Georgia Appleseed Awarded UGA School of Law Cousins Fellowship; Inaugural Young Professionals Council Project

The University Of Georgia School Of Law has awarded Georgia Appleseed its prestigious Cousins Public Interest Fellowship. This Fellowship will be the cornerstone of the new Young Professional Council’s signature Heir Property Project.

**Crystal Chastain Baker, Esq.** will serve as the Cousins Fellow for the two year duration of the Fellowship. The Fellowship will focus on the issue of “heir property.” The problem of heir property involves the passing of a home or other real property across multiple generations without a will. As title to a home becomes less and less clear (and more and more fractioned across heirs), the risk of being forced out of the home by a legal action becomes greater. Low-income rural African Americans across the South are disproportionately hurt by the heir property problem.

The Heir Property Project will be the signature project of the recently launched Georgia Appleseed **Young Professionals Council** (YPC). YPC engages younger professionals (39 and under) in the systemic social justice work of Georgia Appleseed. **Jason Carter** (Bondurant, Mixson & Elmore) is Chair of the YPC; the YPC Heir Property Project Chair is **Avril McKean Dieser** (Corporate Counsel, UCB Pharmaceuticals, Inc).

Crystal Baker is a graduate of the University Of Georgia School Of Law with considerable experience in real estate law. She will spend her first year of this two year Fellowship at the law school in Athens teaching and researching the heir property problem. In the second year, she will undertake the service component of the Fellowship and work to provide systemic solutions to the problems of heir property.

The Cousins Fellowship has three primary goals: to create durable programs of civil legal service; to develop opportunities for law students to assist in those services through clinical legal education; and to help experienced practitioners pursue public interest practice and clinical law teaching.

Under the Fellowship, Ms. Baker will work with law students to deliver civil legal services to Georgians impacted by heir property issues. YPC members will work with Ms. Baker in developing the project, offer substantive law expertise and mentoring to students, facilitate the creation of a statewide collaborative among interested entities and oversee planning for the post-fellowship phase of the project.

To learn more about the Young Professionals Council, contact Georgia Appleseed at info@gaappleseed.org or 404-815-6750.

Georgia Appleseed Center for Law and Justice is an independent affiliate of the national Appleseed network of nonpartisan, nonprofit, public interest law centers.

Georgia Appleseed leverages the pro bono work of lawyers and other professionals to produce systemic solutions to difficult social justice problems.

**Mission of Georgia Appleseed**

To listen to the unheard voices of the poor, the children, the marginalized; to uncover and end the injustices that we would not endure ourselves; to win the battles for our constituency in the courts of public opinion or in the halls of justice that no one else is willing or able to fight.

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From Our Executive Director

Georgia Appleseed embraces the idea that lawyers committed to seeking justice can do “real pro bono work” using a variety of different legal skills beyond those honed in the courtroom. Georgia Appleseed also depends on the volunteer spirit of other professionals whose skills complement those of the pro bono attorneys.

Together volunteers work on projects to build the case for a more just Georgia, pursuing systemic solutions that impact great numbers of people. Typically, projects showcase Georgia Appleseed’s three core competencies, which are to research, to disseminate and to effect change.

With its volunteers, Georgia Appleseed engages in qualitative research to understand the foundation of a particularly difficult social justice problem. Once that research is complete, Georgia Appleseed shares what it has learned by disseminating its findings and recommendations to the public. The most powerful work, however, happens when Georgia Appleseed and its volunteers effect systemic change through legal advocacy, community engagement and policy expertise.

In this issue, you will see our core competencies in action, from our work on behalf of improved justice for children, to helping parents become more informed and engaged advocates for their children and schools, to helping new immigrants realize economic security while improving public safety for their communities.

In our new video, volunteer Rob Rhodes describes Georgia Appleseed initiatives as a mosaic to promote a more level playing field for all Georgians, each project interconnected in its impact.

We invite you to become part of the mosaic. Visit www.GaAppleseed.org for the full view. Join us as a supporter and a volunteer and a catalyst for change.

– Sharon Hill

Photo courtesy of the State Bar of Georgia

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www.GaAppleseed.org
Georgia Appleseed works collaboratively to bring Latino immigrants into America’s mainstream financial system, in order to promote public safety and enhance economic security.

“One More Step Toward Financial Security”

Following the home invasion murders of six Latino immigrants in Tift and Colquitt Counties in 2005, Georgia Appleseed partnered with the UGA Extension Service and the Archway Partnership to respond to the community’s express need to enhance public safety through financial literacy.

With seed funding from Georgia Appleseed, Andrea Scarrow has been on the job as the UGA Extension Service Financial Literacy Agent since July, 2007. Andrea, who is bilingual, started at the grass roots level, holding focus groups to build trust and identify needs within the immigrant community. Andrea learned that many elementary school parents wanted to learn English, so she combined English language classes with finance classes.

As Andrea explains, “We’ve seen parents, moms mostly, come and learn about banking, learn how to write checks…how to open a bank account…how to plan a family budget, which are all new concepts for the Latino immigrant population.”

“Colquitt County parents learn how to write checks and keep a check register in their ‘Real Life English’ class.

“At the end of the day, when I’ve given a class and someone has just applied for a loan and received the keys to their first home, there no better feeling than to know that I’ve helped this family just take one more step toward financial security. I get a lot of satisfaction from this project because it is making a difference in individual lives and potentially in the entire community, especially when it comes to public safety.”

“If you speak with our chief of police in both Tift and Colquitt, they would say that they have seen a decrease in crime against Hispanics. This is a public safety issue and we want a safe environment for everyone in our community.”

“I don’t know any other place in Georgia where this [program] is happening. It could serve as a model statewide. The partnership between Georgia Appleseed and UGA has definitely been a great one.”

Immigrant Policy

On the Air: Radio Call-In Show Message Training

When the topic is immigration reform, Georgia radio call-in shows frequently skew towards divisive and demeaning rhetoric, leaving little chance for reasoned debate on the issue of immigrant inclusion. Supporters of Georgia’s immigrant communities face many challenges in the radio call-in show venue.

On April 30th, Georgia Appleseed facilitated a radio call-in message training session funded by the Carnegie Corporation. The Mainstream Media Project, a non-profit public education and communications firm, trained law enforcement, banking, and community service providers from across Georgia on how to deliver the many positive messages of immigrant inclusion.

The trainings were simulated radio shows where each trainee learned to interact with different types of interviewers (the “informed” host, “supportive” host, “combative”, and “uninformed”). Participants learned tips for a successful interview: be concise, stay on topic, maintain a positive tone, and avoid long pauses.

Immigrant Policy Backgrounders

Georgia Appleseed prepared timely background briefings to summarize current research on issues before Georgia’s General Assembly.

- Backgrounder: Public Safety, Economic Security and Remittances – Taxing international money remittance services will only serve to discourage the use of a powerful economic development tool.
- Backgrounder: Public Safety and Bilingual Pay – Offers data regarding Georgia and other states’ law enforcement use of pay incentives to hire and retain bilingual officers.

Download the Backgrounder at www.GaAppleseed.org/banking


Banking in a Global Market offers a step-by-step approach to establishing a remittance program that is beneficial to both consumers and the financial institutions serving them. The report describes several effective remittance programs, drawing on the experiences of financial institutions in Georgia and throughout the U.S.

Download the Guide at www.GaAppleseed.org/publications
Celebrating the Art of Justice 2008

On May 20th, Troutman Sanders LLP graciously hosted Georgia Appleseed’s 2nd Art of Justice, a series of fine art exhibits supporting the law center’s work. Troutman Sanders’ Bob Webb and Governor Carl Sanders offered a warm welcome; Sharon Hill shared highlights of the juvenile justice pro bono project, and Georgia Appleseed Board Chair Steve Clay introduced its new video. Guests then toured Troutman Sanders’ outstanding art collection, enjoyed an artful buffet and bid on donated artwork in the silent auction.

Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia’s Lisa Thrower and Annette Cone-Skelton (curator of the Troutman Sanders art collection) strike a pose with Sharon Hill, Bob Webb, Wayne Vason (Troutman Sanders Art Committee Chair) and Mollie Rosefsky (Troutman Sanders Hospitality Services Manager)

Following greetings from Troutman Sanders’ CEO and Managing Partner Bob Webb and Governor Carl Sanders, GA Appleseed Board Chair Steve Clay (Kilpatrick Stockton) introduces the new video (L-R)

Georgia Appleseed Board Members Jason Carter (YPC Chair), Beth Tanis and Dr. Portia Shields enjoy the evening with Bill Shields and Maya Simmons

Debbie Segal (Kilpatrick Stockton) and her husband, Randy Cadenhead (Cox Communications Senior Counsel), celebrate the art of justice

Mary An Merchant (Troutman Sanders) made the winning bid on the REM signed artwork

David Mobley (Young Professionals Council) and Governor Carl Sanders chat with Georgia Appleseed Board Member Chuck Clay
Georgia Appleseed Video Debuts

A highlight of the Art of Justice was the debut of Georgia Appleseed’s exciting new eight minute video showcasing the work of its volunteers, partners and staff. See it online at www.GaAppleseed.org or request a copy.

Volunteers starring along with professional staff are Georgia Appleseed Board Chair Steve Clay (Kilpatrick Stockton), and Education Advisory Council members Terence Dicks (Georgia Center for Children and Education) and Rob Rhodes (Holland & Knight).

Special kudos is extended to Larry Gold (Carlton Fields) for underwriting the video.

Be a catalyst to effect change.
Be a core supporter of Georgia Appleseed.

Core Competencies of Georgia Appleseed:

Core Competencies of Georgia Appleseed Supporters:
Research: Learn about us.
Disseminate: Tell your colleagues, friends, and charitable advisor.
Effect Change: Support Georgia Appleseed with an unrestricted gift.

Be a core supporter!

Our projects are made possible primarily through generous restricted grant funding. But your tax-deductible contribution will provide the operating resources we need to sustain our organization throughout the year and continue our work as a catalyst for change in Georgia.

Please take the time to donate to Georgia Appleseed today.
Log on to www.GaAppleseed.org to donate safely and securely online. Or send your check to Georgia Appleseed, 1100 Peachtree Street, Suite 2800, Atlanta, Georgia 30309.

Thank you!

www.GaAppleseed.org

Invite us to lunch!
You get the sandwiches; we’ll bring the apple pie!

Seeking an engaging, interactive program for your office and colleagues? Want to earn a Professionalism CLE hour?
Schedule a 'lunch & learn' with Georgia Appleseed.

We’ll bring your colleagues up to date on our innovative projects and ways to get more involved in pro bono work with statewide impact.

Contact Theresa Brower to get Georgia Appleseed on your calendar (tbrower@gaappleseed.org or 404-815-6266)
The national Appleseed report “It Takes a Parent: Transforming Education in the Wake of the No Child Left Behind Act” found that the legislation’s parental involvement provisions miss the mark. Extensive data on school and student performance intended to empower parents and help them make informed decisions for their student is often found to be overwhelming and confusing. Many parents simply don’t know what to do with it.

**Parental Involvement Workshops**

To transform the NCLB testing data from a confusing set of numbers into a powerful tool for change in the hands of parents and educators, Georgia Appleseed created an innovative workshop that explains parents’ rights and responsibilities under NCLB and helps them to interpret the data they receive.

Cathy Henson, noted Georgia education leader and Chair of the Georgia Appleseed Education Advisory Council, and Theresa Brower, Georgia Appleseed Parent Involvement Project Manager, designed the instructional workshop and took it on the road to school districts around Georgia.

Over 800 parents, teachers and graduation coaches attended one of the 17 workshops.

**Next Up: A Parent Involvement Instructional Video**

To share this information with a much broader audience, Georgia Appleseed has begun work with Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB) to create a sixty-minute program based on the workshop content. In addition to being aired on GPB, the program will be accessible via www.GaAppleseed.org

The video will become the cornerstone of presentations statewide in collaboration with our education partners. An exciting addition for parents will be a downloadable tool to help them track important information and NCLB data relevant to their child’s education.

**Professional Instruction Modules**

Building a foundation for professionals that will help increase their skills in engaging parents using NCLB data is another important step to systemic impact. Georgia Appleseed has collaborated with Georgia’s Leadership Institute for School Improvement to develop curricula modules for school administrators and lead teachers.

The modules are posted on the GLISI website (www.galeaders.org) for download by districts, RESA, school leaders and university faculty. GLISI Senior Executive Director Deb Page reports “The modules are on their way through cyberspace across Georgia… They will benefit lots of [school] leaders, and in turn, parents and students.”

In their own words...

**feedback from workshop participants**

The workshop was very informative and professional. It would be very helpful if more parents and grandparents got could attend this workshop or receive the information that was shared.

I have had a lot of questions concerning “No Child Left Behind Act” and all of them were answered by the speaker today. Thank you!

Thank you very much for coming to Valdosta. I am and I am glad I was able to join in this workshop and found an increased amount of knowledge. Thank you!
Georgia’s juvenile code impacts children from birth until age 18. It has been amended so many times since its release in 1971 that those who use it every day describe it as “difficult to use, lacking in clarity, and outdated.” In 2005, the Georgia General Assembly passed a resolution calling for its complete overhaul.

Georgia Appleseed Executive Director Sharon Hill, still known by many as “Judge Hill,” spent more than eight years on the bench of the busiest juvenile court in Georgia. She has experienced firsthand the problems found in the present juvenile code.

Georgia Appleseed and JUSTGeorgia

Under Sharon Hill’s guidance, and with the expert project management of Leslie Gresham, Esq., Georgia Appleseed is working with its partners to make a revised juvenile code a reality through its leadership role in JUSTGeorgia.

Established in 2006 with funding from the Sapelo Foundation, JUSTGeorgia is a statewide coalition co-founded by Georgia Appleseed, Voices for Georgia’s Children and the Barton Child Law and Policy Clinic of Emory University School of Law. The JUSTGeorgia project has two primary goals:

• To advocate for passage of a new Juvenile Code reflecting scientific findings and best practices in child development; and

• To work to identify and change policies in Georgia’s social services system to prevent detention, sustain healthy behaviors and promote safer communities.

Progress Report

Sharon Hill describes activity in 2008. “This year will be one of gathering the massive amounts of input, marshalling the facts and opinions, publishing the common wisdom and pertinent questions of the people around the state impacted by the current juvenile code, crafting with our partners a draft legislative package, and working with legislators on the best approach to secure passage. Then we will share with the stakeholders how their input is being used to make a structural, foundational change for the benefit of all Georgians.”

JUSTGeorgia 2008 Check List

☑ In March, 2008, the Young Lawyer’s Division of the State Bar of Georgia released a proposed model juvenile code which was four years in the making. It is based on a national review of best practices and scientific findings in child development. View it at www.justga.org

☑ Grow the JUSTGeorgia coalition throughout Georgia (ongoing)

☑ Georgia Appleseed methodically vets input on the current juvenile justice system gathered by its pro bono volunteers from stakeholders across the state.

☑ In Fall 2008, Georgia Appleseed will release ten judicial district reports and a comprehensive summary report of recommendations to inform the legislative package.

☑ The proposed model juvenile code + statewide stakeholder input + compromise + political reality = a comprehensive juvenile code legislative package to be introduced in the 2009 Georgia General Assembly.

☑ JUSTGeorgia coalition members, policy makers and other vested supporters statewide advocate for adoption of a new Georgia Juvenile Code.

JUSTGeorgia: Georgia Appleseed’s Three Core Competencies at Work

Research (inputs)

• Georgia Appleseed recruited thirteen lead law firms to conduct one-on-one and small group stakeholder interviews statewide on improvements to Georgia’s current juvenile code and to compile reports of the findings;

• Over 260 lawyers and other legal professionals participated as pro bono volunteers;

• More than 23 stakeholder groups were interviewed in each of Georgia’s 10 judicial districts, including juvenile court judges, public defenders, prosecutors, child advocates, parents, children, educators, child welfare experts and more;

• A public town hall meeting was held in each judicial district, hosted by Georgia Appleseed and facilitated by UGA’s Fanning Institute.

Dissemination (outputs)

• Ten Judicial District Reports based on the stakeholder input are nearing completion.

• A Statewide Summary Report will be released in Fall 2008.

Effect Change

• Stakeholder input informs JUSTGeorgia in drafting proposed legislation.

• Georgia Appleseed volunteers join other JUSTGeorgia supporters to advocate for an improved Juvenile Code for Georgia.
Meet Leslie Gresham
Georgia Appleseed JUSTGeorgia Project Manager

Leslie M. Gresham, Esq., is an Atlanta native putting justice first for Georgia’s children and families.

Following her graduation from Howard University School of Law in 1995, she has practiced family, domestic and juvenile law. Leslie’s devotion to serving the needs of children is evident in every step of her career.

Leslie sat as part-time Associate Judge for Clayton County Magistrate Court, served as Judge/Pro Tempore in Clayton County Juvenile Court and as a child advocate attorney in Fulton County Juvenile Court. She is frequently appointed by Superior Court Judges as Guardian ad Litem (GAL) in custody proceedings and currently represents DFCS as a Special Assistant Attorney General (SAAG).

As Georgia Appleseed JUSTGeorgia Project Manager, Leslie assumed a critical role in research and dissemination. She works closely with the lead law firms and pro bono volunteers in the completion of interviews and reports; she organized the ten town hall meetings and is a frequent community speaker about JUSTGeorgia.

How does Leslie feel about this latest role? “Working on this project feels great because it is bringing more attention to juvenile court. Many think these are just ‘kiddy’ courts and not that important. But they are very important. A lot of defendants in ‘big’ court would not be there if there were better juvenile courts.”

“Our pro bono volunteers have been impacted, too. Many of them were not aware of what went on in juvenile court; they had no interaction with the juvenile code. This project has changed that. Others knew about juvenile court but this project drove it home. In fact, one volunteer was just sworn in as an Associate Judge in the Juvenile Court.”

The Cream of the Crop

Thank you to each of the thirteen lead law firms and their volunteer professionals for investing time and expertise on behalf of justice for Georgia’s children and families.

You are the apple of our eye!
Alston & Bird
Arnall Golden & Gregory
DLA Piper
Hunton & Williams
Jones Day
Kilpatrick Stockton
King & Spalding
McKenna Long & Aldridge
Morris Manning & Martin
Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough
Smith Gambrell & Russell
Sutherland Asbill & Brennan
Troutman Sanders

Georgia Appleseed Pro Bono Hours Grow

Through June, 2008, Georgia Appleseed pro bono attorneys and other professionals have committed over 6,500 hours to the JUSTGeorgia project.

Number of stakeholder interviews: 300+
Number of volunteers: 260

Join the JUSTGeorgia Coalition. Log onto www.JUSTGa.org

www.GaAppleseed.org