

# Appleseed This Week

eNewsletter - May 14, 2009



A non-profit network of 16 public interest justice centers in the U.S. and Mexico, Appleseed is dedicated to building a society where opportunities are genuine, access to the law is universal and equal, and government advances the public interest.

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**June 11, 2009**

Join Appleseed for

## Georgia Appleseed Tackles Heir Property

*Joins AL and LA Centers in Protecting Homeowners*

As part of its ongoing Heir Property Project, Georgia Appleseed recently hosted a daylong workshop in Liberty County, GA, a rural county along the coast, to educate landowners on how to secure - and protect - clear title to inherited property.

"An end to poverty begins with property rights," explained Sharon Hill, Executive Director of Georgia Appleseed. "This phrase came to my attention when reading about the eradication of global poverty, but it seemed to describe perfectly our motivation in bringing the Heir Property Project to Georgia."

Representing a signature program area for Appleseed Centers in [Alabama](#) and [Louisiana](#) as well, heir property involves the passing of a home or land across multiple generations outside of the official probate process. As title to such property becomes less clear and more fractioned among heirs, the risk of eviction through legal action increases. In addition, lack of clear title prevents access to vital wealth-generating tools commonly associated with land ownership.

The Liberty County workshop, co-sponsored by DLA Piper and GreenLaw, addressed a number of crucial issues related to heir property, including: laws of descent and distribution, disadvantages of heir property, partition and tax sales, and how to protect one's land. Attendees received an [educational brochure](#) produced by the Young Professionals Council of Georgia Appleseed. The event also included a seminar on estate planning, as the lack of a will complicates ownership when property is conveyed intestate.

Overall, the project demonstrated the proficiency of the Appleseed Network in replicating vital advocacy and programming in a number of regions and communities. Problems

its annual event in  
New York City!

## *Engaging a Network for Change*

Click on the link above for  
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and program!

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relating to heir property were first exposed in the wake Hurricane Katrina, when families along the Gulf Coast were unable to prove home ownership and therefore could not claim essential rebuilding funds.

Unlike Alabama and Louisiana, however, Georgia's heir property issues stem not from storm devastation, but from strong demand for coastal real estate and land sought for development. Without clear title, heir property owners risk losing their homes through legal action on the part of, for example, developers or the government.

Georgia Appleseed's Heir Property Project is overseen by the University of Georgia's Cousins Public Interest Fellow, Crystal Baker, who has considerable experience in real estate law.

According to Baker, Georgia Appleseed will replicate the Liberty County workshop and other educational programming, modeled on the comprehensive work of the Alabama Center, in regions throughout the state. Meanwhile, law students at UGA will continue to research the extent of the problem.

For more information on heir property and other projects, visit [Georgia Appleseed's website](#) or contact Crystal Baker at [ccbaker@uga.edu](mailto:ccbaker@uga.edu).