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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **East Carroll Parish Legal Help Access Point Opens in Lake Providence Library**

The Louisiana Access to Justice Commission, through the Justice For All Project, held a Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony on Aug. 4, 2022, for the launch of its first Legal Help Access Point inside the East Carroll Parish Library in Lake Providence, La. More than 30 local leaders attended the ceremony, including representatives from Congresswoman Julia Letlow’s Office, Acadiana Legal Service Corporation, Community Action Agencies, the East Carroll School Board, the Providence Journal, Delta Interfaith, judges and court staff from the 6th Judicial District Court, and many others.

The ceremony was led by Louisiana State Bar Association 2020-21 President Alainna R. Mire, who explained that this project was developed in response to findings identifying parts of the state where residents struggle to access legal help. East Carroll Parish residents, for example, had to drive more than an hour to access civil legal services at civil legal aid offices, self-help centers, and law libraries. The findings also showed that people experiencing civil legal problems, like divorce or applying for unemployment, struggle to get the basic information and services they need to resolve their issues. To review the full findings report, go to: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/45fb46ed32854ab2b88a7e459f022068>.

The Legal Help Access Point, a private booth located inside the library, provides community members with a continuum of options for legal help. Using the Access Point, community members can access self-help resources and automated court forms; find out if they qualify for free legal aid; get customized legal help and referrals through the Louisiana Bar Foundation and Lagniappe Law Lab’s Civil Legal Navigator; meet virtually with an attorney in a confidential enclosed space; and attend a virtual hearing with participating courts via an online court program.

The library was chosen as the inaugural location because, for years, librarians have ensured that the public has access to information and resources. “Local libraries and their staff are often familiar, reliable, and trusted sources of information in their communities,” Mire explained.

“When people have legal issues but do not know where to go for help, they often start at a library.”

The Legal Help Access Point provides the community with a place to go for help navigating their legal problems and, at the very least, a starting point for help. “With this resource, our patrons will have access they’ve never had before to the legal system,” said Library Director Krishanda Harrison Sanders. “This Access Point makes finding legal help and understanding Louisiana’s legal system easier than ever before.”

The Legal Help Access Point in Lake Providence is located inside the East Carroll Parish Library and is accessible Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday from 8 a.m. to noon.

Additional Legal Help Access Points will be launched at a future date in Concordia Parish libraries and the LaSalle Community Action Agency office in Catahoula Parish.

The Louisiana Access to Justice Commission, Lagniappe Law Lab and the Louisiana Bar Foundation and its collaborative partners hope to continue to leverage technology to address access to justice issues in Louisiana and to scale this model by building additional access points in civil legal deserts throughout the state. To learn more, go to [www.lsba.org/ATJ](http://www.lsba.org/ATJ).

*Photos are available at:*

*<https://www.lsba.org/ATJ/NewsArticle.aspx?Article=2f0e2f0f-5d36-4b07-b0ea-8184c69df393>.*

*The Louisiana State Bar Association assists its more than 22,000 members in the practice of law. The statewide association, as part of its multi-faceted mission, promotes and maintains access to justice initiatives for the state’s residents, assists the Louisiana Supreme Court in its regulation of the practice of law, upholds the honor of the courts and the profession, and supports programs that increase public understanding of and respect for the law.*