



Justice Matters

THE NEWSLETTER OF PISGAH LEGAL SERVICES

Standing for Justice and Dignity since 1978.

FOURTH QUARTER

2020

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Jessie worked two jobs to cover the high cost of housing but lost her second position when COVID-19 struck. "It was so hard to catch up on the rent and keep the lights on and food on the table." Jessie and her daughter faced eviction and homelessness. "I had always been able to pay my rent, so I was unfamiliar with the legal terms and the legal process for eviction." She found help at Pisgah Legal Services.



Join Ally Wilson for our next **Justice Matters Virtual Tour** on Jan. 22nd to dive deeper into the work and impact of Pisgah Legal.

Call 210-3444 and sign up today.

Fighting to Keep People in Their Homes

YOU CAN PROVIDE CARING ATTORNEYS AND ADVOCATES THAT WILL KEEP VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN WNC HOUSED DURING THE PANDEMIC AND UPCOMING WINTER

Jessie* is like thousands of people in our mountain communities who never expected they would need Pisgah Legal Services, but the economic crisis caused by the pandemic has made more people vulnerable to falling into homelessness and poverty. One day she came home and found an eviction notice taped to her door.

"I didn't know where we were going to go," Jessie says. "I thought we would have to stay in a shelter or in our car."

She contacted Pisgah Legal and began working with Attorney Casey Steen. "He could hear the panic in my voice and told me to send over all the papers I had."

Casey arranged a reduced payment with the leasing agent and secured a portion of Jessie's back rent through Pisgah Legal's Rental Assistance Fund, while Jessie's family made up the remainder. "Casey showed up just at the right time and once he got involved, it all worked out."

*Name/photo changed at client's request

Promises to Keep to Those Who Need Us Most

YOUR SUPPORT PROVIDES HOPE AND SECURITY FOR THE DIFFICULT WINTER THAT LIES AHEAD

Dear Friends,

Is there anyone among us who isn't looking forward to saying farewell forever to 2020?

With your help, and the tireless work of our dedicated staff and extraordinary volunteers, we are finding our way through this difficult year, adapting to serve the increasing number of local people who are in crisis.



Pisgah Legal continues to receive on average 1,000 calls each week. Our front-line staff and volunteers report more tears, frustration, and panic from folks in WNC desperate for help, and with good reason. The stimulus money is long gone, winter is coming, and the eviction moratorium ends on Dec. 31.

The most urgent calls right now are related to housing. The National Low Income Housing Coalition estimates that 42% of North Carolina renters are at risk of eviction. We continue to hear from tenants at risk of homelessness due to illness, loss of work or decreased hours, lack of childcare, or quarantine requirements. From July to Sept. we opened 65% more housing cases than at the same time last year.

Domestic violence is also, unfortunately, increasing. Asheville Police received 498 domestic violence calls in the first nine months of 2020 compared to 426 in all of 2019. Many shelters are open at limited capacity, and the pandemic has pushed many residents into lower-cost housing units as unemployment has risen, exacerbating an already dire affordable housing crisis in our region.

Pisgah Legal is responding to these and other challenging needs. One way is to cross-train staff and volunteer attorneys. Earlier this year we worked with private volunteer attorneys to offer assistance with unemployment insurance benefits.

Together, we closed 225 unemployment cases, compared to 14 during the same time in 2019, securing precious resources for those who couldn't navigate the system alone.

Pisgah Legal is also managing the distribution of federal and private emergency financial assistance to those who need it most. By combining our legal expertise with this aid, we can leverage these funds to provide more sustainable solutions for our clients, such as negotiating longer leases to get them safely past the eviction moratorium deadline.

We successfully partnered with Dogwood Health Trust to publicize special opportunities for people who lost their health insurance to get covered under the Affordable Care Act and continue this important work now during regular Open Enrollment.

Pisgah Legal is also providing extensive information on our website, via Facebook Live presentations, and with local media outlets to notify people of scams, correct misinformation, and inform people of their rights and resources to help them through the pandemic.

We have promises to keep, both to our clients – the strong but struggling people in our mountains who are doing the best they can in very difficult circumstances – and also to you, our loyal supporters and friends, who trust us to use the power of the law and your donations carefully and wisely, to do the most good.

We have miles to go before we sleep. We need your help to sustain this critically important work. **Please give today.**

Stay safe and well, and thank you for your support,

Jim Barrett, PLS Executive Director

“With your help, we are finding our way through this difficult year, adapting to serve the increasing number of local people who are in crisis.”



COVID-19 Urgent Response MATCHING GIFT CHALLENGE

Double Your Impact: Gift Match

People in our mountains are turning to Pisgah Legal for help now more than ever. **Many have lost their jobs** and can no longer pay their rent; others **need help obtaining benefits** such as unemployment insurance. Some are **living with an abusive partner**, and do not know how to safely escape. Others are **too scared to seek help or medical treatment because of their immigration status.**

Support Pisgah Legal Services today and help us meet the needs of our vulnerable neighbors during the COVID-19 crisis, and beyond – as the impacts of the pandemic are not only immediate but also far-reaching. **Help us ensure that those who are struggling can navigate the complex legal system, defend their rights, and stay safe and healthy.**

Give by Dec. 31, and generous donors will match gifts up to \$200,000! Use the enclosed envelope, give online at pisgahlegal.org/give, or contact Ally Wilson by phone at 210-3444 or e-mail ally@pisgahlegal.org.

Justice Forum with Clint Smith – A Powerful Evening



Thank you to the many sponsors and 500+ guests who attended the 10th Annual – and first ever online – Justice Forum on October 1. Poet Clint Smith gave an inspiring and powerful address that resonated even in the virtual space and moved us to act and advocate to create a more equitable and just world. Guests were also treated to an outstanding performance by local singer Kat Williams.

Profiles in Giving



Remembering Leah Karpen 1920 – 2020

This Fall, we were saddened to lose Leah Karpen, a great friend, devoted volunteer, and generous philanthropist.

Pisgah Legal Executive Director Jim Barrett says, “Leah was a fierce advocate for less privileged people. She was often present at public hearings speaking up for working people and others who could not be present to speak on their own behalf.”

“When her health declined, she volunteered to screen applicants for our services. Leah continued this noble work even when she needed an oxygen tank and a companion to accompany her to our Asheville office. Many of us were inspired by her determination and commitment to help others.”

Leah Karpen will be remembered as a feisty social activist, an avid hiker and traveler, an arts and music lover, a patron who championed many important causes and a fighter for justice. We will always be grateful to her.



PISGAH
LEGAL SERVICES

Standing for Justice and Dignity since 1978.

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“If you want to be a true professional, you will do something outside yourself... something that makes life a little better for people less fortunate than you.”

– Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

This Year, Give Your Way

MEET YOUR GIVING NEEDS AND ALSO HELP OTHERS

1. Need the Perfect Present?



Want to give a meaningful gift, but aren't shopping this year? Show you care by giving to Pisgah Legal in honor of a loved one, and you'll also be providing a caring legal advocate to a family in need. We'll even mail a letter to your loved one that acknowledges your generosity, AND you get to skip the post office!

2. Traditionalist or Modern?



Send a check using the enclosed envelope, scan the code (above, right) with your smartphone, or give online at www.pisgahlegal.org/give. You can also donate stock, give through your IRA, or become a monthly donor. Contact Ally Wilson at (828) 210-3444.

3. What About a Forever Gift?



Leave your lasting legacy by including Pisgah Legal Services in your estate plans. Find out more at www.freewill.com/pisgahlegal or contact Ally Wilson.

GET COVERED for 2021!

Sign up for ACA Health Insurance
by Dec. 15.



The ACA is still the law, and you may qualify for financial help!

Make an appointment to review your options today at pisgahlegal.org/aca or call us at 828-210-3404.

Because Justice is for Everyone, Not Just Those Who Can Afford It.

