



Mississippi

CENTER FOR LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

2018 Annual Report



JACKSON



HATTIESBURG



MCCOMB



GULFPORT



MERIDIAN

“Protecting People, Preserving Justice”

Serving 43 Counties

ADAMS, AMITE,
CLAIBORNE,
CLARKE, COPIAH,
COVINGTON,
FORREST, FRANKLIN,
GEORGE,
GREENE, HANCOCK,
HARRISON, HINDS,
HOLMES, JACKSON,
JASPER,
JONES, JEFFERSON,
JEFFERSON DAVIS,
KEMPER, LAMAR,
LAUDERDALE,
LAWRENCE, LEAKE,
LINCOLN, MADISON,
MARION, NESHOPA,
NEWTON, NOXUBEE,
PEARL RIVER, PERRY,
PIKE, RANKIN,
SCOTT, SIMPSON,
SMITH, STONE,
WALTHALL, WARREN,
WAYNE,
WILKINSON, YAZOO



MCLSC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

REVEREND CARLOS WILSON, BOARD CHAIR

HALEY BROOM, ESQ.

LEWIS H. BURKE, ESQ.

B. WESLEY CURRY, IV. ESQ.

ROBERT GIBBS, ESQ.

MS. REKESHIA GRANDERSON

MR. COLEMAN HARRIS

TANYA HASBROUCK, ESQ.

GLENDA HAYNES, ESQ.

JOE HUDSON, ESQ.

AAKEELA HUDNALL, ESQ.

MS. CONNIE JONES

ALEXANDER C. MARTIN, ESQ.

BEN PIAZZA, JR. ESQ.

RENEE MCBRIDE PORTER, ESQ.

MS. EARLENE SINGLETON

JENNIFER A. RILEY COLLINS, ESQ.

MR. BILLY SPILLER

MATTHEW THOMPSON, ESQ.

MR. ARTHUR WALKER

STEPHEN WILSON, ESQ.

**“SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY,
WE MUST LEARN THAT THERE IS
NOTHING GREATER THAN TO
DO SOMETHING FOR OTHERS.”**

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Greetings and Thanks from Executive Director



I am pleased to greet you on behalf of Carlos Wilson, Board Chair, and the staff of MCLS. The year 2018, like years before, had challenges for legal aid and the low income community, but as in years past, all persevered. There were some efforts with inadequate staffing and resources, but there were also meaningful accomplishments for clients in areas like domestic relations, domestic violence prevention, income maintenance, parent representation and foreclosure defense work. I can dare say that there was progress, but there is still much work to be done before equal justice is played on a level playing field.

The Board Chair, board members, and staff recognize that the provision of legal aid to the poor is not yet recognized by all as an entitlement, but still considered by many as a privilege that can be taken away. We know that what we do and the benefits that low income persons receive because of our work, would not be available without the support of so many persons inside and outside of the legal profession. We do not take this support for granted, and for this, we extend our continuing appreciation.

We invite you to share in this report, which hi-lites some of our struggles and accomplishments over the past year. More importantly, we invite and encourage you to continue your support for low income persons. We strive to strengthen our existing partnerships and build alliances with others who also believe that everyone is entitled to a full range of legal services.

Our special thanks to our funders listed below. Without your support, we could not continue to work to level the playing field for poor people. We ask that you remain committed and we encourage others to join the fight so that equal justice for all will someday become a reality, and not just remain an ideal concept.

Thank you.

Sam H. Buchanan, Jr.

We could not begin to do our work without the funding from federal, state, public, private and other contributors. To each funder, we are grateful.

Legal Services Corporation (LSC), Washington, D.C.

Mississippi Bar Foundation-Interest on Lawyers Trust Account (IOLTA)

**Foreclosure Defense Grant*

The Mississippi Supreme Court (Legislative Civil Legal Assistance Fund)

**\$5 Filing fee add-on*

**Fees from out of state attorneys to practice in Mississippi*

Area Agency of Aging

**Central Mississippi Planning and Development District*

**East Central Mississippi Planning and Development District*

**Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District*

Mississippi Public Defenders Office

Cy Pres Award

MS State Department of Health (Leading Poisoning)

American Bankruptcy Foundation

MS State Department of Health -Office Against Interpersonal Violence (VOCA)



WHY LEGAL SERVICES FUNDING IS URGENTLY NEEDED

Who We Are

Chartered on May 1, 2004, MCLS covers five (5) historic programs: Central Mississippi Legal Services (CMLS), Southwest Mississippi Legal Services (SWMLS), East Mississippi Legal Services (EMLS), South Mississippi Legal Services (SMLS) and Southeast Mississippi Legal Services (SEMLS).

More Mississippians than ever before live in poverty. At least 812,860 persons are eligible for free civil legal aid. The provision of legal assistance and representation to these indigent citizens unable to afford private counsel is the goal of the Mississippi Center for Legal Services (MCLS). ***In fact, MCLS is the only provider of a full range of civil legal aid in many, if not most, of our state's central and southern rural communities.***

Presently, to serve MCLS' 43 counties, there are five (5) service offices: Gulfport, Hattiesburg, Jackson, McComb and Meridian. Historically, MCLS (its predecessor programs) had 16 office locations. With the closures of 11 office locations, it is not uncommon that clients travel 90 miles to a service office. Many travel at least 60 miles one way.

Access to our courts threatened

When "minimum access" funding was reached in past years, MCLS employed approximately 56 attorneys. Presently, MCLS employs 18 attorneys in its service offices. Three (3) of its 18 attorneys provide counsel and advice through the Call Center and four (4) attorneys provide limited scope representation through special grants. There is 1 attorney for every 26,000 eligible persons. In contrast, the general public enjoys approximately 537 attorneys, for every person.

MCLS receives about 72.07% of its funding from the Legal Services Corporation, Washington, D.C. This funding has sharply declined from \$3,205,135 in FY 2010 to \$2,697,239 for FY 2018.

For many years, MCLS' second source of funding was IOLTA (Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts). Its funding has also decreased drastically from \$1,030,130 in 2008-2009 to \$44,700 in 2018-2020.

Types of cases Not handled

Among prohibitions are class actions, certain fee-generating cases, legal assistance with respect to criminal proceedings, actions collaterally attacking criminal convictions, abortions, euthanasia, redistricting, representation in drug related evictions, litigation on behalf of prisoners, and most illegal aliens.

Who is eligible?

Financial eligibility is based on income (total receipts before taxes) of all persons who are resident members of the household. Total receipts include money (wages and salaries, income before any deduction) and regular payments from public assistance (Social Security, SSI, etc.) of all persons who are resident members of and contribute to the support of the family unit. The threshold for eligibility is 125% of poverty. At 125% of poverty, income for a household of 4 is approximately \$32,188.

Who we serve?

The MCLS attorneys help poor mothers obtain child support, provide defenseless children with access to education and health care, and protect the rights of the elderly and the vulnerable. The program solves critical and urgent legal problems for homeowners, victims of domestic violence, disaster victims, children with special needs, workers seeking fair treatment and countless others. In 2018, MCLS served approximately 10,323 persons. An additional 2,712 were helped through referrals and community outreach and education.

Our clients are as diverse as the State of Mississippi, inclusive of all races, ethnic groups and ages. They include the working poor, families with children, farmers, veterans, elderly and disabled. Many work minimum wage jobs of \$7.25 per hour, and have incomes that do not exceed \$15,080. ***Over one-half of those eligible for services must be turned away, due to a lack of resources.***

TO HELP, CONTACT
Sam H. Buchanan, Jr., Esq.

Email: shbuchanan@mslegalservices.org ❖ **Phone:** 601-545-2950 ext. 2616 ❖ **Website:** www.mscenterforlegalservices.org

MCLS BIDS FARWELL TO MICHAEL S. ADELMAN, WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS AND NEW BOARD CHAIR

On August 23, 2018, MCLS celebrated its former Board Chair Michael Adelman's 39 years of outstanding service to the program, the client community and the pursuit of equal access to justice for all.

Approximately 100 persons attended that included staff, board members, local and state officials, friends, family and members of the bar and judiciary. MCLS was honored to present Michael with the program's first Michael Adelman Lifetime Access to Justice Award.



In 2018, two (2) new Board Members joined MCLS and the Board elected a new Board Chair.



Reverend Carlos Wilson, Board Chair

has been in pastoral ministries for the past 33 years. He is currently the Pastor of Ebenezer M.B. Church in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. A native of Quitman, Mississippi, upon graduation from high school, he joined the U.S. Navy for two years. He attended Meridian Junior College, and in 1994 received a B.S. degree in Social Work from MS State University. Rev. Wilson is active in his community and has served on many boards that include the Pearl River Valley Organization, East MS Baptist State Convention, Hattiesburg Public School Foundation, Stone of Help and Hope of Hattiesburg.



Haley N. Broom, Board Member

became a Shareholder in the firm Dukes, Dukes, Keating & Faneca, P.A. in 2010. She obtained her Doctor of Jurisprudence from the University of Mississippi. Haley currently serves on the Board of Directors for the University of Southern Mississippi Foundation and Lynn Meadows Discovery Center. Haley was named one of the Mississippi Business Journal's 2011 Mississippi's 50 Leading Business Women, and was recognized as a "Rising Star" in the Super Lawyers Magazine 2014 Edition.



Jennifer Riley-Collins, Board Member

is a native of Meridian, MS. She obtained her Doctor of Jurisprudence from Mississippi College School of Law. Her legal career path has brought her to her position as the Executive Director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Mississippi. Jennifer has studied and written about issues impacting justice and equity in Mississippi to include issues related to criminal justice reform, juvenile justice, poverty, LGBT rights, and voting rights. Jennifer retired from the United States Army in June 2017 as a Colonel after 32 years of distinguished service as a Military Intelligence Officer. She has been thrice awarded the Meritorious Service Medal, awarded the Joint Service Medal, and thrice awarded the Army Commendation Medal. She also has received the Global War on Terrorism Service Ribbon and the Armed Forces Reserve Medal with Bronze Distinction.

MAKING AN IMPACT ON CLIENT LIVES

ESSENTIAL BENEFITS MAINTAINED

Client filed for disability benefits on May 16, 2013 on the basis of a traumatic brain injury and injuries to the left side of her body from severe physical abuse between 1 and 2 years of age. Client continued to suffer from physical and mental impairments. She was found to be disabled as a child on February 25, 2015 with a protective filing date of May 16, 2013. By Notice date February 19, 2016, it was determined by the Social Security Administration (SSA) that the client was no longer disabled based on an aged-redetermination of disability for adults. The client contacted MCLS for assistance on February 28, 2017. The issue was that client became ineligible for child disability benefits when she became age 18, and had to meet the definition of disability on the rules for adults who file new applications. Client continued to be disabled based upon her medical condition as medical improvement was not an issue at the aged-redetermination level. Client appealed the decision of SSA and a hearing was held in the matter on October 26, 2017.

After receipt of post hearing consultative evidence, ordered by the SSA, MCLS' advocate requested additional time in which to draft a brief letter in support of client's claim. The advocate was successful in arguing that client's ability to function independently and interact with supervisors is severely limited based on the evidence and that client met the Listing of Impairments set forth by law. Consequently, on May 1, 2018, Administrative Law Judge found that the severity of the client's impairments met the adult standard, and that client continued to be disabled, and was eligible to maintain SSI benefits.

HOMELESSNESS AVERTED

Client, single 33 year old mother of three(3) was sued by her landlord for \$1,637. The landlord maintained that client was responsible for damages caused to the rental property when a pipe burst during severe winter weather. Client was out of town for the Christmas holiday, and unaware that the pipes had burst. MCLS' attorney was successful in arguing that client was not negligent, did not cause the damage, and had no contractual duty under the lease for the damages. The Court ruled in favor of the client. Client received a Section 8 housing voucher for low income persons that allowed her rent to be subsidized by the Housing and Urban Development (HUD). If the Court had determined that client was responsible for the damages, client would have lost her housing voucher unless the damages were paid in full. As a result of MCLS' representation, client's voucher continued. Thus, allowing client to provide housing for herself and her children.

CHILDREN SAFELY RETURNED

Client, the mother of two minor children ages 5 and 7, allowed the children to visit their father out of the State of Mississippi with the understanding that the children would be returned in time to enroll in school. When it was time to return the children, the father refused. With no Order of custody, client's self help efforts were not successful nor was she rendered assistance by the local authorities. The McComb office filed an action in Mississippi, the home state of the children. The action sought custody, a ruling that jurisdiction lied within MS, and asked the assistance from the out of state court in having children returned. The advocate successfully negotiated a custody settlement and the return of the children to their stable home.



FAMILY FREED FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Client, a 32 year old female, sought representation for a divorce due to domestic violence by her husband. Client had to seek a Protective Order due to her husband jumping on her in the presence of the parties' four children who were ages 8, 9, 13 and 14. There was an incident that occurred the weekend before Client sought representation when her husband came to Client's home after calling her making various threats that he was going to kill her and that he did not care about any police. Whereas, upon arriving at the home, the Client's husband broke in by damaging the front door and he also damaged the master bedroom door trying to get to his wife where he threatened to kill her and their 14 year old daughter. He told his wife that he had a dream that he was going to prison because he killed her and he told his daughter that "he brought her into this world and he will take her out of this world." Client's husband was actually inside the house when the police officers arrived and he was arrested again.

Client was awarded the relief that she requested including custody of the four minor children, the right to carry the minor children as exemptions for State and Federal Income Tax purposes, and her husband was enjoined from harassing, injuring, or disturbing the quiet peace of her and the minor children.

CHAYAH YISRAEL: SAVING HOMES THROUGH FORECLOSURE PREVENTION

2018 was a busy year for the Mississippi Center for Legal Services' Foreclosure Prevention Program. The program is funded by the Bank of America Settlement Grant through the Mississippi Bar Foundation. Over the course of 2018, Chayah Yisrael, the Foreclosure Prevention Project Officer, and other employees from the Mississippi Center for Legal Services (MCLS), attended several community outreach events to discuss legal services offered in general as well as legal services provided by the foreclosure grant. The information presented at these events covered legal discussions regarding Mississippi laws that govern the foreclosure process in Mississippi, steps to take when homeowners face delinquency and/or foreclosure, federal laws that provide protections to homeowners, reverse mortgage foreclosure issues, foreclosure scams targeted towards the elderly and, practical tips for homeowners who are facing delinquency and/or foreclosure. As a result of the outreach activities in 2018, the Foreclosure Project Officer and MCLS staff spoke to over 850 people.

Additionally, the Foreclosure Prevention Project Officer reached the communities through media outlets. Specifically, in March, 2018, Ms. Yisrael spoke on the WMPR 90.1 radio station on a show entitled "Women for Progress". WMPR broadcasts with 100,000 watts of power and reaches an audience within an 80 mile radius of the Jackson, Mississippi area. The radio station specializes in gospel and blues but also serves the listening audience with a number of community-oriented talk shows and has been touted as "The Voice of the Community". Ms. Yisrael provided a wealth of information to the listening audience including tips on foreclosure prevention; laws in Mississippi regarding foreclosure, and eligibility requirements for the MCLS. Afterwards, she accepted call-in questions from the listening audience. The outreach activity was targeted at reaching homeowners in the Jackson and surrounding areas who may be facing delinquency and/or foreclosure.

In May, 2018, Ms. Yisrael was interviewed on WTOK's live television broadcast entitled "The Morning Show" at 6:00 a.m. She discussed the upcoming event of "An Evening of Community Service" for the Meridian and surrounding areas. Ms. Yisrael addressed several questions regarding foreclosures in Mississippi, foreclosure laws and prevention as well as why it's good for homeowners to know how to protect themselves in the event of delinquency and/or default.



Loan Modification Obtained to Help Save Home

One of our MCLS' clients sought assistance with a foreclosure after his bankruptcy was dismissed for non-payment. The client's mortgage company threatened immediate foreclosure against his home after the bankruptcy dismissal. When the client called the MCLS, he wanted to see if he could obtain a loan modification from the mortgage company. The client needed a reduction in his home payments because his income had been reduced due to medical illness. Ms. Yisrael was able to assist the client with several issues on his home including adding his daughter to the mortgage so that she could assist him with monthly payments. Ms. Yisrael worked with the Managing Attorney in the Hattiesburg office to prepare a quick claim deed from the client to himself and to his daughter. The deed was subsequently filed in the county land record's office. This information was sent to the mortgage company while Ms. Yisrael negotiated with the mortgage company on the loan modification terms. The mortgage company accepted the quick claim deed and added the daughter to the mortgage account. The mortgage company subsequently granted the loan.

THE JACKSON OFFICE:

Making a Difference in the Lives of Our Seniors & Persons with Disabilities

On September 6, 2018, the City of Jackson hosted its 25th Annual Senior Health and Wellness Fair at the Jackson Convention Center Complex. The Mississippi Center for Legal Services (MCLS) has participated in this health and wellness fair for at least 20 years. In 2018, employees Chayah Yisrael, its Foreclosure Prevention Project Officer, and Iola Gleese and Hertistine Latiker, Legal Secretaries, attended the fair and catered to approximately one-hundred fifty nine (159) of two hundred (200) seniors who participated. They provided information about program services, general eligibility, and reasons to seek legal advice when encountering legal problems. They discussed with attendees the importance and requirements for wills and estates, Advance Healthcare Directives, housing and foreclosure issues, Social Security benefits, Medicaid, Medicare, and how to access services through the MCLS Call Center.

MCLS employees answered many questions asked by seniors as they stopped at MCLS' display table. Informational brochures on legal services, flyers with MCLS' contact information, and types of cases handled were distributed to all persons present. Participants were informed of the availability of services through the elderly grant provided by CMPDD for legal assistance. Audience participation was excellent!

After presentations were made on selected topics, MCLS staff allotted time for one-on-one consultation.



Homestead Exemption Secured

In 2011, Clients, one of whom was disabled, entered into a real estate contract with a finance company for the purchase of their home. In 2013, Clients paid off the finance company and were given a Quitclaim Deed. In the same year, Clients made application for homestead exemption, and were denied. Clients were informed that the denial resulted because the Quitclaim deed was defective in that another financial company had an interest in their home, a claim which Clients denied. In 2017, Clients contacted MCLS whose advocate filed a Complaint to Quiet and Confirm Title. A subsequent Judgment was entered correcting the title in favor of the Clients. This had a significant impact on the Clients' lives. They needed the deed corrected to obtain homestead exemption and to borrow money for repairs.

THE HATTIESBURG OFFICE: Integrating Work and Civic Involvement

"EVERYBODY CAN BE GREAT, BECAUSE ANYBODY CAN SERVE...
YOU ONLY NEED A HEART FULL OF GRACE. A SOUL GENERATED BY LOVE."

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING

Chief Financial Officer, Barbara Brown, has been busy following her passion of singing with the Ben Cone III and Worship 2 and they have had some very impressive concerts. Barbara and Worship 2 were very much a part of the 50th Anniversary of Malaco Recording's Gospel Celebration held at the Thalia Mara Hall in Jackson, Mississippi on July 12, 2018. Barbara and Worship 2 had the opportunity to sing with Gospel Recording Artist Ricky Dillard during the McDonald's 2018 Inspiration Gospel tour on August 10, 2018, which concert generated much needed funds for the Batson's Children Hospital in Jackson, Mississippi. Ms. Brown and the other choir members at West Point Baptist Church helped Christian Services, Incorporation of Hattiesburg feed thousands with their Annual Thanksgiving Community Dinner to the homeless and needy families throughout the Pine Belt on November 20, 2018.



Patricia Pittman a Paralegal in the Hattiesburg office, won First Place (in her age category) in the Manheim of Mississippi 5K Glow Run on October 6, 2018. Ms. Pittman has also been one of the greatest supporters of the Hattiesburg High School Athletics Program.

Roberta Gaddis Davis and her Youth Group at Mt. Olive Baptist Church assisted Christian Services, Incorporation of Hattiesburg at the Ben McNair Community Center on December 15, 2018. Christian Services, Incorporation of Hattiesburg is a non-profit organization located in downtown Hattiesburg that feeds the homeless and needy families five days a week (Monday through Friday). The Hattiesburg office also adopted a family for Christmas and gave clothes and toys to the children in the family on Friday, December 21, 2018.

Attorney Alethea Shaw Milton donated toys and helped give away toys during the *Giving While Living 2nd Annual Toy Giving Away* and *Blood Drive* that was held at the C.E. Roy Community Center on December 22, 2018.

Executive Director, Sam Buchanan was honored with the Social Justice Award by the Alumnae Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. (Lambda Kappa Zeta Chapter) during the Finer Womanhood Scholarship Luncheon that was held on March 23, 2018.

One of this year's honorees of the Social Justice Award is Hattiesburg's Regional Managing Attorney Glenda F. Funchess who will be the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award for her work in the area of Civil Rights. Ms. Funchess has been active since the age of ten (10) when she was a student in Freedom School during the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Attorney Funchess also donated an 80 piece Civil Rights Art Collection to her alma mater, Hattiesburg High School. Several of the framed art were recently put on display at Thames Elementary School on February 19, 2019, and at the Hattiesburg Public Library on February 27, 2019.



THE McCOMB OFFICE:

PROVIDING GUIDANCE AND STABILITY TO OUR YOUTH

Client's minor cousin, had been determined to be a child in need of supervision, and as a result of inappropriate behavior, the county prosecutor had become involved to recommend to the Court, placement for the minor. The minor's grandmother who had been granted custody was now deceased, as was the biological father. The biological mother's health would not allow her to give the minor the guidance and supervision needed. MCLS' attorney was successful in advocating that it was in minor's best interest that his adult cousin be awarded custody and that she could provide the structure and supervision needed.

Client's mother passed away leaving a 16 year old autistic son in need of care, The father was unknown. The McComb office was successful in obtaining guardianship to allow client to meet the special needs of her brother.



THE GULFPORT OFFICE:

PARENT DEFENDER PROVIDED FOR YOUTH COURT CASES

by MCLS' attorney, Hannah Shirley

Did you know that Mississippi is the only state that does not appoint an attorney to indigent parents when custody of their children has been removed by the state? Fortunately, the Gulfport office provides a Parent Defender for Youth Court cases in Harrison County. The position began as a pilot program implemented in various counties across the state. Ms. Shirley is appointed at the initial emergency shelter hearing to represent parents whose children have been removed from their custody due to allegations of neglect or abuse. Parents facing these allegations are confused, overwhelmed, angry, ashamed, vulnerable and insecure. Generally, the immediate and primary goal is a successful, safe reunification of the parents and children. Understanding why it is vital to strive for reunification requires an understanding of what abuse and neglect look like in our society. It is natural and easy to assume that every Child Protection Services (CPS) case is horrific, but that is simply not the case. In reality, physical and sexual abuse make up less than 20% of all the cases that enter CPS. Long-term abuse is exceedingly rare. The majority of children enter the system due to neglect. Neglect is often a result of poverty, domestic violence, unmet mental health needs, drug abuse or because the parents simply do not know better – not malice or an inherent inability to parent. Poverty makes it difficult for families to access appropriate medical care, mental health treatment, addiction treatment, food, transportation, and stable housing. The vast majority of parents involved in the system are not bad people, but people with limited capacity, support or resources. Neglect is almost never malicious but, rather, situational.

In our society, CPS is granted an exorbitant amount of duty and power. The public operates on a perception that this power is genuinely used to protect abused and neglected children. It is the responsibility of the Parent Defender to hold the CPS case workers accountable and protect vulnerable families. Unless an immediate danger or safety concern exists, CPS must make reasonable efforts to keep families together. In many cases, parents can safely care for their children at home while concurrently receiving mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, domestic violence counseling, family counseling, or parenting education. However, it is not uncommon for children to be removed prematurely. The Parent Defender provides a voice to the parent and assists the parents in navigating the legal proceedings. To achieve reunification, courts often apply a one size fits all. The Parent Defender advocates on behalf of the parent for relative placement, increased visitation, tailored service agreements, and a speedier reunification. Ms. Shirley assisted 142 families as the parent defender.

THE MERIDIAN OFFICE:

Gale Nelson Walker, Esq.



joined the Mississippi Center for Legal Services (MCLS) in June 2017. She is the Regional Managing Attorney of the Meridian Office. Gale received her Juris Doctorate degree from the Mississippi College School of Law in 2003. Upon graduating from law school, Gale served as a judicial law clerk to the Honorable Leslie Southwick of the Mississippi Court of Appeals. Afterwards, she worked for various law firms and municipalities where she gained valuable legal experience. Gale has used that experience to zealously represent the best interests of the clients of MCLS' clients.

Born in Crystal Springs, Mississippi, Gale received her nursing diploma from St. Dominic's School of Nursing in 1979 and a Master of Science in Nursing from the University Of Mississippi in 1999.

Gale is also a licensed, ordained Methodist Minister and pastors a church in Meridian.

EDUCATING HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS IN THE COMMUNITY

On September 18, 2018, MCLS' Meridian Office participated in a community workshop entitled "Health Care Providers Helping to Navigate the Path of the Lay Caregiver" in celebration of Adult Day Care Week. The workshop was sponsored by the New Beginnings Adult Day Services primarily focused on those who provide health care for loved ones/others. The venue was the Meridian Community College Workforce Development Center. Sixty (60) people attended. The topics included: Community health resources; Caregiver's Burnout/Depression; Respite care; Infection Control in the Home; Alzheimer's Brain Health – what you can do to help; Advance Directives, and Wills & Estates. The presenters included professionals from the MS State Department of Health, Alzheimer Mississippi's Director of Public Policy, Advocacy & Communications; and Gale Walker on behalf of the MCLS. Exhibitors provided gifts, samples, and demonstrations of their products for health care needs.

As a result of this workshop, four (4) clients contacted the Meridian office for assistance with drafting their Last Will & Testament and an additional three (3) clients scheduled appointments to have their Advance Directives for Healthcare drafted. Several people who attended the workshop later called the office to inquire about assistance with custody, divorce, and guardianship issues. A few people commented that they were not aware of the services MCLS provide and would definitely tell their friends and families about MCLS.

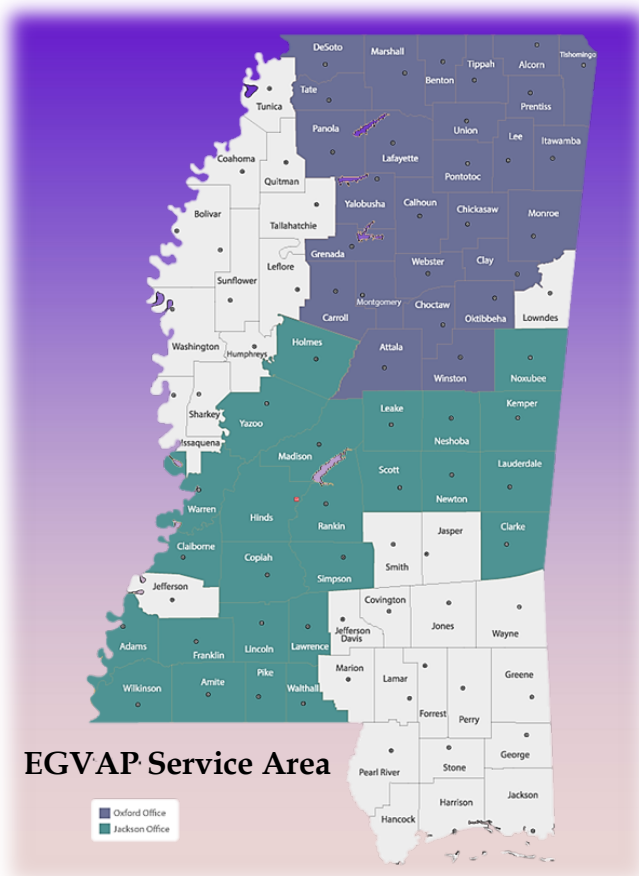


HELPING MISSISSIPPIANS' VOICES BE GREATER THAN ANY FEAR

The Earlene Gardner Victims Assistance Project (EGVAP) was established in the fall of 2017 through funding from the Office Against Interpersonal Violence at the Mississippi State Department of Health. The EGVAP project was created by both North Mississippi Rural Legal Services and MS Center for Legal Services Cooperation. This project was awarded to the State of Mississippi under the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA).

The EGVAP enables the Mississippi Legal Services Programs to address the growing demand for legal assistance to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. The project provides free legal services to the victims and include: Domestic Abuse Protection Orders, Divorces, Custody, Housing, Victims Compensation, and other civil legal matters.

The Project is to ensure victims have access to readily available services without any restrictions. Often times, victims are forced to remain with their abuser because the abuser is their provider of basic needs. Our hope is that victims become empowered to speak up and out about their circumstances and take back their lives. We want to remind victims to *“Let Your Voice Be Greater Than Any Fear.”*



MCLSC WELCOMES THE EARLENE GARDNER VICTIMS ASSISTANCE TEAM



Melissa King

joined MCLS in the fall of 2018 as the VOCA Staff Attorney in the Jackson office. King earned her Bachelors of Business Administration from the University of Mississippi. She attended Western Michigan University's Cooley Law School and was awarded Top Intern while participating in the Sixty Plus Elder Law Clinic. Before joining MCLS, Melissa was a family law and estate planning attorney in Atlanta, Georgia. She is also a graduate of the Georgia Bar Association's Young Lawyer Division Leadership Academy. Her passion for justice for victims currently drives her legal career.



Alethea Shaw-Milton

is the VOCA Staff Attorney in the Hattiesburg office. She is a graduate of the University of Mississippi School of Law. Alethea attends the Mt. Olive Baptist Church and is the proud parent of one son.



Chiquita Brown

is a native of Canton, Mississippi and a 2007 graduate of Canton High School. She is a wife and the mother of three amazing children. Her career began in 2008 in the field of administration. She realized her destiny was to make administration her career of choice so that she can help others. She pursued college and graduated from Hinds Community College with an Associate Degree in Business Management in May 2017. Chiquita serves as the VOCA Legal Secretary in the Jackson office.

MCLS BUILDS RELATIONSHIP & PARTNER WITH SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES

ESTABLISHES NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

The Community In Action (CIA) Fair is a joint venture between MS Center for Legal Services (MCLS) and about fifty public and private businesses and organizations that provide services to the Metro Jackson community. CIA serves as locations for students to complete their required public service hours. The fall 2018 event was hosted by the Alice Varnado Harden Center for Service and Community Engaged Learning at Jackson State University in effort to partner with MCLS and others.

The CIA Fair provided a wealth of knowledge to Jackson State University's faculty/staff, community based organizations, as well as students. MCLS staff, Carshena Bailey, Esq. and Theresa Williams, were able to meet and network with approximately 50 students who were interested in volunteering. They provided them as well as others with information about MCLS and how our program operates. There were more than 400 people in attendance.



THE ALICE VARNADO HARDEN CENTER FOR SERVICE

FALL 2018

Community

IN ACTION (CIA)

Fair

**THURSDAY
SEPTEMBER 6TH**

9:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.

3RD FLOOR STUDENT CENTER
(BALLROOMS A & B)

FACULTY AND STAFF COME AND DISCOVER WHICH AGENCIES ARE THE "BEST FIT" FOR THEIR DISCIPLINES.

STUDENTS COME AND FIND A COMMUNITY SERVICE OR SERVICE LEARNING SITE TO HELP WITH THEIR GRADUATION REQUIREMENT.

COMMUNITY PARTNER/AGENCY COME AND NETWORK WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT KIMBERLY R. HARRIS AT (601) 601-979-4156

CONTINUED AWARENESS IN THE CHOCTAW COMMUNITY



MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION
AND CHOCTAW LEGAL DEFENSE

2018

Choctaw Community Law Day

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2018

SILVER STAR CONVENTION HALL
9:00 A.M.—1:30 P.M.

BREAKFAST & LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED

**** ONSITE INTAKE WILL BE AVAILABLE ****
MUST MEET INCOME GUIDELINES • MUST BE A CHOCTAW MEMBER

WORKSHOP SESSIONS:

- BANKRUPTCY/COLLECTIONS
- BLOOD QUANTUM & DNA TESTING
- ELDERLY SCAMS
- EMANCIPATION/TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS
- ESTATE/DEEDS & ADMINISTRATION ISSUES
- WILLS
- BUYING USED CARS/WARRANTIES/REPOS
- HOUSING ISSUES

**CH-CTAW COMMUNITY
LAW DAY**

LSC

TO REGISTER FOR THIS EVENT

CALL
601-948-6752 EXT. 2918

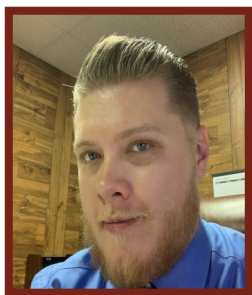
OR
EMAIL
jsampson@mslegalservices.org

In effort to promote awareness and inform the Choctaw Community, MCLS has formed a partnership with Choctaw Legal Defense and continues to build relationships as we host an annual Choctaw Community Law Day event. MCLS believes, it is important to let the Choctaw Community know there is help available. MCLS solicits staff, community leaders, local businesses and attorneys to discuss various topics that will enhance the knowledge and provide information to those in attendance.

On December 13, 2018, the educational workshop included topics from Bankruptcy/Collections to Buying Used Cars/Warranties/Repos and Housing Issues. It is MCLS' mission to serve eligible persons who cannot afford civil legal services by protecting their legal rights and providing competent legal representation in civil matters. MCLS staff, met with justice partners and community leaders to discuss the new Indian Child Welfare Act passed in 2018. Our speaker for this segment was the Tribal Attorney General, Cheryl Hamby.

Meridian office staff, Gale N. Walker, Esq., Carla Brown, and Janet Patton provide support to Choctaw Community by meeting with potential clients and providing an intake day every other Wednesday each month.

New Staff joins MCLS family



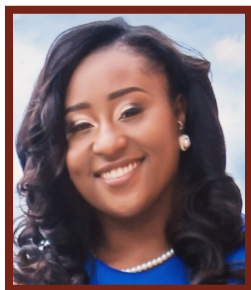
Kaleb Bailey, Esq.

is a native of Muscle Shoals, Alabama. He graduated from the University of North Alabama, and received his Juris Doctorate degree from Mississippi College School of Law. He serves as a Staff Attorney in the McComb office.



Stacy Evans

is a native of Monticello, Mississippi. She attended Jackson State University where she majored in Business Administration. She received her BS degree from the University of Phoenix and is currently pursuing her Masters degree in Criminal Justice. She has twenty years experience as a Paralegal and is serving as the Social Security Paralegal for the Gulfport office. Stacy is the proud mother of two children and is a die heart Cowboy fan. She believes in the phrase used to remind one of the unalterable elements of life. "It is, What it is."



Ameriah S. Bonds

serves a legal secretary/receptionist in the Hattiesburg office. She is a newlywed and a 2018 graduate of William Carey University. She originally applied to MCLS as an intern but was hired for a full time position soon thereafter. Due to the great help and training of MCLS, she plans to start law school at Cooley Law School in Tampa, Florida this coming fall.



Sue Merchant, Esq.

began working in the Meridian Office on November 1, 2018 as a staff attorney. Previously, she had worked at Mississippi Department of Human Services for five years, collecting child support arrearages through Chapter 13 bankruptcies, personal injury suits, and probate cases. She worked as a sole proprietor in Meridian for 10 years. She began her law career volunteering at East MS Legal Services, and after passing the bar, became a full time employee. She enjoys the opportunity to finish her law career where she began, at Legal Services, helping those who desperately need an advocate, but cannot afford one.



Kapriyah Crosby

is a resident of Hattiesburg, MS. She is a recent graduate of The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) where she majored in Public Health with an emphasis in Health Education and Community Outreach. While attending USM she was afforded an opportunity to study abroad in Kabale, Uganda where she planned and implemented different, sustainable programs for women infected with HIV/AIDS. She is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated and the City of Hattiesburg Mayoral Health Council. Kapriyah's ultimate career goal is to become a global health educator, impacting the world one community at a time. Working out of the Hattiesburg office, she is employed as an Education & Outreach Coordinator.



James Wright, Esq.

affectionately known as Jim is a native of Houston, Texas. He is a graduate of the University of Mississippi where he received a BA, Magna Cum Laude, in Classical Civilization. Following college, he graduated from The University of Texas Law School where he received his Juris Doctorate. He was an Articles Editor on The Texas International Law Journal. After 28 years in private practice, he joined MCLS' Gulfport office.



Tyler Cuning

is from Tuscaloosa, Alabama but is a native of Columbus, Mississippi. He attends the University of Southern Mississippi where he holds a double major in Legal Studies and Entrepreneurship. He aspires to be a civil rights attorney, *fighting for the rights of all!* He looks forward to continuing his employment with MCLS, where he serves as the Education & Outreach Coordinator. As the E&O Coordinator, he assists with informing the public of their rights in regards to Lead Poisoning, Fair Housing, and Landlord and Tenant Rights. He is 22 years old and plans to start law school in the fall of 2020.

Office Locations

Administrative and Hattiesburg Office

111 East Front Street (39401)
Post Office Drawer 1728
Hattiesburg, MS 39403-1728
601-545-2950
800-773-1737
Fax:(601) 545-2935

Gulfport Office

520 East Pass Road
Suite J (39507)
Post Office Box 8691
Gulfport, MS 39506
228-896-9148
877-664-0238
Fax: 228-896-0242

Jackson and State Initiatives Office

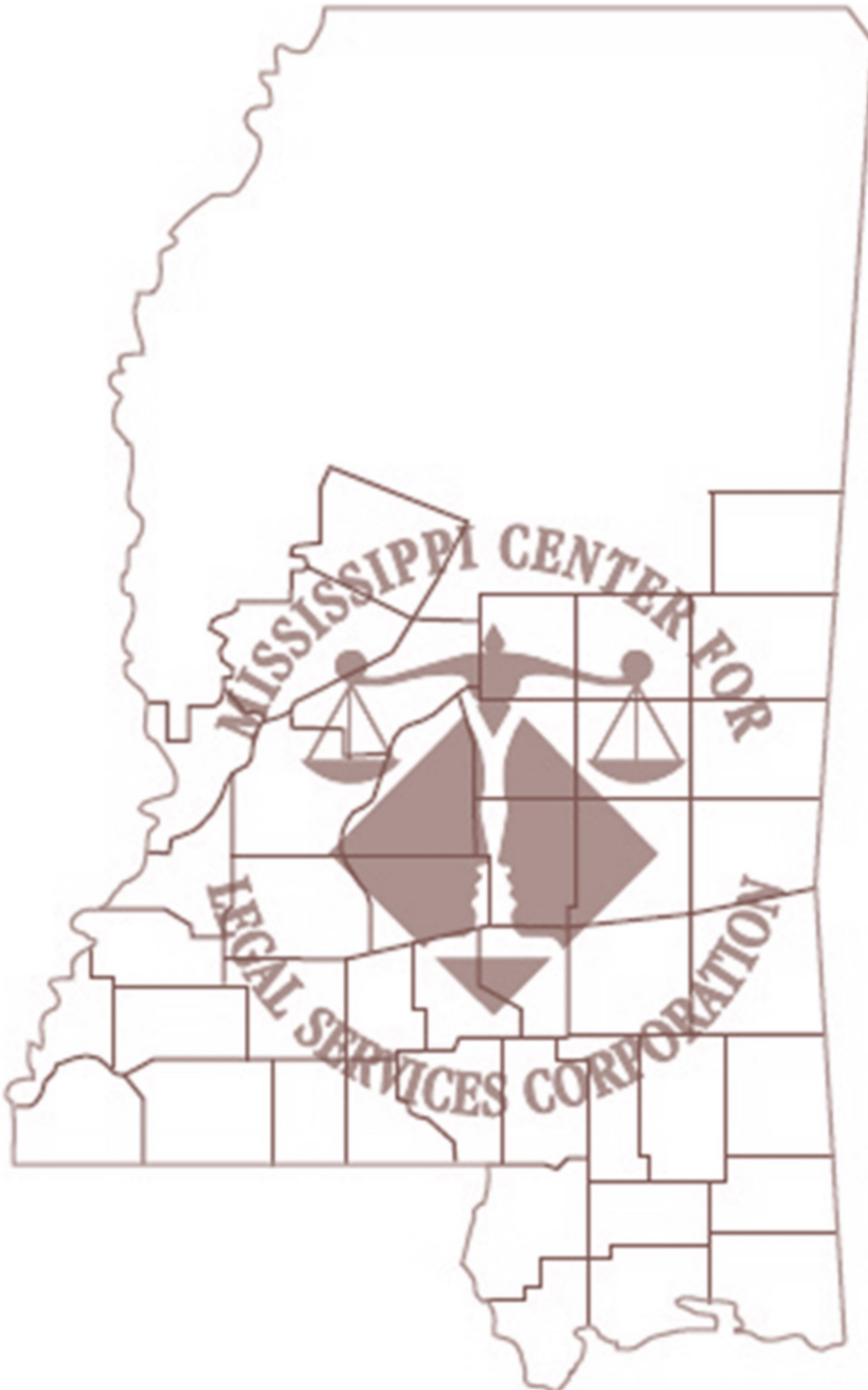
414 South State Street
Suite 300 (39201)
Post Office Box 951
Jackson, MS 39205-0951
601-948-6752
800-959-6752
Fax: 601-948-6759

McComb Office

221 Main Street (39648)
Post Office Box 575
McComb, MS 39649-0575
601-684-0578
800-898-0985
Fax: 601-684-0575

Meridian Office

2350 Fifth Street,
2nd Floor(39302)
Post Office Box 1931
Meridian, MS 39302-1931
601-693-5470
888-631-9161
Fax: 601-693-5473



For assistance, please call

1-800-498-1804

