

Appleseed This Week

Appleseed Spotlight: Malcolm A. Meyer

August 8, 2008 - Malcolm A. Meyer, a Louisiana Appleseed volunteer and partner at Adams and Reese in New Orleans, has written the book on Louisiana property law. His book, *Meyer's Manual on Louisiana Real Estate*, is the acknowledged treatise on Louisiana real estate law. Considered by many to be a national expert on this subject, last year Meyer joined forces with Louisiana Appleseed to combat the problem of "heir property," or property without a clear title, personally contributing 100 hours of pro bono work.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Appleseed recognized the potentially devastating effects that lack of title could have for some of the nation's poorest. "Katrina uncovered this problem in a strange way," Meyer said. "All these people had bad titles, but they never had to deal with them because they never borrowed money, they never had to get insurance, they never suffered a loss. All of a sudden, they've suffered a loss, and they need to prove their title, but they can't."

With more than 30 years of experience in real estate law, Meyer has led the movement in Louisiana to change the laws that govern how titles are passed on, making it easier and less expensive for people to prove succession. He estimates that about 20,000 people lack property title to their homes, and have never obtained the legal documentation because the process is expensive and never seemed to be necessary.

"I thought to myself, 'There are so many simple steps we could take, and if we could reduce the cost of curing those titles by 50 percent -- which is not a big goal -- we could help 15,000 in one fell swoop,'" Meyer said.

A major success in this effort occurred earlier this year when the Louisiana legislature voted to create an Appleseed-led committee to study heir property and develop recommendations for the state legislature. Meyer is confident that some measures will be passed next year.

"Malcolm's enthusiasm for this project and his support for Louisiana Appleseed are endless," said **Christy Kane**, ConocoPhillips/Adams and Reese Fellow and director of Louisiana Appleseed. "We are fortunate to have such a skilled and dedicated attorney working with us."

"Malcolm's vast knowledge of Louisiana property law, enthusiasm for the project and ability to bring together a productive team are key factors to the success of this project," added **Allison Berger Tiller**, Appleseed's Gulf Coast Recovery project director. "Louisiana Appleseed's campaign will bring about changes in the law that better the lives of poor and minority landowners throughout the state, and we will all have Malcolm and his team to thank."



Malcolm A. Meyer, Louisiana Appleseed volunteer and partner at Adams and Reese in New Orleans.

(Photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer, New Orleans CityBusiness)

Other links:

[Article in *New Orleans CityBusiness*](#) (August 2008)

[National Public Radio interview with Meyer](#) (April 2008)

[Meyer article in the *Louisiana Bar Journal*](#) (March 2008)

For more information on Appleseed, visit www.appleseednetwork.org. To support the work of Appleseed, donate [here](#).

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