

By: Alissa C. Lietzow, Esquire

Executive Director of (Charleston) Pro Bono Legal Services, Inc.

I was recently working on Charleston Pro Bono's Annual Report for 2017. Around the same time, I was preparing for presentations to various funding entities regarding pending grant applications. Both required me to delve into recent case statistics such as the types of cases opened and how many were assisted by a pro bono attorney, in addition to economic, geographic, and demographic information for those we serve. While I certainly understand the need for such figures, especially when trying to determine if a grant award will have the desired impact, it is often easy to get lost in the numbers. It is easy to forget that each of those numbers represents a person, a story, a life changed.

Time and space limit my ability to share the stories of each of the hundreds of clients served annually by this organization. But, I will take this opportunity to highlight just a handful of stories which I hope will illustrate the importance of seeing past the numbers, and appreciate the person each of those numbers represents.

Ms. G is a single working mother with young children. She sought help from our office when her landlord demanded she cover the expenses of a habitability repair and attempted to have her evicted when she disputed the cost. As a recipient of housing choice voucher benefits, an eviction would jeopardize her subsidy and potentially render her family homeless. With direct representation service from our office, Ms. G was successful in litigating her claim against the landlord, receiving a judgment of money damages related to the pest issue and dismissal of landlord's action for eviction.

Ms. C came to CPBLS when she had received threats of eviction from her property manager regarding her continued residence in a project-based housing unit. Ms. C had been the victim of domestic violence and the property management attempted to use the incidence of domestic violence as cause for her eviction along with no-cause grounds of continued tenancy being the initial lease term. On re-hearing, Ms. C prevailed on all issues.

Mr. B, an elderly gentleman with a nominal fixed income, needed our assistance in getting his name changed. Although he went by his adoptive name his entire life, his

official birth certificate was never changed. We helped collect all necessary legal forms from government entities and prepared his court pleadings. He was elated following his court hearing knowing that his life-long dream of officially changing his name to honor his adoptive family was complete.

Mr. K contacted Charleston Pro Bono concerned about losing his family's long-term residence to foreclosure. Thanks to the exceptional work and tireless advocacy of his pro bono attorney, Mr. K was able to avoid foreclosure, make necessary home repairs, sell his property, and walk away with enough resources for his family to have a very happy holiday season.

Mr. R applied for services with CPBLS following serious concerns for his children's well-being while in their mother's custody. With the help of one of our volunteer attorneys, the Court involved DSS which opened an investigation. After the mother's repeated positive drug tests, DSS recently closed the case and recommended permanent placement with our client. Mr. R now has full custody of his children, who are now in a safe and healthy environment thanks to the tireless advocacy of his pro bono attorney.

Ms. O came to us for a simple will. Upon meeting with Ms. O, we learned that she had advanced stage cancer and very limited time left. Ms. O's main concern was for her children. We helped her preserve her estate for the children and to ensure that guardianship of the minor daughter was placed with her adult brother, instead of reverting to her estranged father. Ms. O passed away shortly after we prepared her will; we then helped her son with the custody case to grant him legal custody of his sister.

Hopefully, these case summaries serve as a reminder of the lasting impact having access to justice and the legal system can have on someone's life. There are many members of the Charleston County Bar Association who work closely with our organization and understand the importance of what we do for our community. I know we can count on you to continue that support. For those members who have not yet had an opportunity to build up the good karma that comes with donating your time, talent, or treasure, I sincerely hope to hear from you soon!



CHARLESTON PRO BONO

LEGAL SERVICES, INC.

Law Firm: _____

Contact Person: _____

Address: _____

Enclosed is our gift of \$ _____.

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