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## Free civil legal assistance to be offered Friday at Rural Justice Day at Beebe City Hall

By Greg Geary newsroom1@thedailycitizen.com

Jul 19, 2021

The Center for Arkansas Legal Services started a new free event this summer that will be held in Beebe on Friday, according to Communications Specialist Amber Quaid.

Anyone facing civil legal issues like divorce, eviction and power of attorney for a family member can get help from the nonprofit law firm at the Rural Justice Day being held from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at Beebe City Hall, 321 N. Elm St., Quaid said. She said it is open to anyone, not just residents of White County. Walk-ins are welcome but she strongly encourages calling the helpline at (501) 376-3423 to schedule an appointment and get a spot saved.

Quaid said the Center for Arkansas Legal Services is holding the “Rural Justice Days in the smaller communities over the whole summer, May, June, July and August.”



“We just want to get out to these communities that are underserved, but are spread apart,” she said. “We still wanted to give them the opportunity to know we are here, we offer these services for free, so we kind of host a whole-day event. We reach out. We find a community that is interested. We find a place that is interested in hosting it and then we just advertise and we have an outreach member who goes to talk individually to every community member she can find, just to let people know we are here, we are coming to your community, you can come talk to us, one on one.”

All of the staff attorneys from the Center for Arkansas Legal Services will be in Beebe for the event, Quaid said.

“For the Rural Justice Days, we focus a lot on divorces, family law, estate planning,” she said. “A lot of people have trouble getting the titles to their homes. With the flooding going on, there is so much available to people with the FEMA money but they just don’t even realize that they have to have the title of their home first.

“Powers of attorneys with COVID has been huge, especially with medical directives. You want in writing somebody to say, ‘Hey, you can make these medical decisions for me.’ We are really big on criminal record sealing on non-criminal, civil, legal issues. People can get a divorce eventually, of course there is a lot of paperwork that goes with the legal proceedings, but they can start the paperwork process and what is involved in it. A lot of people think you need to have the other person there to sign but that is not true. It is basically our legal team talking to people one on one, letting them know the ins and outs of any legal question that they have.”



Quaid said the drive to get to one of the legal offices may be an issue for some, so they want to “go to the people and be there for them.”

When asked how many they want to serve through this event, Quaid said “I always say hundreds. Realistically, that probably wouldn’t happen because of the timeframe that we have. We say 10 to 3 but we stay later. We try to help as many people as we can. If we can’t help you that day, we will get your name and number and call you back and start a process.”

The staff attorneys who go to these events love being involved, Quaid said. “This is why they work for CALS. They love helping low-income individuals get the legal help they need. So many people have this idea that the situation that is happening to them is happening because they are poor, and that is not the case. It is a legal issue that we can help you with and help you get out of. It is not just because of the circumstances that you are in.”

Quaid advises getting to the event early because she said by 11 a.m. it usually gets really busy.

The hot topic issues now, according to Quaid, are evictions and scams, “debt collectors who are basically misinforming people. We are trying to get everyone there to talk about any civil issue you want to talk about.”

There are bilingual members on staff, she said, and one will be available in Beebe.



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## Center for Arkansas Legal Services

What: To offer free legal help for civil needs, such as divorce, evictions and power of attorney, at Rural Justice Day

When: July 23 from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Friday

Where: Beebe City Hall, 321 N. Elm St.

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