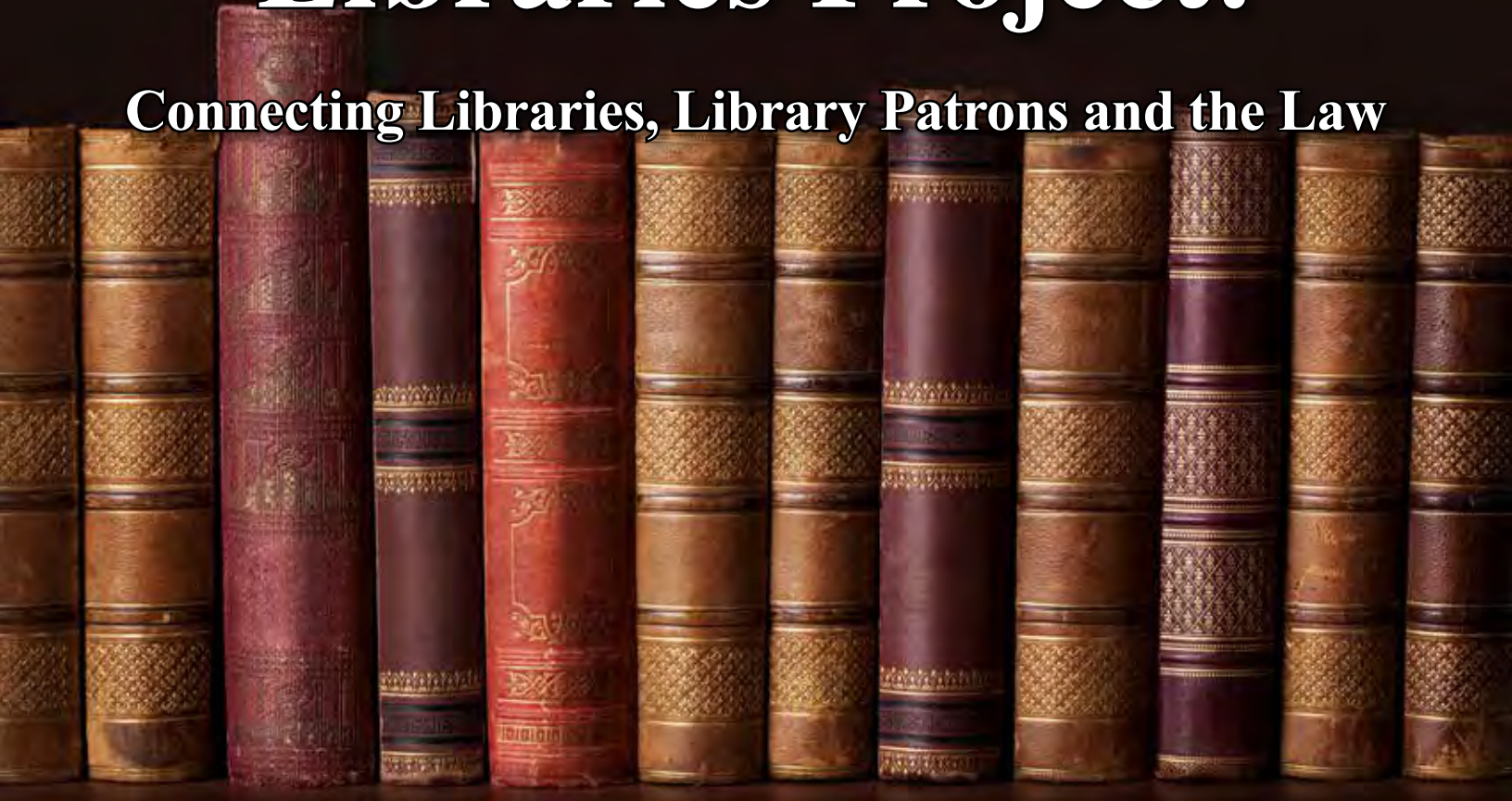


LEAP and Lawyers in Libraries Project:

Connecting Libraries, Library Patrons and the Law



By Joanna Laidler and Jordan Maier

Public libraries are natural starting points for people in search of resources, information and services. This includes those seeking legal assistance. Although librarians cannot provide legal advice, they are particularly well-placed to provide critical legal information to public library patrons. The Legal Education and Assistance Program (LEAP) works to support connections between public libraries and the legal profession. LEAP is a collaboration between the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA), the Law Library of Louisiana, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services, the Acadiana Legal Service Corp. and Louisiana public libraries. Established in 2014, LEAP's programming empowers librarians to

provide appropriate assistance to library patrons seeking legal information.

Sarah Lewis from the New Orleans Public Library explains "librarians deal everyday with members of the public and are often asked by patrons about legal issues. It is critical, therefore, that librarians are trained on how to appropriately respond to these requests." To this end, LEAP provides in-person training at libraries across Louisiana and the Louisiana Library Association Annual Conference. During the trainings, LEAP staff offer librarians practical information and best practices for assisting patrons with legal questions, as well as information detailing statewide legal resources, reference materials and referral information. This training is now being made

into a series of educational videos, which will be distributed to all Louisiana library branches later this year.

LEAP has also created a series of online research guides, called "libguides," which offer librarians and the public basic information on different areas of law. Most recently, LEAP created a guide to Louisiana Mayor's Courts designed to answer commonly asked questions about mayor's courts for non-attorneys. The guide also includes contact information for mayor's courts throughout the state.

LSBA President Robert A. Kutcher said, "By working with the LSBA's Building Bridges Committee, LEAP and the Law Library were able to identify a great need by the public to access information about Mayor's Courts to



Rapides Parish: From left, attorney Ted Roberts, attorney Kay Michiels, Pro Bono Project Executive Director Debbie Smith, attorney Robert Levy and attorney Paul Tellarico.



Jefferson Davis Parish, Jennings Branch: Attorney LaWanda Gibson, left, and Jefferson Davis Parish Headquarters Manager Suzanne Young.



St. James Parish, Lusher Branch: Attorney Kristina Collins Harrison, left, and librarian Susan Duhe.

resolve minor criminal matters. This resource provides basic information about Mayor's Courts in plain language for which the public can easily access and understand."

The connection that LEAP fosters between public libraries and the legal profession in Louisiana is most visibly underscored during the LSBA's Lawyers in Libraries Week of Service, held in conjunction with National Celebrate Pro Bono Week the last full week each October (Oct. 21-26, 2019). For the sixth year, Louisiana attorneys provided free, limited legal services to the public via libraries across the state, helping hundreds of Louisiana residents who likely would not otherwise have access to counsel.

"To effectively serve the public, attorneys are reaching out through Lawyers in Libraries events," said Louisiana

Supreme Court Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson. "Across our state, attorneys donate tens of thousands of hours of pro bono service every year. This donation of time and experience yields benefits which are highly impactful in clients' lives and represent the highest degrees of professionalism. Lawyers in Libraries events facilitate an opportunity for lawyers to provide much-needed assistance to the citizens of our state."

The Lawyers in Libraries program has consistently grown since its launch in October 2014. These events have assisted more than 3,000 Louisianians in public libraries and reached patrons in every parish. This year, the event boasted a total of 102 attorney volunteers participating in 139 events at 78 library branches across the state. Additionally, some libraries have expanded the program lo-

cally to host recurring events throughout the year.

LSBA President Kutcher, a Lawyers in Libraries volunteer for many years, believes this program "demonstrates the LSBA's commitment to helping the courts and our members to better serve the public."

The LSBA would like to acknowledge Louisiana library staff and the LSBA members who volunteered in their communities, and the pro bono agencies, bar associations, private practitioners and legal service providers who helped to coordinate events in individual parishes. The names of attorney volunteers are listed below. Attorneys are encouraged to volunteer at their local libraries throughout the year.

More information is available online at: www.LouisianaLawyersinLibraries.org.

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St. Mary Parish, Franklin Branch: Attorney Adolph B. Curet III, left, and librarian Connie Durocher.



Terrebonne Parish: Librarian Brigid Laborie, left, and attorney Lakethia Bryant.



Webster Parish, Minden Branch: Attorney R. David Harvey and librarian Savannah Jones.



Iberia Parish: From left, librarian Stephanie Lee, attorney Sandra A. Broussard, and Alexis Batiste, Brandi Prout and Glenn Krieg with the Department of Children and Family Services.



Lafayette Parish, Main Branch: From left, library staff member Chris Melancon, Lafayette Bar Association Director of Pro Bono Services Marilyn Lopez and attorneys Alex Stanford, Courtney Guillory and Stuart Breaux.

Attorney Volunteers by Parish

Acadia: Taylor Robinson.
 Allen: LaKeisha A. Ford and Adam Johnson.
 Ascension: Jason Stinnett and Chris Pierce.
 Assumption: Lakethia Bryant.
 Avoyelles: Debbie Smith.
 Beauregard: Glen Cella.
 Bienville: Tyler C. Cooley.
 Bossier: Pamela R. Jones.
 Caddo: Angela Ginn Waltman, Ebonee Norris, Monique I. Davis, Brittany Arvie, Terrell Myles, Courtney Ray and Sherron Williams.
 Calcasieu: Shayna Sonnier.
 Cameron: Ashley Freeman, Jennifer Jones, Shermin Khan and Max Guthrie.
 Catahoula: Lewis Gladney.
 Claiborne: Patrick O. Jefferson.
 Concordia: McCaleb Bilbro.
 DeSoto: Lewis Gladney.
 East Baton Rouge: Cherita McNeal, James Word II, Allen Posey, Jr., Scott L. Smith, Jr. and Averil Sanders, Jr.
 East Carroll: Kelly Massey.
 East Feliciana: Kirk A. Williams and Rodney Hastings.
 Evangeline: Tamiko Chatman.
 Franklin: Rossanna McIlwain.
 Grant: Lewis Gladney.
 Iberia: Sandra A. Broussard, Alexis Batiste, Brandi Prout and Glenn Krieg.
 Iberville: Perry W. Terrebonne.
 Jackson: Douglas L. Stokes.
 Jefferson Davis: LaWanda Gibson.
 Jefferson: Cynthia Schmidt, James Maguire,

Julie Jochum, Herman L. Bastian, Jr. and Donita Y. Brooks.
 Lafayette: Stuart Breaux, Blake David, Courtney Guillory, Marilyn Lopez, Chris Ortte, Sandra A. Broussard, Prof. Chase Edwards, Phillip Smith and Alex Stanford.
 Lafourche: David C. Peltier and Lakethia Bryant.
 LaSalle: Walter McClatchey.
 Lincoln: NiKayla Smith.
 Livingston: Gregory Hughes.
 Madison: Angela L. Claxton.
 Morehouse: Amy C. Johnson.
 Natchitoches: Lewis Gladney and NiKayla Smith.
 Orleans: Jules Cattie, Cortney Dunn, Eric Torres, Stephanie M. Hartman, Kim Madere, Patrick Dehon, Meagan Miller, Camille Patti, Mark A. Vicknair, James A. Lightfoot III, Andrea Agee, Dara L. Baird, Elizabeth Meneray and Leonor Prieto.
 Ouachita: Elizabeth Brown and NiKayla Smith.
 Plaquemines: Matt Smith.
 Pointe Coupee: Scott L. Smith, Jr.
 Rapides: Robert Levy, Kay Michiels, Ted Roberts, Debbie Smith and Paul Tellarico.
 Red River: R. David Harvey.
 Richland: Rossanna McIlwain and Josh Strickland.
 St. Bernard: J. Van Robichaux, Jr., Daniel Nodurft, Scott Tillery, David Gerhauer, Joyce Young, Ryan Early, Paul Tabary, Elizabeth Borne, Keith Couture, William McGoey, Edward Bopp and Eric Bopp.
 St. Charles: Rachel Naquin, Kellie Fox and

Kim Madere.
 St. Helena: Sean Brady.
 St. James: Kristina Collins Harrison.
 St. John the Baptist: Marissa Delgado, Elizabeth Goree and Kellie Fox.
 St. Landry: LaKeisha A. Ford and Jeffrey Coreil.
 St. Martin: Neal C. Angelle.
 St. Mary: Adolph B. Curet III.
 St. Tammany: Jason Freas, Suzanne Jones and Robert Kemp.
 Tangipahoa: Elsbet Smith.
 Tensas: McCaleb Bilbro.
 Terrebonne: Lakethia Bryant.
 Union: Brian Granville Smith.
 Vermilion: Bernard F. Duhon.
 Vernon: Debbie Smith.
 Washington: Theresa Robertson and Paula Charles.
 Webster: R. David Harvey.
 West Baton Rouge: Talya Bergeron.
 West Carroll: John M. Lancaster.
 West Feliciana: Talya Bergeron.
 Winn: Rossanna McIlwain and Lewis Gladney.

Partner Organizations

38th District Attorney's Office
 38th Judicial District Court
 Loyola Law Clinic / Workplace Justice Project
 Acadiana Legal Service Corp.
 Baton Rouge Bar Foundation Pro Bono Project
 Central Louisiana Pro Bono Project
 Department of Children & Family Services
 Lafayette Bar Foundation
 Legal Aid of North Louisiana
 Northshore Pro Bono Project
 Southeast Louisiana Legal Services
 University of Louisiana-Lafayette
 Staffs of 78 library branches across 62 parishes.

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Orleans Parish, Main Library: From left, librarian Sarah Lewis, attorney Meagan Miller and librarian April Martin.



West Feliciana Parish: Talya Bergeron with Southeast Louisiana Legal Services.