DID YOU KNOW?

BY KATHLEEN JANE ENGLAND, PRESIDENT, STATE BAR OF NEVADA

Not long ago, I was introduced to the eye-opening YouTube video "Shift Happens." Two bloggers offered a graphic and startling perspective on how communication has changed and how much the human race has grown in the past 100 years. I highly recommend watching it – you can find it online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljbI-363A2Q or just Google "YouTube/Did you know?"

Here in Nevada, the need for pro bono assistance can, when viewed in a similar perspective, be quite staggering. Yet the efforts of Nevada's legal service providers to meet those needs are astonishing. Here are just a few eye-opening facts:

Did you know…

…In 2007, in Nevada rural counties, there was only one legal service attorney for every 5,256 adult persons living in poverty? In Clark County, there was only one legal service attorney for every 5,495 adult persons living in poverty. And in Washoe County, there was only one legal service attorney for every 2,550 adult persons living in poverty.

Did you know?

In 2008, more than 13,000 people received representation and services from the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada (LACSN), a 30% increase from 2007. LACSN also holds bankruptcy counseling classes for the public and, in the first six months of 2008, 455 people attended those classes. In the first six months of 2009, 730 people attended. According to Barbara Buckley, Executive Director of LACSN:

> Two hundred and fifty children a month are placed into foster care in Clark County…
> …only *half* of them have an attorney from LACSN or its volunteer attorneys.
>
> In 2008, Las Vegas Metro received 25,000 domestic violence calls…
> …and LACSN's domestic violence project represented over 1,000 victims.
>
> One in 64 homes in Nevada is in foreclosure…
> …and LACSN has a growing caseload of 200 clients, is running public service announcements about the mediation foreclosure program and cannot meet all the requests for assistance.

Did you know?

According to Paul Elcano, Executive Director of Washoe Legal Services (WLS), his organization applied for 1,972 temporary protective orders for victims of domestic violence and 1,297 were granted. In addition:

> More than 7,000 individuals in Washoe County became, or were at risk of becoming, homeless…
> …and WLS handled 1,292 cases assisting in preventing homelessness.
>
> At present, 7,524 primary domestic violence victims live in Washoe County…
> …and WLS served 1,218 adults and 1,128 children in domestic violence cases.

Did you know?

In 2001, Nevada Legal Services (NLS) created its Tenants' Rights Center to stretch its limited resources and overwhelming demand for services. In 2008, the Tenants' Rights Center assisted over 50,000 tenants in private landlord/tenant matters. In 2008, 55% of NLS's case load was housing-related and it completed 2,500 cases. According to Anne Marie Johnson, Executive Director of NLS:

> In 2007, 32,000 evictions were filed…
> … *per month* in Las Vegas.
>
> Nevada ranks in the top five states in unemployment…
> …and in the first six months of 2009, 17% of NLS's workload was made up of unemployment cases.
>
> Due to limited resources, NLS has had to narrow its services to making sure clients have shelter, can feed their families and can get access to medical care…

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…and from March 15 through May 15, 2009, NLS had to turn away over 5,000 people who qualified for service (with an income of less than $44,100 for a family of *four*) whose cases had merit.

Did you know?

Voluntary Attorneys for Rural Nevadans (VARN) was founded by the State Bar's Young Lawyer Section. In the past 12 months, VARN prosecuted 109 legal actions on behalf of domestic violence victims; half of the actions are currently pending. Between January and June, 2009, VARN received 339 requests for assistance from domestic violence victims. No employee of VARN has received a pay raise or cost of living increase in the past 3.5 years. According to Valerie Cooney, Executive Director for VARN:

> VARN provides pro bono and direct legal services in 15 Nevada counties, an area of approximately 90,000 sq. miles…
> …out of only *one office* in Carson City, with only *four* attorneys, including the executive director.
>
> In the past 18 months, VARN provided representation and legal assistance to 1,075 low- and moderate-income individuals in rural counties…
> …and most rural courts will not allow filing by fax or e-mail.
>
> Every time VARN appears in Elko to represent someone, it takes five hours driving…
> …*each* way from Carson City to Elko. It costs $160 in mileage, $40 per diem and $100 for a hotel each trip.
>
> A VARN attorney was the first attorney ever to appear on behalf of a domestic violence victim for a protective order…
> …in *any* rural Nevada court.

Did you know?

Approximately 13,000 Nevadans live in nursing homes and, since 2007, the Las Vegas Senior Citizens Law Project (SCLP) has assisted over 3,000 elderly clients in preparing advance directives and long-term health care plans. Since 2007, SCLP has served as guardian ad litem in over 60 cases, recommending to the court the safest, most suitable environment for the ward. According to Sugar Vogel, Executive Director of SCLP:

> SCLP opens more than 3,000 new files each year…
> …with a full-time legal staff of only *three* attorneys and *one* paralegal.
>
> Since NRS.111.109 was passed in 2003 authorizing individuals to convey their interest in property upon death…
> …SCLP has drafted 481 beneficiary deeds to assist seniors in avoiding probate.

Did you know… that you can help?

The YouTube video asks you to join the conversation. I am asking you to help fund legal services for needy Nevadans who have nowhere else to turn by volunteering your time with your local legal services provider and by changing your IOLTA trust account to one of the banks paying higher interest rates. To see a list of these banks, visit the state bar's website at www.nvbar.org. NL