

DICTA



**A TENNESSEE
COURT IS
“IN BUSINESS”
FOR US ALL**

**SUPER
CIRCULATION
ISSUE**



By: Marshall H. Peterson
Holbrook Peterson Smith PLLC

INTRODUCING: SHERI A. FOX, ESQ.



Sheri A. Fox became Executive Director for Legal Aid East Tennessee (LAET) on January 1. LAET provides civil (non-criminal) legal assistance and representation at no cost to eligible clients in 26 East Tennessee counties. LAET also provides community education and outreach. LAET and its predecessor organizations have provided representation to low-income East Tennesseans since 1965.

LAET serves clients out of six offices located from the Tri-Cities to Chattanooga. It is a large geographic area with many thousands of individuals meeting the requirements for pro bono legal services. LAET, through its dedicated attorneys, staff, and pro bono volunteer attorneys, benefits around 14,000 individuals per year, ranging from obtaining Orders of Protection for victims of domestic violence to protecting families from being homeless. The annual economic benefit to our region from this work is more than \$26 million.

For the past 23 years, David Yoder has served as Executive Director of LAET. Mr. Yoder brought vision, stability, and inspired leadership to the role. At the end of 2015, he stepped down, and our new Executive Director assumed her role.

The Board of LAET appointed me Chair of the Search Committee to recommend a candidate for Board consideration.

The Search Committee included LAET board members and employees representative of the LAET geographic regions. A

consultant with experience in legal aid organization placements guided the nationwide search process. After considering dozens of applicants and two rounds of interviews, the committee made a unanimous recommendation of Ms. Fox, which the Board accepted.

Ms. Fox comes to LAET from 14 years in private law practice, a shareholder at Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, P.C. (Baker Donelson). While at Baker Donelson, Ms. Fox amassed a wide range of litigation experience at both the trial and appellate levels in state and federal courts. She focused her practice primarily on products liability defense, commercial litigation, nursing home defense, and general litigation. She was active in the work of LAET during her years in private practice and, even before becoming a lawyer, when she was a summer intern in the Chattanooga office of LAET.

She says of that experience: "I was hooked right from the start; hooked not only by the important work being done, but also by the spirit and commitment of the people doing it."

That commitment to legal aid work continued in her law practice as she served on her firm's Pro Bono Committee, took pro bono cases, volunteered for various legal clinics, and worked on other LAET events. In recognition of her Pro Bono work, the Tennessee Supreme Court designated her as an Attorney for Justice.

Sheri Fox has many practice recognitions, as befitting an accomplished practitioner. Important as those are, what stands out are her enthusiasm, drive, creativity, and pragmatism. She assumes her responsibility with a solid management team, a dedicated board, community goodwill, a balanced budget, and a supportive network of partners throughout the state. Her passion for building on these strengths is inspirational.

As Chair of the Search Committee, my endorsement of Sheri Fox stems from viewing her as a leader, intent on making equal justice a community value. Please welcome Sheri A. Fox as Executive Director of LAET.



The KBA Judicial Committee has compiled an inclement weather policy list for all of the courts in our area as a resource for members. The list is available at www.knoxbar.org.