



LEGAL AID CLIENT STORIES – STATEWIDE 2006

BEND

(Chiloquin, OR)

Tammy and Timothy Huebner had been together for 23 years. Throughout their marriage, Tammy endured extremely severe physical, verbal, and emotional abuse at the hands of Timothy. Timothy did not allow Tammy to drive or obtain a driver's license. He prevented her from using the phone and often she was not even allowed to leave the home. Consequently, she was imprisoned in her own home, which is located in a very remote, rural area.

In September 2005, despite a restraining order prohibiting him from contacting Tammy, he broke into the home and brutally attacked her in the presence of their three-year-old daughter, Turquoise. Tammy was seriously injured and Timothy was charged with attempted murder. He is in custody and awaiting trial. Legal Aid Services of Oregon assisted Tammy in obtaining a divorce.

Tammy, unfortunately, has an aggressive and advanced form of cancer. She has undergone and continues to undergo extensive amounts of chemotherapy and radiation therapy. She was very concerned about what would happen to Turquoise should Tammy pass away. Legal aid was able to find an attorney in Klamath Falls who would handle her estate planning matters *pro bono*. The attorney and Tammy are currently finishing up her estate planning documents, including provisions that will keep Turquoise safe.

Tammy has a strong desire to keep living, improve herself, and provide a better life for her daughter. All those who have worked with Tammy have much admiration for her incredible strength, determination, and perseverance.

COOS BAY

Clifford Lint and Donna Allison have never met, but along with other residents on the south coast, they had the same legal problem. The Coos Bay Oregon Law Center was there to help them. A collection agency demanded immediate payment from Cliff and Donna for medical services that Medicare or private insurance should have covered. Neither had seen the charges before. The medical clinic had closed without notice and all outstanding bills, whether eligible for insurance coverage or not, were given over to a local collection agency.

When asked if he had the ability to pay the medical charges claimed by the debt collectors, Cliff said he figured he could pay about a nickel a month for the rest of his life. When the demand for payment came in the mail, Cliff tried unsuccessfully to the collection agency by phone. When they finally called back, a representative claimed to have no knowledge of any insurance information. "When you get tangled up in a legal snafu," he told us, "it's intimidating as the dickens."

The collection agency brought suit against Donna, a retired cook and long-time resident of the area. Donna, who was in the hospital when her doctor's office closed, expected her bills would be paid for by insurance.

OLC lawyer Kris Thompson called a representative of Medicare who said that the seniors had no liability for charges not properly billed to Medicare. Medicare notified the collection agency that they had no legal right to demand payment and the matters were resolved.

GRANTS PASS

Noelle is a 25 year old woman diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome. Two years ago she met Jeffrey over the internet. She was living in Grants Pass and he was a soldier stationed at Fort Bragg,

North Carolina. After a few weeks of exchanging emails she agreed to fly out and meet him as she wanted to attend a national AmeriCorps reunion that was being held on the East Coast and Jeffrey promised to take her. Jeffrey never took her to the reunion and a week after she arrived at Fort Bragg he married her. Jeffrey hid Noelle in the Fort Bragg barracks for a few weeks until he was able to get an apartment off base.

Jeffrey was abusive and controlling from the very beginning and Noelle was kept a virtual prisoner. Once when she tried calling her mother in Oregon, Jeffrey took her keys and left her locked outside their apartment for several hours. He would often take her keys, identification cards and money as punishment. When Noelle was just recovering from a miscarriage Jeffrey refused to reschedule their move into base housing and Noelle was forced to unpack all the boxes when Jeffrey left on a deployment. Once when she tried to leave, Jeffrey had another soldier go and physically return her to the base. Jeffrey was ordered to take anger management classes, but he never did.

When her child Alexander was born and Jeffrey became abusive to the child as well as her, Noelle decided to leave no matter what the danger to her. Noelle was finally able to leave with the help of an Army chaplain. When Noelle returned to Josephine County she filed for a separation as well as a restraining order. When Jeffrey hired an attorney to contest both matters Noelle came to legal aid for help. Noelle now has custody of Alexander and Jeffrey has limited parenting time until he has completed further counseling.

LINCOLN COUNTY

[First person narrative, prefers to have only her first name used in the press]

“My name is Dolores. In December I will be 80 years old. I live on social security of \$713 a month. I’m retired now, but I worked for years on my feet in pharmacy departments.

‘Last year, out of the blue, social security sent me a notice saying my monthly social security checks were ending. The notice said I would not get another monthly check until January of 2008. The notice said they had sent me \$18,000 by mistake and now would take my monthly payment until it was all paid back. I called my bank to see if \$18,000 had been deposited, they said no. I tried to call the number on the notice for the Albany social security office. There was no answer, it would just ring and ring.

‘I went to Legal Aid. We sat down together right then and there and called Social Security. No one answered. Legal Aid tried a different number and we finally reached a supervisor. He said when the Albany social security office is busy at certain times of the month, they can’t answer the phone. The supervisor could not explain why they thought I had gotten \$18,000. But after Legal Aid staff talked to him, he said he would look into this and not stop my monthly payments.

‘It finally was resolved. It was all social security error. But I was so stressed when I came to Legal Aid that I was actually suicidal. I support Legal Aid and I ask you to support them too.’”

PORTLAND

A Vietnamese woman who asked that her name not be used was referred to the Multnomah County office of Legal Aid Services of Oregon after her husband of nine years made repeated threats of murder suicide. Her husband had abused her for years, but when he began acting more erratic, making these threats, and kept her from leaving the house, she decided it was time to seek a safe situation for herself and her 6 year old son. She found her way to legal aid with the help of the Domestic Violence Enhanced Response Team (DVERT). This team has members with the major domestic violence services, legal aid, and the District Attorney’s office in Portland. An advocate who works with Raphael House and the Portland Police Domestic Violence Reduction Unit was able to connect her in with legal aid and services offered by other DVERT members that helped her move into a stable and safe situation. She was able to obtain a restraining order against her husband, and when he asked for a hearing on the order, legal aid represented her and kept the order in place. Legal aid also represented her in her divorce from her husband.
