Board of Trustees adopted a new mission statement: “to provide civil legal aid and advocacy to combat unfairness and injustice and to help people rise out of poverty.”

To make this mission reality, SEOLS will advocate for the rights of our clients inside and outside the courtroom. The work highlighted in this report, chosen from the many avenues our advocates are pursuing, illustrates those efforts.

Our attorneys are working in Southeastern Ohio communities to bring the voices and ideas of clients and community leaders together to address issues that hinder the economic and social well-being of the families we serve. Substance abuse is a major barrier to progress in our communities. SEOLS’ response to the crisis is featured in this report.

With support from courts, law enforcement and the social service network across the region, SEOLS applied for and received a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice for the Appalachian Victim

Assistance and Prevention Project. SEOLS received the maximum grant award—\$750,000—and was one of only four legal aid organizations nationwide to receive funding through this initiative. SEOLS will convene community partners in 17 counties to identify and address gaps in services to children and youth victimized by crime as a result of the opioid epidemic. The collaboration will build on existing projects and programs and create new community strategies to provide services.

To ensure fairness and justice, policymakers need to hear the voices of the people most affected by their decisions. This report highlights SEOLS’ Rural Community Stabilization Project and its goal to empower low-income families to effectively voice their needs and ideas to community leaders, the justice system, and legislatures.

George H. Bush once said, “Education is the key to opportunity. It’s a ticket out of poverty.” In 2018, SEOLS stepped up efforts to keep kids in school. SEOLS’ education cases increased by 23 percent. SEOLS created the “Ohio Education Equity Project,” to address the disproportionate number of low-income, minority, and disabled children who were being removed from schools and

not getting the education promised by federal law. Many studies show that students with repeated suspensions and expulsions are more likely to experience the criminal justice system, decreased job opportunities, and poverty.

SEOLS can often prevent homelessness; however, many families facing homelessness do not realize a legal aid lawyer can help. In Knox County, SEOLS is working with other organizations to educate families about legal help. We are connecting families to financial resources and supportive services and identifying and raising legal defenses against eviction.

In addition to fundamental legal representation, we are empowering people through education and access to justice to overcome poverty. Our bankruptcy and bankruptcy bypass programs protect seniors and others from creditor harassment and improve income and employment opportunities by protecting wages and restoring driving privileges.

There is more being done than can fit into an annual report and there is much more that will be done through partnerships and involvement with community organizations and agencies. If you would like to discuss issues in your community and share ideas for making life better, we would love to hear from you. Just contact the SEOLS office serving your community.

Thomas J. Bonasera
OSLSA Board President

Thomas W. Weeks
OSLSA Executive Director

James M. Daniels
SEOLS Director

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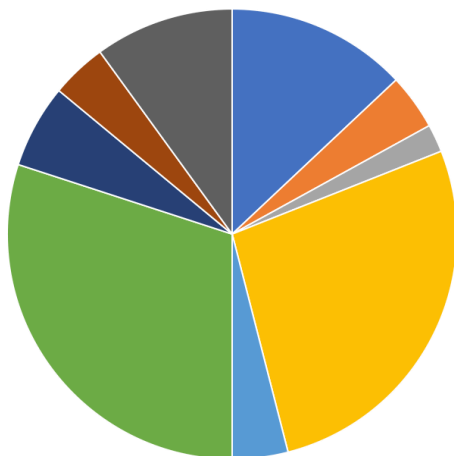
Calfee, Halter & Griswold, LLP
Appointed by Ohio State Bar
Association
Cuyahoga County


"WITHOUT EVERYTHING THAT (ATTORNEY) NATASHA PLUMLY DID, I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WOULD HAVE DONE. SHE HELPED ME OBTAIN SPOUSAL SUPPORT FROM MY ABUSIVE X (SIC) HUSBAND. WITHOUT HER I'D HAVE NOTHING."


- DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVOR WHO RECEIVED ASSISTANCE OBTAINING A DIVORCE AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT


4,995 TOTAL CASES


CASES BY PRACTICE AREA




 SEOLS served 791 survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking in 2018. Advocates assisted with a variety of issues, primarily domestic related.

 64.57% of households helped were at or below 100% of the poverty guidelines. Under the federal poverty guidelines, the annual income for a family of three is \$21,330.


 Of our 48 Fair Housing cases, 36 involved clients with a disability.


 12% of households had no income.


 44% of households included children.


 More than 2/3 of clients were female.


PERSONS HELPED



5,045
ADULTS


3,569
CHILDREN


648
SENIORS


66
HOMELESS


107
IMMIGRANT


238
VETERAN


1,320
DISABLED

9,296
TOTAL

"I WAS ABOUT TO LOSE MY MEDICARE BENEFITS UNTIL (PARALEGAL) MRS. PATRINA QUEEN INTERVENED ON MY BEHALF."

- 82-YEAR-OLD FACING A LOSS OF LONG-TERM CARE AND MEDICARE PREMIUM ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BENEFITS

SEOLS ADVOCATES FOCUS ON EMPOWERING COMMUNITY PARTNERS TO FIGHT POVERTY

For most of our clients and their families, legal problems are the result of poverty. A lack of job opportunities, training, healthcare, addiction treatment, affordable and decent housing, and education—solving these problems requires more than just courtroom skills. To learn additional skills, SEOLS invited the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law to train all its advocates on "community lawyering." A Rural Community Stabilization grant from the Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation made this training possible. The Center defines community lawyering as a "process through which advocates contribute their legal knowledge and skills to support initiatives that are identified by the community and enhance the community's power."

Under this grant, SEOLS is working to help low-income people identify barriers holding them back and ways to empower them to overcome and remove those obstacles. In addition to partnering with the Corporation for Appalachian Development and the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, we are connecting with leaders across our region to gather their shared concerns and ideas.

For example, when SEOLS learned that many "peer mentors" working in addiction and treatment centers were in jeopardy of losing their jobs due to a proposed change in state regulations, we stepped in to help. Peer mentors work with individuals in recovery. They are effective because many have first-hand experience with addiction. Many also have a criminal history from that past. The proposed changes would have resulted in the loss of employment for all such individuals with a criminal history.

We partnered with providers and others to bring the problem to the attention of policymakers who revised the regulations' application. SEOLS also stepped in to help individual peer mentors seal any criminal records or get a Certificate of Qualification for Employment (CQE) so they could continue their valuable work battling the opiate crisis that has hit Southeastern Ohio so hard.

In addition, under this grant SEOLS has reached out to low-income families living in Hocking, Athens, Perry, and Ross counties who participate in the Head Start program, which focuses on school readiness. We created and distributed a legal resources booklet to every Head Start family in those counties. We attended Head Start meetings and met with parents and staff to hear and better understand the problems and challenges these families face.

We look forward to 2019 and the fruits to be borne from these partnerships and efforts.



Community Lawyering encourages legal aid attorneys to think of themselves as community catalysts, trusted advisors, and partners to create positive change.

"ATTORNEY MELISSA SKILLITER WAS KIND AND UNDERSTANDING AND WENT ABOVE AND BEYOND TO HELP ME IN MY TIME OF NEED. SHE MADE MY PROBLEM GO AWAY."

LITC CLIENT WHOSE \$10,000 TAX DEBT WAS SETTLED FOR \$10

ADVOCATING FOR INDIVIDUAL NEEDS AND SYSTEMWIDE CHANGES TO PROMOTE SUCCESS IN THE CLASSROOM

Rick, a 10-year-old, witnessed severe domestic violence at home. At school, he had an emotional outburst in class that involved overturning a desk. The school district responded by removing Rick from school and sending him to an alternative school/partial-hospitalization program where he received only one hour of educational services a day. Deeply concerned, his mother contacted SEOLS.

Aware of the negative impact that removal from school can have on children, attorney Lucy Schwallie had Rick evaluated for special education services. Finding that he qualified, she worked to have a comprehensive Individualized Education Program (IEP) developed that considered his past trauma. Schwallie then turned her focus to helping transition Rick back to his neighborhood school. She worked with the district to provide him 60 hours of tutoring over the summer to make up for the education he missed during his removal from the classroom.

Thanks to the extra tutoring and the supports obtained under his IEP, Rick is thriving in middle school. He was recently recommended to serve on his school's student council. His teacher wrote on the recommendation that Rick is "kind and hardworking" with a "wonderful and positive attitude."



Keeping students in school and engaged in their education is a goal of the Education Equity project.

Paving the way for individual students to be successful in school while addressing policies that impact low-income children as a whole is the focus of the nine-county Southeast Ohio Education Equity project, funded through an Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation grant. The program looks to identify the challenges rural parents face when requesting needed education services for their children, trying to keep their kids from being improperly removed from school, and addressing bullying or harassment issues and then identifies and pursues systemic solutions to these challenges.

SEOLS was contacted by a parent of a 9-year-old with autism who was being restrained without any plan in place to address his behavior. SEOLS advocacy for this family resulted in districtwide changes that will help disabled students for years to come. Because of SEOLS' involvement, the district agreed to update its restraint and seclusion policies in the school's handbook, which is distributed annually. Circulating this information will provide crucial assistance to families of students with disabilities about their rights when it comes to disciplinary interventions by the school district.

The grant, which covers Athens, Fairfield, Hocking, Meigs, Morgan, Monroe, Noble, Vinton and Washington counties, has enabled SEOLS to significantly increase the reach and visibility of its education practice in several ways: through training for parents, caregivers and educators, advocacy for more trauma-informed discipline policies, and direct representation of children at risk of being removed from school.

As Schwallie noted: "Keeping students in the classroom and on track to complete their education is vitally important to breaking the cycle of poverty in our region, and I am grateful to be a small part of that."

"WE ARE BEYOND GRATEFUL THAT THEIR (SIC) ARE PEOPLE LIKE YOU OUT THERE WHO UNDERSTAND AND ARE SYMPATHETIC TO OUR PLIGHT AND GIVE US A VOICE WE WOULD NOT HAVE HAD OTHERWISE!!!! KEEP IT GOING. YOU ARE LITERALLY CHANGING LIVES!!!!!"

- PARENT OF A CHILD WHO WAS RETURNED TO SCHOOL FOLLOWING A LONG EXPULSION

SEOLS HELPS LEAD COMMUNITY EFFORT TO FIGHT ADDICTION

When the Washington County Behavioral Health Board needed to bring together members of the community to form the county's state-mandated Opioid Hub, the director called on SEOLS project managing attorney Robin Bozian and Municipal Court Judge Janet Welch to co-chair the effort. Designed to increase cooperation among community organizations and state agencies, Hubs are charged with educating young people about the dangers of drug use and promoting workforce development as a way to prevent opioid addiction. Bozian and Judge Welch quickly brought together law enforcement, court officials, social service agencies, education leaders, and other interested community members. In short order, the Hub established committees to address education/prevention, treatment and workforce activities. The committees were each asked to answer three basic questions: Who else should be invited to join the effort? What services and efforts are currently in place? What services and efforts should our community have?

In less than a year, the Education/Prevention Committee brought together all of the school districts as well as preschool and after-school programs to coordinate and expand evidence-based programming on prevention and decision-making. The committee also coordinated with the local hospital to provide one-on-one outreach services to all new parents and created a simple bookmark to educate the community on the availability of all types of treatment regardless of income or insurance coverage. It will also be facilitating the opening of a Community Resource Center that will offer services ranging from a message center for people without a permanent address to referrals and resources for addiction-related issues.

The Workforce Committee is exploring expanded training funds and is planning a meeting with local private employers to develop job opportunities for those in recovery.



SEOLS attorney Robin Bozian and Judge Janet Welch co-chair the Washington County Opioid Hub.

Bozian has played an important role in the Hub by keeping the process moving forward, apprising the committees of one another's work and sharing educational materials. She helped establish the Community Resource Center by forging a collaboration with the local Homeless Committee, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program and L&P services (local treatment provider) to operate the center.

Members of the Hub and Washington County officials are pleased with the progress. The Hub, thanks to Bozian's "expertise and wisdom," has moved quickly and effectively to address the drug epidemic in the region, said David Browne, Executive Director of the Washington County Behavioral Health Board. "Robin has kept everyone on task and has prevented the inertia that often overtakes a group like this," he said. "The Hub was started approximately one year ago, and there are more people involved now than before. With Robin Bozian helping to lead the charge, people want to get involved in the group. All kinds of people, from all walks of life, from all socio-economic backgrounds, are volunteering to work together under Robin Bozian's leadership."

SEOLS anticipates that Bozian's contributions to the Hub can be replicated in our other service areas as our attorneys work to address the opioid crisis and other community problems. As we embrace the concept of community lawyering, we expect many opportunities to join forces with clients and community partners to identify problems and develop solutions.

SEOLS WORKS WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS TO HELP STABILIZE FAMILIES

Homelessness has many causes and is often about more than a lack of housing. SEOLS can help with many of the contributing issues such as bad credit, a non-violent criminal record and domestic violence.

Through a United Way of Knox County grant that began in 2016, the Newark office assists people who are homeless or facing homelessness. In 2018, SEOLS helped 209 children, seniors, and adults. Without the grant, many of these families and individuals would not have been helped.

As part of the 2018 funding, SEOLS began a program with volunteer students from Kenyon College. The program gives students hands-on experience with the legal issues faced by people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Students meet with people at The Winter Sanctuary Emergency Homeless Shelter and at Interchurch Social Services of Knox County. These are sister programs funded by United Way grants that allow us to use their space to serve clients.

One such family faced eviction for non-payment of rent. The father had recently been diagnosed with brain cancer. His son also was fighting cancer. The family had paid part of the month's rent. The landlord took their money, but then filed a complaint to evict them, so the family turned to SEOLS for help. SEOLS contacted the landlord's attorney. A settlement was reached that resulted in the eviction being

dismissed. Instead of a possible downward spiral into homelessness, the family was able to remain in their home and focus on helping father and son fight cancer.

Another example is "Sue" who came to SEOLS for help with a divorce from an abusive husband. In addition to helping her with the divorce, an attorney performed a "legal check-up" on her. A legal check-up is a review to see if clients have other issues that might increase their risk of becoming homeless. Such problems include a lack of income for necessities like food and health care. The review revealed that Sue was not receiving the appropriate amount of food stamps. The Department of Job and Family Services was improperly including her abusive husband's income in their calculations even though the two were separated. SEOLS helped Sue get her abuser out of her life and her food stamps increased.

The impact of this grant continues to grow and expand. In 2018, working with the Knox County Bar Association and the local Municipal Court, language was added to the eviction summons to let families know they may be able to get help from SEOLS and how to contact the office. As a result, more families who are facing eviction and at risk of becoming homeless are seeking our help. SEOLS looks forward to continuing its efforts to reduce homelessness and to working with community partners to serve this at-risk population under their 2019 United Way of Knox County grant.



Pictured from left to right, Joe Springer, Advocate/Operations Manager of The Winter Sanctuary Emergency Homeless Shelter, SEOLS Attorney Natasha Plumly and Joy Harris, Director of Interchurch Social Services of Knox County.

CRACKING DOWN ON CREDITOR HARASSMENT



Best friends 69-year-old “Betty” and 73-year-old “Shirley” do everything together—even sharing an appointment at SEOLS together to have wills prepared. During their interview, it became clear that both were struggling with debt and harassment from creditors. Both had considered filing bankruptcy but were encouraged when they learned they did not need a bankruptcy to stop the harassment. After they discussed their options with each other, they both participated in the Bankruptcy Bypass Program. As a result of SEOLS’ involvement, both reported that the phone calls and collection letters have dramatically decreased.

Amid news stories about increased bankruptcy filings for seniors, SEOLS is offering a different approach to ending creditor harassment of vulnerable individuals, many who fear being jailed if they do not pay. Bankruptcy is not always the best option. The Bankruptcy Bypass Program helps stop creditor harassment by utilizing volunteers to draft letters to the creditors of seniors and other low-income families emphasizing that their low income and few assets are protected by law and that any collection efforts would be fruitless. If the harassment continues, there is follow up to see if there are any violations of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act.



SEOLS Bypass Stats:

Clients served: 54

Letters sent: 352

Client feedback is that the program has stopped or greatly reduced creditor harassment.

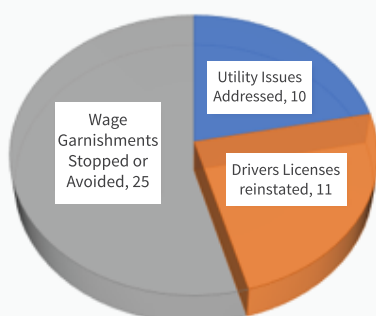
A disabled woman living with her elderly mother called to say: “We were borrowing from cash advance places to make ends meet and made a big mess. [The Bankruptcy Bypass Program] gave us our life back. I am so thankful for this wonderful Bypass Program...”

A 72-year-old lady living in poverty: “[The Bankruptcy Bypass Program] gave me some peace of mind and calmness in my troubled heart and soul.”

A 90-year old veteran: “Thank God people in my condition have someone like your group for support and help.”



Impact on Clients



In addition to the services provided by the Bankruptcy Bypass Program, SEOLS helped 49 clients file for bankruptcy relief in 2018. Eleven of those cases were filed by Pro Bono Attorneys who volunteered their time to help get these clients get back on their feet.

While the bypass program is a good solution for many noncollectable clients, bankruptcy is a better solution when someone is facing emergency circumstances. We are able to file bankruptcy to assist clients with saving their homes, protecting wages and restoring utilities and driving privileges.

FINANCIALS

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES AND CHANGES IN NET ASSETS

	DECEMBER 31, 2018
Grants and Contracts	\$5,466,395
Investment Income	(\$20,201)
Contributions	\$12,229
Donated Legal Services and Materials	\$86,721
Other Income	\$386,244
	\$5,931,388

EXPENSES

Salaries and Benefits	\$4,447,385
Donated Legal Services	\$86,721
Professional Fees	\$798,180
Occupancy	\$190,935
Telephone-Communications	\$91,089
Office Supplies	\$96,788
Equipment	\$765
Insurance	\$14,310
Travel and Training	\$166,901
Dues	\$27,019
Library	\$42,576
Other Expense	\$40,001
Depreciation	\$53,063
Total Expenses	\$6,055,733
Increase in Net Assets	(\$124,345)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	DECEMBER 31, 2018
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$59,831
Investments	\$3,273,813
Accounts and Grants Receivable	\$436,390
PrePaid Expenses	\$80,381
Property and Equipment Net	\$557,295
	\$4,407,710

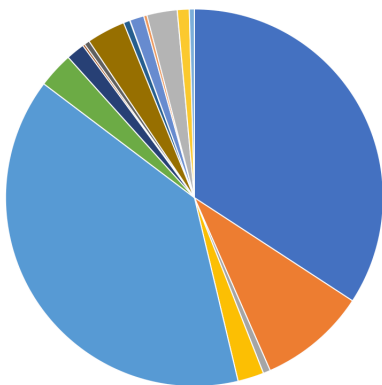
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Accounts Payable and Accrued Liabilities	\$499,273
Accrued Payroll and Related Liabilities	\$263,102
Other Liabilities	\$30,883
	\$793,258

NET ASSETS

Net Assets with Donor Restrictions	\$273,833
Net Assets without Donor Restrictions	\$3,340,619
Total Net Assets	\$3,614,452
Total Liabilities and net assets	\$4,407,710

SEOLS 2018 GRANT FUNDING



Total \$5,466,395

- OLAF **\$2,127,395**
- Legal Services Corporation **\$1,864,450**
- LSC - (Technology Innovation Grant) TIG **\$502,464**
- Violence Against Women **\$180,102**
- OLAF - Justice Fellowship Grant **\$165,815**
- Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) **\$141,490**
- Title III **\$121,900**
- LITC **\$86,351**
- HUD Fair Housing **\$66,000**
- Muskingum Valley Health Centers MLP **\$56,000**
- Other Grants **\$39,422**
- United Way **\$33,600**
- Licking County Housing Coalition (Supportive Services for Veterans Families) **\$30,000**
- Licking County Foundation **\$25,000**
- City of Newark Fair Housing **\$15,000**
- Equal Justice Works **\$10,000**
- SSVF Washington/Morgan Community Action **\$1,406**

DONORS

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR ADVOCACY.

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Ross County United Way
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban
Development
U.S. Department of Justice

**"FOR TWO ELDERLY PEOPLE WITH LITTLE EDUCATION &
NO INCOME BEYOND SOCIAL SECURITY WHO HAVE SOME
ASSETS THRU (SIC) HARD WORK THIS SERVICE IS TRULY
A BLESSING."**

-COUPLE WHO RECEIVED HELP WITH ESTATE PLANNING

THANKS TO OUR 2018 VOLUNTEERS.

Robert Abdalla
James Addison
John Aebi
Betty Appell
Kezia Atta
Kelsey Ayers
Herbert Baker Jr.
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Special thanks to the Ohio State Bar Association for providing graphic design services for our 2018 annual report.

OHIO UNIVERSITY INTERNS AID ATHENS OFFICE, GAIN VALUABLE EXPERIENCE

In 2018, the Athens SEOLS office welcomed a group of interns to help with housing calls. Participants in the Access to Justice Intern Program assisted tenants facing eviction from their homes or poor housing conditions and contributed to larger scale research projects that support our work. The partnership not only provided much-needed help to our staff, it offered a meaningful volunteer experience to the Ohio University students who participated.



A2J intern Carly Kay

“Working in the social justice field has taught me that this is the path I want to take in my future. It is a great feeling knowing that you have helped someone who doesn't have the means to help themselves,” said A2J intern Carly Kay.

“SEOLS is important in the Athens community because there are many low-income individuals fighting the court system alone. When we can assist those individuals and help them through the process and answer any questions they may have it helps bring the equality, education, reform and social justice this institution works towards.”

“Many of the clients were grateful for the help of the attorneys, and even me when I was just an intern. To them, Southeastern Ohio Legal Services was not just a company helping them but a group of people who were invested in assisting them. Many clients expressed great thanks, showing me that SEOLS was also an emotional support system to help them get through the rough time,” said A2J intern Alexis Karolin. “I have been inspired by the tireless hours that these attorneys put in to helping their clients. Even if the clients get confused or do not quite understand the situation, all the attorneys are quite patient and work to assist when they can. I have also been inspired by the community of attorneys in the office. SEOLS embodies this feeling of community as it puts forth its best efforts to help its clients.”



A2J intern Alexis Karolin



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