



SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA LEGAL AID SOCIETY, INC.

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Seeking ONE Justice for ALL Virginians Since 1972

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA LEGAL AID SOCIETY RECEIVES HONORABLE MENTION AWARD FOR “SILENCE ISN’T GOLDEN” CAMPAIGN

MARION, Va. – Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society, Inc. (SVLAS) received recognition through the Commonwealth Council on Aging (CCOA) on March 14th stating, “The Best Practices Awards Committee determined that the “SILENCE ISN’T GOLDEN” (SIG) program deserved an Honorable Mention Award.” The Best Practices Awards Program is sponsored by the Commonwealth Council on Aging, a Council composed of 24 members who are in part appointed by the Governor and legislators to represent all geographic areas of Virginia. The Council helps the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) and state government meet the needs of older Virginians in the most efficient and effective manner. The SIG Campaign is public education and awareness regarding elder abuse, and how you can help combat elder abuse, with focus on neglect, financial exploitation, and mental and physical harm to seniors.

The Southwest Virginia Elder Justice Task Force (SVEJTF), previously chaired by Daveena Sexton with SVLAS, worked to help initiate the “SILENCE ISN’T GOLDEN” campaign in the southwest region of Virginia, originally in 2021. She acquired permission from Paul Greenwood, San Diego County, and Marcia Buchalter and Buchalter Consulting, who developed the concept and original materials. She then obtained funding to support the initiative. The funding allowed the SIG program to develop awareness throughout the region with radio, billboard, Facebook, transit bus, and printed materials’ advertising. Members of the SVEJTF, consisting of the Elder Justice Coalition of the New River Valley, Washington County/City of Bristol CCRT Elder Abuse Subcommittee, and the Wise County Senior Abuse Task Force while other agencies have assisted with placement of materials to key agencies in Southwest Virginia. Furthermore, Janet Brennend with the New River Valley Area on Aging, developed a PowerPoint presentation to support the SIG Campaign, which is taught throughout the region to agencies, senior centers, and other organizations that work closely with seniors. Also, Ms. Brennend initially took the lead in developing the application to CCOA for “The Best Practices Awards Program.” The original planning group for the SIG Campaign members were Sarah Angles, Human Resources Director for SVLAS; Debbie Marshall, Intake Paralegal for SVLAS; Robin

Burton, Intake Paralegal for SVLAS; Jessica Roberts, Family Services Supervisor for Wise County Dept. of Social Services; Janet Brennend, Long-Term Care Ombudsman/Elder Abuse Prevention Specialist for NRV Area on Aging; and Daveena Sexton, previous Director of Advancement for SVLAS and Chair of SVEJTF.

Today, the SVEJTF, chaired by Gary Cody with SVLAS, and our partners continue the efforts to protect seniors through the SIG Campaign. Members are strong within the SVEJTF committee and assist with distribution of materials and presenting the SIG PowerPoint to agencies and virtual webinars across southwestern region of Virginia. Please contact Gary Cody, gcody@svlas.org, 276-783-8300, ext. 2011 or Janet Brennend, ombudsman@nrva.org, if you or your agency would like to schedule a SIG Presentation or to join our Task Force as an agency member (*See photo of a recent visit to Bland County Department of Social Services to distribute SIG materials to staff*).

Through continuance efforts of offering education and awareness concerning elder abuse, please make sure to sign up for our annual virtual conference this year – Elder Abuse: Understanding Guardianships, slated for June 10, 2022. More information can be found on our website in the upcoming weeks, www.svlas.org.

If you need legal assistance, call Legal Aid to apply for services at 1-888-201-2772. The call is free, and intake staff are available to take your call Monday through Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.; 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. and Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. You can also apply online 24 hours a day at www.svlas.org.

To learn more, visit Legal Aid's website at www.svlas.org.

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