

LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE AND THE CUMBERLANDS

INFORMATION FOR RELEASE

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HOUSEPIAN TO HEAD LEGAL AID SOCIETY

NASHVILLE, Tenn. June 14, 2007 – The Legal Aid Society board of directors announced today that Gary Housepian, managing attorney for Disability Law and Advocacy Center of Tennessee, Inc., has been named executive director of Legal Aid Society.

Housepian succeeds Ashley Wiltshire, who has served as executive director since 1976 and is retiring at the end of this month, at which time Housepian will assume his new duties at Legal Aid Society.

“Gary has a distinguished career in public interest law and has shown a great passion for using his talents to help Tennessee’s most vulnerable families,” said Kathryn Edge, president of the board of directors and an attorney with Miller & Martin. “We are extremely excited about this new chapter in the life of Legal Aid Society. I am confident that Gary will work hand-in-hand with his new Legal Aid colleagues to build on the many successes the organization experienced under Ashley’s leadership.”

Since 2002, Housepian has worked with Disability Law and Advocacy Center of Tennessee, helping advocate for the rights of Tennesseans with disabilities to ensure they have an equal opportunity to be productive and respected members of our society. The organization assists persons with disabilities in areas such as community integration, special education, abuse and neglect, accessibility and discrimination in housing and employment.

Housepian said he became interested in public interest law early in his career. “After three years of law school, I realized I didn’t know much about the real world,” he said. “So I decided to become a VISTA volunteer attorney and spent a year working with migrant farm workers in Arizona. I was hooked. I knew I wanted to do public interest law.

“Coincidentally, that’s also the moment I realized I would have to learn to live on a low income,” he joked. “What drew me to Legal Aid Society was its reputation and the inspired leadership of Ashley Wiltshire. I spent about four years with Legal Aid in the Murfreesboro office, so I know the organization does a great job. I’m excited to be able

to return and put to good use the insights I've gained working with other public service legal organizations.”

After a year working with the Volunteers In Service to America (VISTA) program, Housepian joined Knoxville Legal Aid Society as a staff attorney in 1978. He then spent a year in the State Attorney General's office as an assistant attorney general before joining the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation as general counsel. From 1990-91, he served as general counsel for the Tennessee Department of Human Services, after which he worked in private practice for five years.

He became the managing attorney of the Murfreesboro office of Legal Aid Society in 1997 and staff attorney for the Tennessee Justice Center in 2001.

“I hope to help Legal Aid Society continue the growth it experienced under Ashley Wiltshire by building on the tremendous support Legal Aid receives from the community – not just funding but also volunteer service, such as the many hours donated by private attorneys through the Nashville Pro Bono Program,” he said.

Housepian holds a J.D. from the University of Detroit Law School and a B.A. in business administration from Houghton College in New York. He is a past chairman of the Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services and former member of the hearing committee of the Board of Professional Responsibility of The Supreme Court of Tennessee.

In 2005 he received the Arc of Tennessee Outstanding Community Leadership Award.

Founded in 1968, the Legal Aid Society is a private, not-for-profit organization governed by a local board of directors comprised of attorneys and members of the client population. Legal Aid Society provides free legal assistance in civil matters to people in 48 Middle Tennessee counties with a total eligible population of 382,000. It has offices in Nashville, Gallatin, Clarksville, Murfreesboro, Columbia, Tullahoma, Cookeville and Oak Ridge.

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