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# Serving & Sustaining Our Community: A Partnership to Save Homes & Businesses

In response to the pandemic, Wells Fargo partnered with Legal Services to represent tenants facing the threat of eviction and small businesses facing potential collapse.Thispartnershipstrengthenedour response on two fronts – housing and small businesses.

#### Prioritizing Tenants to Prevent Homelessness

At the start of the pandemic, our partnership prioritized saving homes. Wells Fargo's funding expanded our capacity to handle the influx in evictions. Last year, with eviction moratoriums expiring and rent prices rising, 55% of our cases focused on housing instability, primarily eviction.

Take Alma for instance, a 55-year-old woman who lives alone and has participated in the Section 8 program for the past six years. Crippled with anxiety after receiving a housing assistance termination notice amid the pandemic, Alma turned to Legal Services for help. Maintaining her housing assistance was crucial as she abruptly faced loss of income after her hours were cut in half due to COVID. Legal Services successfully demonstrated she was being wrongfully targeted, and the Housing Authority reversed the notice. Alma was able to safely stay in her home and preserve the affordable housing assistance she relies on.

Now in the recovery phase, a growing problem is the increasing rent that many tenants face. From February 2021 to February 2022, rent prices in Miami rose by 55%. These steep rent surges are difficult, not only because of increasing costs but also due to unscrupulous landlords who increase rent in violation of existing rules. Currently, Legal Services is representing a single mother living in subsidized housing, whose landlord filed an eviction for unpaid rent that was increased without the property notification and approvals required by laws governing subsidized housing tenancies.

To address quickly rising rent, Miami-Dade County recently passed an ordinance requiring landlords to provide 60-day notice when increasing rent by more than 5%.

#### Investing in the Success of Small Businesses

Small businesses were one of the most affected sectors amid the pandemic and continue to face an array of challenges despite stimulus packages aimed to keep them afloat. Through Wells Fargo's Open for Business Fund, the Florida Community Development Legal Project (FCDL) led by Legal Services, assisted 112 small businesses in 159 legal matters last year, saving them hundreds of thousands in legal fees. In turn, they can reinvest these savings, creating wealth and assets. Additionally, FCDL supported minorityowned businesses to help bridge the racial wealth gap, conducted start-up consultations, and created custom legal solutions for a wide variety of small business clients.

April 2022

A few examples of small business owners who Legal Services delivered support to include:

• Tiffany Cordon, owner and designer of Ukeme Official, who sells unisex apparel featuring African inspired art, graphics and designs;

• Jamila Rowser, owner and publisher of Black Josei Press, an indie comic book publishing company focused on celebrating comics by and for Black and Brown women and non-binary people; and

• Alexandra Sliva, owner and artistic director of New Century Dance Company, an entertainment and dance company, recently showcased in Wells Fargo Stories. We invite you to learn how our collaborative efforts helped her by visiting <u>HERE</u>.

With Wells Fargo's support, we provide life-changing housing support to thousands and help protect and empower small businesses so they can thrive and sustain our local communities. In the spirit of our theme in 2022, *Celebrating Community*, we thank Wells Fargo for standing up for our community and investing in our work.



From the Executive Director Monica Vigues-Pitan This year we are focusing on *Celebrating Community*. We are proud of how our community came together and demonstrated strength and resilience during the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic. I am incredibly proud of all our amazing volunteers and team who are dedicated to helping our community. We appreciate and respect the hard work they do each day.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay personal tribute to a key member of our team for her immeasurable contribution to Legal Services and to countless colleagues, including me. After devoting her entire professional career to promoting equal access to justice, our Deputy Director of Advocacy and Programs, Margaret Z. Moores, retires this month.

She has made a significant impact on our organization since her start in 1991. Through her many leadership roles, she has been central to Legal Services' growth and excellence, including Project Coordinator for Children First, Senior Attorney of the Family, Juvenile and Education Unit, Director of Training and Professional Development, and her current position of Deputy Director of Advocacy and Programs. In this latest role, Margaret was responsible for raising tens of millions of dollars to support all our advocacy areas.

Margaret has contributed in so many ways but perhaps her most instrumental role has been the development of innovative and collaborative projects and the professional development of our team. Margaret has been a mentor to dozens of advocates. I am personally inspired by her work ethic, intelligence, and dedication to making life better for others and continue to benefit from her wise counsel. Legal Services and the communities we serve are better because of her legacy of



passion, professionalism, and creativity. Please join me in sending her well wishes on her retirement.

### **How You Can Help**

I have always had a strong moral compass and believe in justice and equality for all. It is what led to my career in law. When, at an early age, I realized that this was not the case for all individuals, it became my passion to assist those who did not have the means to assist themselves. I sought out an organization where I could help make a big impact in the community and in individual lives — Legal Services of Greater Miami proved to be just that. Approximately 550,000 of our neighbors live in poverty. They often encounter legal barriers to providing basic necessities for their families, combined with the challenge of obtaining justice in our complex legal system.

For over 55 years, Legal Services has been a **powerful advocate for equal justice in our community with over 25 full time attorneys who protect and defend the rights of individuals when they face legal barriers and issues**. For many in our community, equal justice translates into access to housing, education, and healthcare—all basic essentials of personal safety and well-being.

I am proud to have served as Co-chair of the Legal Services Campaign Committee for five years and as Chair of our annual Heart of Giving and Judicial Reception which celebrates its 13th year on May 12, 2022. Each year we present extraordinary honorees with the Legal Services' Equal Justice Leadership Awards and highlight the significance of our work in the community. **Every donation translates to justice and equality.** Please join us.

Click **HERE** to register for the Heart of Giving.

Lilly Ann Sanchez, Esq.





From Campaign Committee Co-Chair Lilly Ann Sanchez



#### **Legal Services Obtains** Accommodation for **Disabled Man to Naturalize**

Humberto came to the United States from Venezuela in 2016 in search of a better life given the economic crisis and turmoil in his country. At age nine, he was diagnosed with a rare genetic eye disorder known as Stargardt Disease, which progressed until he eventually lost his vision when he was only fifteen. Despite his vision impairment, Humberto worked diligently in pursuit of his education. After graduating from law school in Venezuela, he realized that music was his true passion and switched careers.

Humberto was the drummer in a Grammy-winning album for Venezuelan band Voz Veis. Despite his accolades as a musician, life in Venezuela offered him little hope for future prosperity and freedom, so he made the difficult decision to leave his life behind. He gained legal entry to the United States because of his extraordinary musical talent.

Due to his vision impairment, he could not take the written exams required for naturalization. Legal Services Attorney Pamela Flores successfully advocated on his behalf to prove Humberto's impairment gualified him for an accommodation. He realized his life-long dream of becoming a naturalized citizen. Humberto shares his story to inspire people with disabilities to overcome obstacles and never give up on their dreams.



### **Tax Relief for Single Mother** of College Student

Ivonne, a single mother in her early 50s, works as an events coordinator to provide continued help to both of her young adult children. She was surprised when she received a letter from the IRS advising she owed over \$3,000 for a prior tax year as the IRS was disallowing the child tax credit she had claimed for her son in college. After filing a petition to appeal in Tax Court, she sought the assistance of Legal Services. Prior to trial, her Legal Services' attorney successfully negotiated a settlement where the IRS conceded Ivonne owed nothing and instead was entitled to a tax refund in the amount of \$1,400. The refund offers relief to this working mother, who struggles to meet her basic living expenses at a time when prices are rising.

### **Pro Bono Partnership Strengthens Small Businesses**

Small businesses are essential to our community's economy. As we are Celebrating Community, we are thankful to pro bono champions like Albert B. Maggio, Jr., P.A., Managing Member, CRGO Law, who is strongly committed to the development of small businesses and building up our community, by taking on Intellectual Property cases for our small business clients. Albert shares his insights on pro bono:

#### Why does pro bono in support of small businesses matter?

20% of small businesses fail in their first year and 50% in their fifth year. Only one-third of small businesses make it to the 10th year. Access to affordable legal representation



is a key to survival because it helps to ensure that entrepreneurs form and manage their businesses in compliance with the law. Maintaining proper corporate records and obtaining protection for Intellectual Property are critical legal tasks that can help businesses secure financing, create value, and scale. The pandemic has exacerbated access to legal resources for many entrepreneurs. That is why it is **important for organizations such as Legal Services to** team up with economic development agencies to identify constituents who are most in need and develop legal services delivery platforms which adopt to the changing environment brought on by the pandemic.

#### Why is mentorship of law students so significant?

Many law students, especially part-time evening students, do not have the opportunity to gain practical experience. Many of these students are employed full-time and therefore cannot take advantage of summer clerkships at law firms. Practicing lawyers have a moral responsibility to assist in the development of future members of our profession. Mentoring provides an opportunity for these students to gain practical knowledge and experience in developing some basic skills not only in the substantive legal areas but in the areas of client qualification and needs assessment. We have been working with the faculty and students at the Center for Business Law at my alma mater, New England Law | Boston to provide law students with practical experience.

#### Why do you think it is important for your firm to become involved with Legal Services?

Our firm has aligned our 2022 pro bono commitments with the principals of the Council for Inclusive Capitalism with the Vatican which are based upon the 17 Goals of the United Nations' Agenda for Sustainable Development. Our pro bono efforts are targeted toward achieving these specific Goals: Decent Work & Economic Growth, Reduce Inequality, and Partnerships for the Goals. We focus on People, for whom we strive to bring dignity and equality to the historically disadvantaged entrepreneurial community. With respect to Prosperity, we support community and social vitality by providing these entrepreneurs with the means to generate employment and wealth within their communities. We leverage these efforts by partnering with Legal Services and New England Law | Boston.

#### SUPPORT EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE THROUGH PRO BONO SERVICE

Follow Albert's lead as well as countless other pro bono attorneys who give of their time and skills to create a meaningful impact.

#### **PRO BONO OPPORTUNITIES**

#### **ON DEMAND CLE TRAINING IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:**

- Remote Tenants' Equal Justice Clinic
- Remote Income Equal Justice Clinic
- Remote Consumer Equal Justice Clinic Eviction Defense Project

Mentorship and malpractice insurance provided

Our work is made possible through the generous support of our

# Leadership Circle Donors

### Blue Diamond 100,000+

Edie Laquer Foundation – Endowed Women & Children's Rights Attorney Chair Harke Clasby & Bushman – Social Justice Fellowship in Honor of Nancy T. Clasby Holland & Knight LLP Jacqueline Allee Smith – Jacqueline and Chesterfield Smith Fellows Program Stearns Weaver Miller

### **Diamond 50,000+**

Stephen H. Cypen, President, Jerome A. Yavitz Charitable Foundation, Inc. - Harry & Irving Cypen Tax Fellowship The Fine & Greenwald Foundation Helliwell Family Foundation - In Memory of Paul L. E. Helliwell, Esq. Ryder System

### Gold 25,000+

#### Akerman

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### Silver 10,000+

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Donor Levels Reflect Cumulative Giving for the Campaign Period from 1/1/2020 through 12/31/2022. Pledges and Gifts as of 3/22/2022

NOW ACCEPTING CRYPTOCURRENCY GIFTS

We are excited to announce that we now accept cryptocurrency donations, giving our supporters even more avenues to make a difference. These gifts are immediate, tax-efficient, and go directly to strengthening our community and our advocacy efforts.

We have partnered with The Giving Block to make this possible. Over 70 different types of cryptocurrencies can be donated through our online widget <u>HERE</u>.



### Thank you for your consideration of a crypto gift!

## Making the Case in the Business Community The Impact of Cryptocurrency on Your Business and Our Community



LEGAL SERVICES COMMUNITY OUTREACH COMMITTEE CHAIR: JASON KELLOGG, Partner, Levine Kellogg Lehman Schneider + Grossman

LEGAL SERVICES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: MONICA VIGUES-PITAN

**PANELISTS:** FRANCESCA DE QUESADA COVEY, Tech Innovation Advisor, Miami-Dade County/Partner, TheVentureCity & ALPEN SHETH, PH.D., Senior Principal, Head of Policy and Research, Borderless Capital

MODERATOR: MATT HAGGMAN, EVP, Opportunity Miami, Miami-Dade Beacon Council

In March, we hosted our fifth annual Business Breakfast Panel: The Impact of Cryptocurrency on Your Business and Our Community. Our esteemed panelists focused on the opportunities and challenges cryptocurrency presents, especially for low-income individuals, small businesses, and our community in general. In this conversation moderated by Matt Haggman, our panelists highlighted the importance of demystifying cryptocurrency. From their expert point of view, educating members of our community is key so that they are in a better position to fully understand the implications of embracing crypto as well as feel empowered to make these financial decisions. We want to thank our panelists, our moderator, and our host:



To view the event on demand, click HERE.



#### Pictured on left:

**D. PORPOISE EVANS**, Weiss Serota Helfman Cole & Bierman; Legal Services Board First Vice-President, **ALEX JIMENEZ**, Grove Bank & Trust; Vice Chair of the Legal Services Young Professionals Council and Campaign Committee member; and **ALESSANDRO MARCHETTA**, Grove Bank & Trust.

#### Bottom Left:

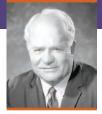
JASON KELLOGG, STEPHANIE L. CARMAN, Gray Robinson; Legal Services Board Member, DARRELL PAYNE, Stearns Weaver Miller; Legal Services Board Member, STANLEY WAKSHLAG, Kenny Nachwalter; Legal Services Foundation Board President, FRANCESCA DE QUESADA COVEY, MATT HAGGMAN, ALPEN SHETH, PH.D., and MONICA VIGUES-PITAN.





### **Chesterfield Smith Society**

Annual Florida Bar Fees Are Due Soon! Become a member of the Chesterfield Smith Society when you make a gift in lieu of pro bono. Chesterfield Smith devoted his life to making certain there is a level playing field for everyone and that the rights of the most vulnerable among us are protected with the highest quality of legal advocacy. Your support follows the legacy of Chesterfield Smith and places one more family on the path to economic stability.



### GUARDIAN \$2,500-\$4,999

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Donor Levels Reflect Annual Gifts for the Period Beginning January 1, 2021 \* Sustaining Donors Pledges & Gifts as of 3/24/2022 Every effort has been made to ensure this listing is complete and accurate. If errors or omissions have occurred, please accept our apologies, and call 305-438-2513 to report corrections. Thank you!





PRESENTS



# THE THIRTEENTH ANNUAL HEART OF GIVING

### CELEBRATION AND JUDICIAL RECEPTION HONORING OUR EQUAL JUSTICE LEADERS



Hon. Cecilia M. Altonaga Chief Judge of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida



Hon. Michael A. Hanzman Circuit Judge of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit Court of Florida



Hon. Nushin G. Sayfie Chief Judge of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit Court of Florida

### Thursday, May 12, 2022 | 6:30 PM

PARADISE PLAZA EVENT SPACE, MIAMI DESIGN DISTRICT 151 NE 41st Street - 3rd Floor

**TITLE SPONSORS** 





### **BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SUPPORT A COMMUNITY OF EQUAL JUSTICE**

Legal Services' **Legacy Society** was established to promote the economic stability of our most vulnerable neighbors and build a stronger community for generations to come. When you make a bequest to Legal Services, you leave a legacy of empowerment, placing individuals and families on a stable path to the future.

These are some of the ways you can create a legacy at Legal Services:

- Designate Legal Services as a beneficiary of your last will and testament or trust.
- Establish Legal Services as a beneficiary of your life insurance.

• Direct IRA transfers.

· Create a Charitable Remainder Trust.

You can make a difference for generations to come by placing a family on the path to economic stability. Your planned gift to Legal Services will seve as testament to your legacy of care, concern and compassion, creating a brighter future for the entire community.

Connect your compassion and concern to your financial and estate planning and transform the future for someone in need. Become a member of **The** *Legacy Society*.

### **ARE YOU A YOUNG PROFESSIONAL LOOKING TO GET MORE INVOLVED IN THE COMMUNITY?**



THE

LEGACY

SOCIETY

For spring break, the Council donated, packed, and delivered snacks for children who typically rely on school lunches. JOIN THE LEGAL SERVICES OF GREATER MIAMI

# YOUNG PROFESSIONALS COUNCIL



The Council hosted Rum Master Class with Gabriel Urrutia at Grove Bank & Trust.

The Council is the perfect way to give back while making friends and connections along the way. With quarterly meetings and plenty of events, such as Happy Hours and our Conversations with Leaders series, it's a group where everyone can find their place. Our dedicated Council members help to plan and host these events, generating funds for the Legal Services Client Fund, providing much needed grocery money to Legal Services' clients.

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Contact JGeeker@legalservicesmiami.org for information on the Young Professionals Council.