

Kentucky Equal Justice Center

July 15, 2021

Staff Report Highlights

Food Justice — Tyler Offerman

- **Kentucky Food Action Network launch:** We continue to work with the KY Center for Economic Policy, Community Farm Alliance, and Feeding KY to support the (now renamed) Kentucky Food Action Network. Recent activities of the Network include:
 - **Steering Committee:** Applications closed for the Steering Committee this month and, while the decision has not been finalized, we have a strong, geographically diverse cohort of applicants that are majority directly impacted Kentuckians. We expect to finalize the review process and on-board the inaugural Steering Committee sometime in the beginning of August.
 - **Mission:** The full Network ratified the [name, mission, objectives, and priorities](#) of the KFAN during our Q3 statewide call. The call included guest speakers from the 2 regional cohorts that have affiliated with the KFAN (the NKY Safety Net Alliance (SNA) & the Food in Louisville Neighborhoods (FIN)). Conversations on the call have led to a burgeoning CKY regional cohort.
 - **Workgroups:** The 4 issue-based working groups (Federal Nutrition Assistance, Child Feeding, Ag. & Food Systems, and Climate Change) are going strong and continue to have regular meetings.
- **Double Dollars:** Our partnership with the Community Farm Alliance around getting a Healthy Food and Farm Fund to provide state funding to the KY Double Dollars (KDD) Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) allocated through Master Settlement Fund is ramping up. We have had several meetings with legislators to identify a sponsor and get the policy on an interim joint committee meeting agenda for the Agriculture Committee and/or the Health and Welfare Committee.
- **kynecting:** KEJC is seeing a surge in Medicaid and Marketplace clients due to the extended Special Enrollment Period and the continued impacts of the pandemic, so Tyler has been helping Miranda with enrollment of English-speaking clients while the new Health Law Fellow goes through the process of becoming a kynector.
- **SNAP claims:** One of the last items Tyler and Betsy worked on before Betsy left was to get DCBS to change its SNAP claims compromise policies ([see attached](#)). Kentucky has had some of the least generous policies around SNAP claims collections in the country. We were

recently informed that the Cabinet has agreed to accept advocates' recommendation on compromising SNAP agency error claims that cannot be paid back within 3 years.

Impact Litigation and Advocacy — Ben Carter

- **Using Equity:** Ben published an article, “Using Equity to Confront and Correct Individual and Systemic Racism” in a report “[Race Equity at the Core of Consumer Law](#)” released July 13th by The Shriver Center on Poverty Law. (Page will be updated to include webinars the National Consumer Law Center and Shriver are doing to introduce the report.)
- **North Fork:** Sued city officials in Morehead on behalf of several former residents of North Fork Mobile Home Park. The suit alleges that city officials violated state law when they created the Morehead Gateway Development Area with about \$10 million in taxpayer subsidies over the next thirty years. (About the dispute: [NYT](#), [great write-up from Ohio Valley ReSource](#)) (About the suit: [WKYT](#)) ([Complaint and Exhibits](#)).
- **Restoration of voting rights:** Ben sued Governor Beshear with co-counsel Fair Elections Center over the Governor’s practice of requiring Kentuckians who applied for restoration under Matt Bevin to reapply and refusing to decide whether to grant or deny Kentuckians’ applications in a reasonable time. ([KEJC blog post](#)).

Maxwell Street Legal Clinic — Leah Engle

- **VAWA Approved!** Allison had her first VAWA self-petition approved recently, the first in our office since the start of the VOCA program. VAWA is a self-petition process created under the Violence Against Women Act, which allows victims of abuse to circumvent the family petition process. Generally, in family petitions, everything is up to the US citizen or lawful permanent resident family member to petition for status for their family member. In cases of domestic violence, this is often used as tool of power and control. VAWA allows victims to petition for themselves, so they can get status without relying on their abuser. Victims must provide substantial evidence showing their relationship and the abuse. It can be a difficult process, and, with increasing USCIS processing times, can be quite a wait. We are thrilled that Allison’s client now has status and stability!
- **Outreach:** Our VOCA team has been busy with outreach since our last board meeting.
 - **DCBS:** On June 15, Michelle and Allison presented on Immigration Remedies for Crime Victims for the Fayette County Cabinet of Health and Family Services Department for Community Based Services. This was our second presentation for DCBS, and we have seen increased referrals from their offices.
 - **Referrals from schools:** We’ve also received a number of referrals from schools recently—often right after a student who might have been eligible for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status has turned 18. Because of these cases, we’ve started reaching out to

schools, so that we can schedule trainings for guidance counselors and staff. If we can get these kids in our office before they turn 18, there are more options available to them. Michelle has already reached out to all the schools in Fayette County. We have a training scheduled for August 26.

- **On the radio:** And of course, we've continued our bilingual immigration law updates with RADIOLEX. In June, we had a great conversation about the difference between attorneys, DOJ accredited representatives, and notaries. And we continue to advise not to take legal advice from TikTok!
- **Law students:** We're excited to have Benjamin Smith, a rising 2L at Brooklyn Law School, and Jennifer Lohr, a rising 2L at UK College of Law, join us for the summer. Benji has been a volunteer at Maxwell Street since 2018, so we're thrilled to have him continue working with us in this new capacity. Both interns have been doing a great job. We're excited to share our passion for public interest and immigration law with future lawyers!

Outreach Coordinator — Miranda Brown

- **RADIOLEX:** Miranda aired three new radio episodes in English and Spanish, covering:
 - [Public Charge Update](#)
 - [Unemployment Benefits Update](#)
 - [Health Coverage Update](#)

The programs feature Leah and Michelle of MSLC, Food Justice Fellow Tyler and Louisville Outreach Coordinator Lizz, and Priscilla Easterling of Kentucky Voices for Health.

- **Enrollment Assistance:** Miranda and Tyler helped 16 new individuals and families with health coverage in addition to previous clients. Clients successfully enrolled in Medicaid and Marketplace coverage, but also into Presumptive Eligibility Medicaid, Emergency Time Limited Medicaid, and Medicare Savings Programs. Five of those clients came from the New Life Day Center, where we continue biweekly outreach. Two clients were referred from Kentucky Refugee Ministries.
- **Advocacy Feedback Loop**
 - **Consumer TAC:** Miranda represents KEJC in bimonthly meetings of the Consumer Rights & Client Needs Technical Advisory Committee. DMS is using a new Pharmacy Benefit Manager, which means that some prescriptions will transition from not requiring a Prior Authorization to requiring one. DMS will send a notice to impacted members notifying them 60 days before the PAs go into effect. The TAC recommended that DMS customize the letter to members to specify which medications will have a prior authorization going forward.

- **CHFS Immigrant Workgroup:** CHFS invited KEJC to participate in an Immigrant Workgroup. Rich and Miranda have been attending. KEJC and KVH advocates recommended that the immigration status question be redesigned to prevent applicants from having to self-report as being undocumented or having to self-identify with harmful policy language that they may not identify with, such as “battered alien.” Miranda suggested adding language to clarify the identity question for Indigenous people that are not affiliated with a tribe in the United States. To protect immigrants from legal problems related to accidentally registering to vote, we suggested adding clarification that only citizens qualify to register.
- **Other Networking/Outreach/Communications:** We completed 6 outreach events and presentations. We distributed information to 91 families at outdoor events at Russell Cave Elementary and for the Mother’s Day Festival and presented to about 40 UnitedHealthCare Care Management Team members on workers’ rights and health coverage options for their immigrant members. Miranda, Tyler, and McKenzie delivered presentations for the virtual Kentucky Refugee and Immigrant Inclusion Summit.
- **Rebuilding Our Commonwealth:** Rich, Raaziq, and the Worker Rights Team organized a Workers’ Rights Town Hall featuring Congressman Yarmuth, the AFL-CIO, Kentucky workers, and an advocate from A Better Balance. 56 advocates and donors attended, and the video has 381 views on YouTube and Facebook!
- **Lexington Wage Claim Clinic:** Miranda and McKenzie assisted 4 new wage claimants. We assisted a painter with a demand letter for \$3,800. One worker has since received her wages, but her employer is also her landlord and attempting to evict her. Ben will represent her next week. We are continuing to gather additional information with the other two, who are food service and property maintenance workers. We’ll resume in-person monthly wage claim clinics next week!
- **Louisville Wage Claim Clinic:** Lizz and McKenzie helped a new claimant demanding \$10,075. They began in-person clinics on July 7.
- **Work Study:** This spring and summer, Tyler and Miranda have been managing UK pre-law work study Payton Sinkbeil as she does radio show video editing, policy research, literature review, and graphic design for outreach materials.

Resource Organizer — Raaqiq El-Amin

- **Donor Management System:** After 6 and a half months of searching, we've got our donor management system! We're confident [Bloomerang](#) will help us reach our goals of cultivating relationships and effectively tracking donor engagement. Over the next 12-16 weeks, I'll be working closely with an onboarding specialist to convert our data and to get the system customized to suit our needs.

- **Workers' Rights Town Hall:** The Workers' Rights team, Rich, and I worked diligently to organize the latest Workers' Rights Town Hall. The event drew 101 registrants and 55 attendees. We were fortunate to have a panel of folx from various backgrounds (including policymakers, advocates, and workers), and we plan to use this event as an engagement model for our other programs. Our goals were to:
 - offer Kentuckians a chance to better understand what congressional infrastructure talks could mean for their communities
 - have meaningful engagement with current and prospective supporters of the Workers' Rights program
- Based on feedback—including a participant survey—we've met these goals. We continue to brainstorm and strategize about how best to show attendees the significance of their support for the Workers' Rights program. You can watch the recording on [YouTube](#) and find it on our [Facebook](#) page.

Director — Rich Seckel

- **Town Hall tech maven:** For our first town hall without a national partner, Rich convened multiple check-ins, reached out to participating workers and—behind the scenes—muscled up on tech to stream live to Facebook. The timely and well-attended session drew Rep. John Yarmuth as first presenter. See the [video](#) here.
- **What's the (strategic) plan?** KEJC came much closer to answers at an energetic 6.5-hour retreat on July 8. Facilitators Marian and Gene Guinn are working through the ideas to distill key elements and next steps. Rich managed the event, including the unfamiliar task of working with a commercial venue to host our first in person meeting since the pandemic began. Back to the library soon? Meanwhile, many thanks to participants!
- **Bloomerang:** Resource Organizer Raaziq El-Amin conducted awesome procurement research, sorting through details of multiple donor management systems for candidates to replace KEJC's free but forbiddingly clunky version of Salesforce. Rich same in for the final round of presentations and proposal review, but Raaziq's research and input led the way to a result: [Bloomerang](#) is a full-featured system and it offered a strong plan for data transfer.