



June 27, 2020 (via email)

From Betsy Fox, President

Hope Woodhouse mentioned in a prior update that we were working on a project that would provide pro bono legal assistance to Indian River County (IRC) residents facing mortgage and rent challenges, due to the impact of COVID-19 on their employment.

Creation of HEART-- I am pleased to announce the launch of the HEART Program —Housing Emergency Advocacy Response Team — a collaboration between Florida Rural Legal Services (FRLS), the Indian River County Bar Association (IRCBA), and the John's Island Community Service League (JICSL).

Specifically, our Service League will fund, through your generosity, a new position within the FRLS, a Housing Attorney dedicated to working on IRC housing cases. The FRLS will provide essential infrastructure and expertise around intake and client qualification, and other support services. The IRCBA will help build a database of local attorneys willing to participate in this program on a pro bono basis.

Unprecedented Collaboration Among Agencies and

Community Partners-- There are a number of IRC agencies that have been providing rental relief to County residents, but have not had access to much-needed legal assistance. These IRC agencies have been brought in as a part of this effort, and are encouraged to refer clients needing rental/mortgage assistance to the HEART Program. They include: Economic Opportunities Council, IRC Human Services, 211, Treasure Coast Homeless Services Council, United Against Poverty, United Way, and Veteran's Council.

To maximize local access to these housing services, the following community partners are generously donating office space: City of Fellsmere Administration Building, Indian River County Courthouse, TCCH-Gifford Health Center, and United Against Poverty in downtown Vero Beach.

Leadership-- These are challenging times, and hence call for creative, collaborative and strategic solutions. Your Service League (and especially Hope, Ellen Kendall and Michelle Julian) has worked tirelessly to bring all of these partners together with the goal of minimizing evictions and foreclosures among our most vulnerable citizens. We believe this collaboration will guarantee the highest rate of success, and we look forward to reporting back to you on the results.

To read more about this, please click on the link to 32963's coverage

Stay Safe.

Betsy

