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Ruth (above left) is a mom that is doing her best to raise her son while she battles mental illness. They were both homeless when they came to Pisgah Legal Services. After working with Pisgah Legal Caseworker Nitiki Kilgore (right), they now have a home, and Ruth has access to medical treatment.*



Did you know that more than 124,000 – or one-fifth – of the estimated 610,000 homeless people in the USA suffer from a severe mental illness?

Find out more at www.pisgahlegal.org.

The Way Back from Homelessness

AFTER YEARS OF BEING HOMELESS, AND A LIFETIME OF UNCERTAINTY, PISGAH LEGAL SERVICES HELPS A MOTHER AND HER SON FIND STABILITY AND SECURITY IN THEIR VERY OWN HOME.

Homelessness and mental health issues can go hand-in-hand, as Ruth* and her son know all too well.

She remembers sleeping in a train station one night and tying a rope from herself to her young son because she was terrified he might be taken from her while she slept.

Ruth's life has never been easy. She bears the emotional scars of sexual abuse and of a childhood growing up in a religious cult. She did her best to move forward by enlisting in the Army after high school.

But mental illness derailed Ruth's plans for a military career, and she was honorably discharged.

In the years that followed, Ruth worked at a variety of different jobs, but anxiety, PTSD and severe depression always overwhelmed her. One day she found herself homeless.

She considered suicide, but her love for her child made her persevere. "He's the only thing that kept me going. I would have no motivation for life except for him."

**Name changed*

(Continued on page 2)

Going Beyond Direct Services Legal Work

ADVOCACY EFFORTS AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS BUILD A STRONGER COMMUNITY FOR US ALL.

Dear Friends,

At Pisgah Legal Services we see the very difficult crises and tragedies that confront so many of our neighbors every day. The direct services we provide are essential and effective, yet we know that to make a significant, long-term difference we must work to solve problems at the community level and beyond – advocating for public policies, collaborating to improve services, and removing barriers – to help our neighbors move out of poverty. I want to share with you a few ways we are making a community impact.

You may have heard about our work with local partners on **Family Justice Centers (FJC) – one-stop locations for helping victims of abuse and violence – in Buncombe and Henderson counties**. The Henderson FJC, where we work with Safelight and other agencies, has been in operation since 2014. PLS is now working with Helpmate, Our VOICE, Buncombe County, law enforcement and others to open the Buncombe FJC this summer. The Center will improve our community's efforts to prevent abuse and to assist victims.



“The direct services we provide are essential... yet we must work to solve problems at the community level and beyond...”

For many years Pisgah Legal has advocated to increase and improve the supply of affordable housing. Last month – with strong advocacy from Pisgah Legal Services, Children First and others – Buncombe County Commissioners voted to pass **a new Community Oriented Development Ordinance to incentivize and facilitate the development of affordable housing in the County**. This action comes at a time when the rental housing vacancy rate is less than one percent, which means many low-income people find it almost impossible to find decent housing and are at a high risk of homelessness if they lose their housing.

With limited resources, we work hard to serve the people in greatest need, and we are pleased to have **a new office in Rutherfordton that is more accessible to local residents**. Rutherford County has vibrant communities and yet is the most economically-distressed county in our service area.

Thank you for joining in our efforts to create more justice and less poverty in our mountains. We could not do this important work without you!

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "James A. Barrett".

Jim Barrett, PLS Executive Director

(Continued from Cover...)

For two years Ruth and her son stayed at shelters and sometimes slept on the couches of friends or family.

“For a long time our daily life was just about survival. I thought, ‘Okay, he’s eaten today. He’s clean, he’s safe.’” Ruth enrolled her son in school and in Cub Scouts, but she kept their homelessness hidden. “I had to pretend that everything was fine. That was hard.”

When Pisgah Legal Services Caseworker Nitiki Kilgore met her, Ruth was sleeping in her car, and her son was staying overnight with family members.

Nitiki helped Ruth get the professional care she needed, then guided her through applying for social security and disability benefits. Ruth grew up in a religious cult that rejected modern medicine, so proving her disability was a challenge given she had no documented medical history. But Pisgah Legal Services prevailed.

Nitiki also helped Ruth connect with Homeward Bound, a nonprofit that placed the family in a home of their own.

Today Ruth is focusing on getting healthy, both physically and mentally. Her son is doing well, playing sports, starting Boy Scouts, and recently had his very first sleepover with a friend from school – at their new house.

“It’s so quiet and peaceful. We just want to be at home all the time.” Ruth says, “I have a sense of security I’ve never had in my life.”

You Can Help Families in Crisis.

Please make a gift today using the enclosed envelope or give online at www.pisgahlegal.org. Thank you!

Volunteers Power Pisgah Legal!

ATTORNEYS, ACA NAVIGATORS, COMMUNITY LEADERS AND OFFICE VOLUNTEERS:
WE ARE SO GRATEFUL FOR HUNDREDS OF VOLUNTEERS WHO LEND A HAND.



Pro Bono Award Luncheon • April 13th

More than 300 attorneys generously answer legal questions and represent Pisgah Legal clients each year, all at no charge, or “pro bono.” The 28th Judicial District Bar and PLS nominated the following attorneys for their outstanding service: (L-R) Evan DeWandler, John Noor and Ana Prendergast. (Kevin Radey was also recognized, but is not pictured). Volunteer attorneys make it possible for Pisgah Legal to serve thousands more people each year than with staff attorneys alone. Thank you!



Java for Justice • April 21st

One day each year coffee shops in WNC host Pisgah Legal Services’ Ambassadors who help raise funds and awareness about the importance of free legal aid. Thanks to sponsors — Mix 96.5 and Paramount Kia — this year’s 5th Annual Java for Justice was a big success!

Mix 96.5 radio personality Dex (center) was broadcasting live from City Bakery in downtown Asheville along with volunteer attorney Zephyr Jost (right) and PLS staffer Betsy Ellis (left). Thanks to ALL of the participating coffee shops and sponsors!

Jazz for Justice • March 23rd

The Spring Jazz for Justice celebration was filled with friends who enjoyed a fun evening and honored three special individuals. Kitty Schaller (far right) presented Anne Kimmel with the Terry Van Duyn Volunteer Award, and special tributes were paid to George Ward Hendon (1941-2013) and Roy W. Davis, Jr. (1930-2015) for their stalwart leadership of Pisgah Legal Services.



Photo by Michael Oppenheim

WHY WE GIVE



*We thank Lyn and Tom,
long-time friends of Pisgah Legal!*

“We have supported Pisgah Legal Services for many years because of their proven ability to provide much-needed legal support and structure to our most vulnerable fellow citizens.

PLS offers a strong helping hand to those in poverty, to whom issues such as spousal abuse, and housing problems are very real and seemingly hopeless.

Funding is always tight, but the staff and attorneys at PLS work tirelessly for our entire community. Helping those most in need helps us all.”

**– Lyn and Tom Leslie
(and Abraham – good dog!)
LESLIE AND ASSOCIATES, INC.**

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AMAZING THINGS

Your Gift to Pisgah Legal can do...



\$50 protects an elderly senior from becoming a fraud victim



\$100 allows a seriously disabled child access to health care



\$150 helps a homeless veteran obtain housing, medical care and food



\$250 helps a victim of domestic violence escape abuse and rebuild her life



\$500 saves a struggling family from losing their home to foreclosure



Imagine the difference your gift can make! We need your help.

Please make a gift to Pisgah Legal Services today.



Ensuring the Future of Pisgah Legal Services

NOW IS THE TIME TO SECURE THE FUTURE OF LEGAL AID IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA. YOU CAN MAKE A GIFT THAT WILL BUILD A LASTING ENDOWMENT FOR JUSTICE AND THE LOCAL PEOPLE WHO NEED HELP MOST.



Photo by Michael Oppenheim

We appreciate everyone that has pledged to the endowment including: (L-R) Pat Smith, Phil Smith, Shelley Brown, Kirk Brown, Terry Van Duyn and Ed Hay.

THANKS TO THESE FOUNDING ATTORNEYS

We are grateful to the following people, and ALL our generous supporters, who are building the Pisgah Legal Services Endowment. **Please, join us!**

Anonymous (2)
Sharon Alexander
Cynthia L. Alleman
C. Walter Allen
Garrett Artz
James W. Baley
Jan Bailes
Ervin L. Ball, Jr.
Frederick Barbour
Susan Barbour
Jim and Sharon Tracey Barrett
Leah M. Broker
Shelley M. Brown
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Coalter G. Lathrop
Bentley Leonard
Virginia Litzenberger
Robert B. Long, Jr.

For almost 40 years, Pisgah Legal Services has been a resource for low-income people in Western North Carolina who are in desperate need of legal aid. Now we are planning ahead for decades to come by building an endowment that will make these vital services possible forever.

Funding uncertainties – including cuts in state funding and grants – are unfortunate realities of today. A strong endowment ensures justice for generations into the future, **but we need your help to build it.** Please contact us today about making a planned gift and leave your legacy for justice.

Leave your legacy

How will you be remembered?

By making an endowment gift, your generosity can live on and ensure that Pisgah Legal continues for generations to come.

Contact Jim Barrett, Executive Director, at (828) 210-3408 or jim@pisgahlegal.org.

Lee Anne Mangone
Ben Many
John W. Mason
Barry L. Master
Molly Maynard
Larry S. McDevitt
Diane Kay McDonald
Joseph P. McGuire
Joy McIver
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“All the great things are simple, and many can be expressed in a single word: freedom, justice, honor, duty, mercy, hope.”
– Winston Churchill

Two Great Events You Won't Want to Miss!

ENJOY AN OUTDOOR CONCERT WITH TWO RENOWNED MUSICIANS OR SPEND THE EVENING WITH A SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVIST & ICON. BOTH EVENTS BENEFIT THE WORK OF PISGAH LEGAL SERVICES.



Amplify Pisgah and Pisgah Brewing have teamed up to bring two music legends to WNC.

Bruce Hornsby & Ricky Skaggs Concert

Tuesday, June 21st

at Pisgah Brewing's Outdoor Stage in Black Mountain.

[Ticket sales benefit Pisgah Legal Services.](#)

Get your tickets online at www.pisgahbrewing.com.



– SAVE THE DATE –

Pisgah Legal Services' 6th Annual Poverty Forum

Ending Child Poverty Now with Marian Wright Edelman

President, Children's Defense Fund

Wednesday, October 5th

More details to come...