

Catheryn Koss, Legal Aid Attorney of the Month

By Teresa Rendon

Catheryn's volunteer experiences at the Senior Law Project of Legal Aid of Oklahoma, Inc. (LASO) while she was an OCU law student, sparked an interest in senior law for her and inspired her to found her own non-profit organization, Senior Law Resource Center, Inc.

"I see a growing need for elder law attorneys with our growing population of aging baby boomers." On her own initia-

tive, Catheryn contacted the Borchard Foundation Center on Law & Aging which awarded her a fellowship, one of only two awarded this year, to pursue her interest in senior law at Legal Aid. One day a week, Catheryn devotes her time to LASO where she represents clients in matters regarding incapacity planning, advanced directives, durable powers of attorney, wills, and adult guardianships, and some probates in certain situations. She also lends an able hand by

calling back seniors who have had consumer debt problems.

She is cum laude graduate of Smith College with a BA in anthropology and 2005 graduate of OCU School of Law where numerous honors were bestowed upon her such as the Oklahoma Bar Association's Outstanding OCU Graduate and the Outstanding Performance Award.

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Her professional resume is replete with non-profit, public interest experience including work with Heifer Project International, San Francisco Food Bank, Northcoast Mentor Program and World Neighbors. Catheryn still has free time to devote to community and professional activities. She currently serves as a board member for Oklahoma Court-Appointed Advocates for Vulnerable Adults; a member of Areawide Aging Agency Advisory Committee; and president of the Plaza District Association Board. In recognition of her many accomplishments in both the civic and professional arenas, Catheryn received yet another honor—OKC Business Forty Under 40 for the Year 2007.

Working at Legal Aid is a great trade of for this devoted volunteer who claims she receives as much from her work as she gives. This new lawyer works side by side with experienced Legal Aid attorneys who

provide her with guidance and mentoring. Another benefit is the feedback she receives from her grateful clients.

“This is the one area in which you get hugged a lot after you have help people getting their estate planning in order. Then they don’t have to worry about being a burden to their children,” explains Koss. She recalls cases in which a caregiver has been able to get a durable power of attorney or a guardianship that has enabled him to make sure that his loved one will be taken care of financially and medically. “Lots of people say, ‘What a wonderful service this is that Legal Aid provides to seniors.’ Just about everybody who walks out of here seems very pleased about being able to take care of things. Many of fixed incomes would not be able to get these services. I also think seniors who are being pressured by creditors can be empowered to know that their income is protected and that they can’t lose their homes!”