

## FRIEND OF THE COURT OFFICERS

In July of 2016 the Kent County Friend of the Court welcomed two detectives from the Kent County Sheriff's Department to assist with the enforcement of child support orders. The goal of our detectives is to resolve bench warrants through the collection of child support, without arrest when possible. As a result, there has been an increase in collections of child support as well as an increase in participation in the child support system. The impact has been nothing short of positive.

One of the greatest challenges in the child support system is getting parents to participate in court hearings. Parties who resolve a warrant by posting a bond at jail or through our detectives are required to appear at a court hearing the week after arrest. Those who post bond at jail have a court appearance rate of 59% versus a court appearance rate of 87% by those who have had contact with our detectives.

In addition to an increase in court participation, individuals who resolve warrants through our detectives are more likely to be compliant after 60 days versus other enforcement methods, and are less likely to have enforcement action taken in the months following the bench warrant being dismissed.

So what should you do if one of our detectives tries to contact you? CALL THEM BACK!!! Remember, the goal is to resolve a bench warrant without an arrest. Once the bench warrant is resolved the Friend of the Court office can focus on future compliance, which benefits families and children involved with the child support system.

### VOLUME 13, ISSUE 2

#### In this issue:

Friend of the Court Officers	1
Summer Fun Activities for Kids	1
Legal Aid and The LAC	2

### SUMMER 2017

#### Friendly reminders:

Stretch your food budget by shopping local farmers markets with the [Double Up Food Bucks Program](#).

There is a public calculator available online. [Follow this link](#) & click "CALCULATE SUPPORT."

Did you know the MI Dept. of Education has a Summer Food Program for kids? Find out more [here](#).

## SUMMER FUN ACTIVITIES FOR KIDS

Summer is fast approaching which means the kids will need lots to do to keep them busy!

Get Outside! Visit [local parks](#). Hit the trails. Pack a picnic and go fishing. Enjoy swimming at a lake or local pool. Introduce your little one(s) to animals at a zoo, farm, or nature center.

Explore! Spend a day at one of the many museums in the area. Pick fruit from a field or go to a local farmer's market. Visit the library for story time, sign up for summer reading, or to check out books. Soak in the sunshine and enjoy a festival or watch a ball game.

Look for other ideas at: <https://grkids.com/>





## KENT COUNTY FRIEND OF THE COURT

*Our mission:  
To serve the Court  
and the families of  
Kent County to  
ensure children are  
supported, both  
financially and  
emotionally.*

82 Ionia NW, Ste. 200  
PO Box 351  
Grand Rapids, MI  
49501-0351

E-mail us at:

[foc.mail@kentcountymi.gov](mailto:foc.mail@kentcountymi.gov)

Visit Kent County's  
[website](#) for employment  
opportunities with  
Kent County and the FOC.

## LEGAL AID and The LAC

Many of our clients use Legal Aid of Western Michigan (LAWM) or the Legal Assistance Center (LAC), but often get the two agencies confused. Our office reached out to these agencies and asked them to compose a letter about the services they offer the community. Here are their responses:



Legal Aid of Western Michigan (LAWM) is a nonprofit law firm providing free legal advice and representation to low income individuals in civil legal issues such as:

- Evictions
- Debt collections
- Denials of public benefits (including SSI)
- Public school expulsions
- Criminal record expungements
- Tax controversies with the IRS
- Divorce for survivors of domestic violence
- Defense of custody for custodial parents

LAWM does not handle criminal cases. A more complete list of LAWM's services is available on LAWM's website – [www.lawestmi.org](http://www.lawestmi.org). LAWM is only able to represent low-income individuals. The website also provides information about LAWM's income and asset limits.

There are two ways to apply for the help of a LAWM attorney in Kent County. Call the office at 616-774-0672. The receptionist will ask you questions to make sure you are eligible for LAWM services. If you are, you will be given an appointment to meet with a LAWM attorney or paralegal.

Apply online using the Online Intake available [www.lawestmi.org](http://www.lawestmi.org). Click on "I Need Help" and then select Online Intake.

LAWM is currently located at 89 Ionia NW, but the office is moving on May 31, 2017. LAWM's new address will be 25 South Division, Grand Rapids, MI 49503.



Facing legal problems alone? The Legal Assistance Center can help. The LAC is a legal self-help center serving the many people in our community trying to solve legal problems or use the courts without an attorney.

The Legal Assistance Center is located on the 5<sup>th</sup> Floor of the Kent County Courthouse at 180 Ottawa Avenue NW in downtown Grand Rapids. The LAC is open Tuesday to Friday from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. Anyone can walk into the center to ask for help. No appointment is needed. Everyone is welcome. There are no income or other requirements. Help is also available by phone at 616-632-6000, but you will have to leave a message and wait for a call back.

Most requests for help from the Legal Assistance Center concern family issues – divorce, custody, paternity, parenting time, and child support. Help is also available with housing issues -- eviction, security deposits, consumer collection issues – garnishment, payment plans, and simple probate – simple estates, guardianships, conservatorships.

The Legal Assistance Center staff and volunteers are helping people to help themselves so they do not give legal advice or provide representation. They can help everyone understand how the court works and how to use the courts when they need to and help find alternatives to using the court. They can help to find the right resources and offer guidance about how to complete forms.

Help at the Legal Assistance Center is free. There are some modest costs for case packets and copies. Many forms, resources, and brochures are available for free. The LAC is a nonprofit that raises the money needed to provide this service. Copies and packet costs help keep the LAC open.

In photo: Clients being helped by the LAC.