

# Kentucky Equal Justice Center

April 26, 2023

## Staff Report Highlights

### Maxwell Street Legal Clinic — Michelle Haubner

#### MS 365

MSLC has officially started the setup of Microsoft 365 cloud-based system. Apps and new software are being downloaded onto all the computers at MSLC. File transfer to the new cloud system has begun, and MSLC staff will receive staff-wide training on the system sometime in the next week or two before we fully implement it as an office-wide procedure.

- **Workspaces:** We have rearranged the office to make space for our new hires, interns, and Paola working full time. Two new desks have been assembled.
- **Grants:** The VOCA Grant, United Way Reports, and Kentucky Bar Foundation Grants have been submitted or are in progress.
- **Volunteers:** The volunteer naturalization program is growing. Some volunteers have even committed to helping more than one client at a time.
- **Digitization:** Digitization of files has been completed and we have a volunteer working on sorting the files by client name.

#### Immigration Law Cases

47 new cases have been opened at MSLC since January, despite being down to one practitioner. The Legal Assistant staff has stepped up in many ways beyond their normal responsibilities to make this happen including managing volunteer naturalization cases, printing and assembling cases from scratch, proofreading immigration filings, and drafting cover letters. 13 of the 47 new cases opened since January were handled by volunteer attorneys.

### Impact Litigation and Advocacy — Ben Carter

#### Movement Support

- **Kentucky People's Union:** KEJC has provided in-person and virtual support to the Kentucky People's Union as they organized, explored, and eventually developed a housing-focused campaign in Ashland. [KPU recently launched a campaign](#) to adopt URLTA in Ashland and Boyd County and strengthen Ashland's landlord registry. We are hoping KEJC can increase capacity to provide legal support to organizations and campaigns like this one.
- **Louisville Bar Foundation:** KEJC [led and coordinated a grant application](#) with 15 participating organizations seeking support for our work to transform the criminal legal system in Louisville from the Louisville Bar Foundation. The group began meeting in

November of 2021 after 3 people died in state custody in the Louisville Metro Department of Corrections (11 more have died since). We are hoping this application can form the template for additional requests to support this life-and-death work. Internally, I view this as another way KEJC is trying to work to combat the civil consequences of contact with the criminal legal system.

## **National Partners**

- **Legal Impact Network:** Rich and I have just returned from a convening of the [Legal Impact Network](#) at the Shriver Center in Chicago. LIN is a network of 30+ unrestricted, state-based poverty law firms. I always learn so much from the people working at KEJC-like organizations across the country and think closer collaboration among the LIN member organizations is one of the big “gamechanger” projects for KEJC as an organization and our work.

## **Help Wanted**

I am once again asking the board to find a way to hire additional “back office” support for KEJC sooner rather than later. Before the next board meeting, KEJC will be hiring and onboarding:

- 2 people for our Vital Strategies-funded work to combat discrimination against Kentuckians who used drugs;
- 4-5 people to do the eviction outreach, defense, and prevention work LFUCG is funding us to do; and
- 2 new immigration attorneys at Maxwell Street Legal Clinic

KEJC’s board has recognized for more than a decade the problem of KEJC lacking appropriate and necessary operations support. 12 years ago, KEJC’s last strategic plan called for more operations support for our work. 2 years ago (having not created any operations capacity under the last strategic plan), KEJC’s board adopted our current strategic plan that again recognized the need for more operations support. Since then, your Senior Litigation and Advocacy Counsel has been telling you that KEJC’s scope, speed, and force is being constrained by the board’s willingness to let us operate without the support appropriate for this organization’s size and ambitious goals for our clients and our Commonwealth.

In July of 2022, as the board considered a part-time administrative assistant job, I said that KEJC needed \*at least\* a full-time person working on operations. [Last September, I again told the board](#), “as Senior Counsel, I hear the strain our staff members feel as they attempt to do their jobs while also doing many of the functions listed in [KCET’s] [job description of Operations Manager](#) (or waiting for our Executive Director's permission/attention as he tries to do both the job of Executive Director and Operations Manager).” In December, [I asked to have a staff meeting](#) to discuss the 2023 budget with an eye toward hiring a full-time Operations Manager.

While there are many good and wholesome things I could report to the board about work we are doing, it would feel dishonest not to (continue to) report that the lack of operations support is an urgent problem for us today and a problem for us as we prepare for a post-Rich KEJC. In my

opinion, we have (and have had) the funds necessary to hire an Operations Manager. Please, revisit the provisional budget and either find or raise the money to hire someone to handle the day-to-day work of hiring, onboarding, and supporting KEJC's growing staff and its varied, careful, and important work.

## **Communications — Natalie Chambers**

### **KY Gives Day 2023**

- KEJC's profile for the annual KY Gives Day fundraiser is currently live
- We are running a social campaign for the fundraiser on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram
- We are also running a funder email campaign
- KY Gives Day is on Tuesday, May 9th. Please like and share our posts!

### **Medicaid Unwinding messaging**

- We are currently developing and running an educational messaging campaign about Medicaid unwinding/re-enrollment
- Initial social posts have been drafted and scheduled
- An infographic to use in future emails, blogs, etc. is also in development

### **Eviction diversion messaging**

- Eviction diversion program communications are in development
- Materials include an informative flyer, social media posts, and (potentially) a press release

### **Lexington housing grant**

- Currently developing a press release and social posts to be sent out after the press conference on May 2nd

## **Resource Organizer — Raaziq El-Amin**

### **Comms & Development Synergy**

Raaziq has been working with Natalie to operationalize processes around the monthly newsletter, giving campaigns, and donor outreach. Past Comms folx offered so much to our fund development capacity, and having a full-time person in the role is going to take us to new heights. It's exciting, and there's more to come!

### **Development Plan**

Raaziq spent the greater part of the first quarter working with Rich to create our 2023 Development Plan. It's ambitious (and a little long). The plan lays out a roadmap to raise \$2.2M by prioritizing five goals:

- Improve database (Bloomerang) hygiene
- Identify and cultivate new prospects

- Increase donor retention
- Boost board member involvement in fund development initiatives
- Enhance grant funding sustainability

## **Grants Management**

The Culture of Philanthropy we have within our organization has been evermore present this quarter. Raaziq has coordinated with staff to identify funding opportunities, apply for grants, and report on our work. So far this year, the KEJC team has submitted 9 proposals and 10 reports. We were recently awarded \$17,972 from Kentucky Civic Engagement Table to implement a language access plan.

## **Housing Justice — Stefanie Ebbens Kingsley**

### **Lexington Housing Stability Grant**

The Housing Team Continues to develop the proposal in partnership with Legal Aid of the Bluegrass and the LFUCG Office of Housing to increase capacity for outreach, organizing, and access to counsel through the award of \$980,370 through the Housing Stability Services Program. The Housing Team is committed to building a nationally recognized program on the best practices learned through our partnership with the Public Justice Sprint, with National Right to Counsel Experts. More details to come after the press conference with Mayor Gorton and her team next Tuesday, May 2, 2023.

### **Racial Justice Institute**

Chloe, Raaziq and Ebony are building a Public Health & Housing Racial Justice Institute project with the Shriver Center RJI Institute, as cohort members in the 2023 RJI Institute. We will be developing better ways to address access to safe and affordable housing as a public health crisis and implementing practices to holistically address those in high Medicaid enrollment and high eviction zip codes in Fayette county. We are excited to see what the team develops through this program.

### **Around the State — Laura Harper Knight**

- **Statewide Eviction Program:** KHC recently launched KY-EDP, the statewide eviction diversion program that all Kentuckians outside of Lexington and Louisville will use through 2025. We're performing outreach and supporting in-court liaison services for Warren county, with plans to expand to Daviess and Christian counties.
- **The Veridian:** Residents of the Veridian complex in Lexington who were impacted by the pipes bursting in December have now received a phone call, voicemail, text message, and email from us about their options moving forward. Several completed the intake process for consideration as our clients. We may host a small claims clinic in the coming weeks to support tenants in pursuing pro se action.

- **Louisville rental assistance:** Louisville’s mess is finally truly winding down and we will have numbers to share soon about the impact of our work in that project. We performed extensive outreach and supported dozens of Louisville tenants in applying for assistance and are now down to a handful of remaining applicants to carry over the finish line.

## **Outreach and — Stefanie Ebbens Kingsley**

### **Outreach**

KEJC staff spoke directly with about 100 people. Some unique occasions this quarter were an in-person presentation with the Berea College Hispanic Outreach Project and multiple meetings with northern Kentucky community organizations and legal services.

### **Direct Service**

- **Worker Rights:** After almost 10 years with KEJC, McKenzie Cantrell moved on to a position in Frankfort. We have identified two law firms to help wrap up assistance for some of the remaining wage claimants. We have finalized the terms and are drawing up contracts. If board members know of private attorneys willing to help low-wage wage claimants pro bono, please connect us!
- **Health Coverage Enrollment Assistance:** Miranda helped three new individuals and families with health coverage in addition to previous clients. She is coordinating with other kynectors to train and support them in assisting more immigrant clients, especially with navigating nuances of health coverage for trafficking survivors and for undocumented Kentuckians.

### **Advocacy Feedback Loop**

- **Kentucky Health Benefit Exchange (KHBE):** Miranda serves on KHBE’s recently revived Education and Outreach Subcommittee. During this quarter, she contributed feedback on new health insurance literacy materials, Open Enrollment efforts, and Public Health Emergency “Unwinding” communications about Medicaid renewals, as well as recommendations and goals ahead of the next Open Enrollment Period. In an effort to turn over our committee seat to a more directly impacted individual with personal experience with Medicaid, Miranda has invited a previous client, who has attended several of the TAC meetings and is considering becoming a member.
- **Medicaid Technical Advisory Committees (TACs):** Miranda serves on the Consumer Rights & Client Needs TAC, which made recommendations to the Department for Medicaid Services this quarter to post the network adequacy one-pager on the DMS website and to require each Medicaid Managed Care Organization to post the one-pager on their respective websites and include in their member handbooks. Miranda also nominated previous client Jeanine Lubuya to serve on the Disparity and Equity Technical Advisory Committee. Jeanine has served on the Equity TAC since its first meeting in September. Miranda has been checking in with and coordinating support for both of these directly impacted TAC representatives.

## **Fundraising**

**Worker Rights:** With support from Raaziq and Stefanie, Miranda has continued to network with worker rights and labor advocates to discuss strategy, highlight Kentucky's momentum, and drum up support. Recent efforts culminated in the National Employment Law Project inviting Miranda to attend a convening in Atlanta with U.S. Department of Labor leadership and worker center representatives from across the southeast. Ben and Miranda met with Louisville plaintiff-side employment law attorneys and are following up on ideas for collaboration and mutual support to help attorneys connect, share resources, and meet the demand of low-wage workers owed stolen wages.

**Healthcare:** Our team is exploring ways to fund a staff person dedicated to being a kynector full time to focus on responding to clients and work closely with Chloe and Kentucky Voices for Health to inform healthcare advocacy!

**Language Access:** Raaziq and Miranda wrote a grant to the Kentucky Civic Engagement Table, and have been approved for \$17,972 to overhaul our language access plan and train staff! Miranda also engaged in discussion with Family Health Centers of Louisville and KHBE around recruitment of bi- and multilingual kynectors.