



PEGASUS
LEGAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

Annual Report 2010

*We promote, support,
and defend the rights of children and youth*

Pegasus Plays Key Role in Banning Corporal Punishment

Pegasus saw the result of over a year's hard work in April, 2011, when Governor Martinez signed into law a bill banning corporal punishment in New Mexico public schools. In 2009, long-time Pegasus friend and contract attorney, Kelly Waterfall, approached co-director Tara Ford about drafting a bill to end the controversial practice. The issue came to Kelly's attention when one of her abuse/neglect clients, a seven year old girl, saw a classmate being paddled in school. Kelly had been thinking about bringing an end to corporal punishment in New Mexico schools since she was a law student, and became even more committed to pursuing that goal after learning that her client, a victim of violence in her home, had been traumatized once again in school - a setting where she had always felt safe.

Tara and Kelly drafted the bill and worked with Dave Schmidt of the New Mexico Council on Crime and Delinquency to bring key legislators on board. Senator Cynthia Nava and Representative Rick Miera agreed to carry the bill in their respective legislative houses. During the Legislative Session, the bill drew opposition from some legislators, but in the final days of the 2011 Session, a coalition of advocacy groups worked behind the scenes to convince legislators to vote for the bill. It came to a vote and passed, but it was not at all clear that the Governor would sign it into law.

Pegasus partnered with Disability Rights New Mexico, KUNM Youth Radio, the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty, and Unlimited Justice (a campaign developed by fashion designer Marc Ecko) to organize a rally in support of the bill. The rally received attention from several media outlets, and the effort paid off – Governor Martinez signed the bill into law the next day.

We are proud that Pegasus played such a big part in the effort to ban this ineffective and harmful practice from New Mexico's public schools. We congratulate all the advocates and legislators who came together to make this happen, especially Kelly Waterfall, Senator Nava, and Representative Miera.



Supporters at the UNM Rally to ban corporal punishment in the schools.

What We Do: Current Projects & Client Stories

Youth Law – The Pegasus Youth Law Project provides legal representation, advice, and information to young parents, and homeless and runaway youth.

Genevieve, age 16, called Pegasus because she wanted to be emancipated. Genevieve had been adopted at age 3 but never bonded with her adoptive mother. At age 14, Genevieve's mother placed her in a treatment center. But when Genevieve completed treatment, her mother refused to allow her to return home. Frustrated, Genevieve ran away to the home of a family friend. She got a job, but was not allowed to enroll in school. Pegasus called the high school principal and explained that, because she was living apart from her mother, Genevieve had the right to enroll herself in school. Because of Pegasus' advocacy, Genevieve was immediately enrolled. Pegasus filed a petition asking the court to declare Genevieve an emancipated minor so she could make her own decisions and access all the services and benefits she needed.

Education – Pegasus works to protect the rights of children to a free and appropriate education through direct representation, policy advocacy, and community education. Pegasus represents the parents of children who need special education services, and advocates for policies that ensure that all children have a positive and enriching educational experience.

Julie Garcia's 10 year old son, Ben, has autism and is largely nonverbal. Because Ben's teachers did not have enough training and support, Ben was not learning. Frustrated that her son was not making progress, Julie came to Pegasus for help. Pegasus and attorney Debra Poulin filed a due process complaint. To resolve the complaint, Ben's school agreed to engage a speech/language therapist with a specialty in picture exchange communication, and a clinical psychologist to train Ben's teacher, both of whom had expertise working with students with autism. To its credit, the school went further and developed whole classroom supports so that other students with autism could benefit from the specialists' expertise.

Kinship Guardianship – Through legal guardianship, we help kinship caregivers such as grandparents secure safety and stability for children whose parents are unwilling or unable to care for them.

Travis, age 10, lived with his mother whose alcoholism was out of control. When his mother placed him in a terrifying situation, Travis called 911. Travis then went to live with his grandmother and she asked Pegasus to help her get guardianship over him. In spite of her continued serious alcoholism, Travis' mother fought the guardianship for over a year. Travis' mental health deteriorated due to constant fear that he would be forced to go back to live with her. The court granted Travis' grandmother's petition for guardianship. Travis' mental health improved immediately.

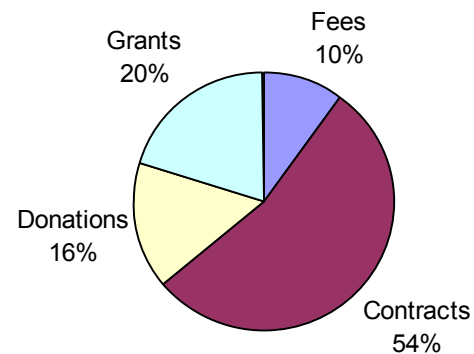
Abuse/Neglect – Pegasus represents children and youth in foster care primarily through a contract with the 7th Judicial District. In line with our mission, Pegasus attorneys strive

Shawna, age 14, disclosed to a teacher that her stepfather

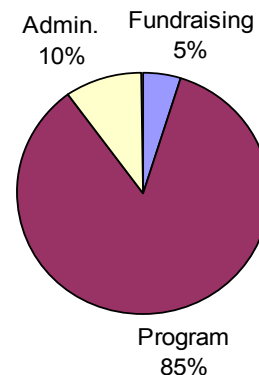
had been molesting her for over a year. Because Shawna's mother did not believe her and refused to separate from her husband, Child Protective Services removed Shawna and placed her in a foster home. A Pegasus attorney represented Shawna in the abuse/neglect proceedings against her mother and stepfather. At first, Shawna felt terribly guilty for disclosing the abuse, and blamed herself for causing trouble for her parents. Shawna worked with her attorney to prepare for her testimony at the trial and her testimony convinced the judge that her parents had abused and neglected her. Testifying in court helped Shawna to realize that her stepfather was responsible for his actions, not her, and that she deserved to be kept safe from him and anyone else who would hurt her.

*Names and details in the stories below have been changed to protect the privacy of our clients.

Where the Money Comes From



Where the Money Goes



Staff: Back Row: Larry Kronen, Kinship Guardianship Program Director and Staff Attorney; Tara Ford, Co-Director; Grace Spulak, Staff Attorney; Liz McGrath, Co-Director; Zak Sloan, UNM Law Extern. Seated: Sally McGrath, Development Director; Carmen Reyes, Receptionist; and P.A. Blalock, Senior Paralegal. Not pictured: Barbara Dodge, Bookkeeper.

Good-bye and Thank you to P.A. Blalock!

Senior paralegal P.A. Blalock is leaving Pegasus after 6 years of service to New Mexico's children and youth. P.A. joined Pegasus in 2004 mainly working with co-director Liz McGrath on kinship guardianship cases. For the past three years she has focused on working with young parents and homeless youth. She is such an integral part of Pegasus' history and day to day functioning that we are not sure how we will function without her. P.A.'s expertise in handling calls from grandparents and youth will not be replaced any time soon. Thanks, P. A. And remember, there's always a spot here for you to volunteer!

Tara Ford Awarded the New Mexico Voices Patty Jennings Citizen Advocacy Award

In September, Tara was honored to receive the New Mexico Voices Patty Jennings Citizen Advocacy award. This prestigious award honors a New Mexican who has demonstrated outstanding community service in advocating for New Mexico children. Receiving the award meant so much Tara because she had the privilege of working with Patty Jennings and knew that Patty was passionate about creating understanding about the importance of education for all our children, including those with special needs. In accepting the award, Tara talked about how schools critically impact our kids, for better or worse. At Pegasus, we know that quality education is the key to success in our society. Education fosters dreams and helps children obtain the skills they need to achieve those dreams. We are so glad to be able to work towards making sure that equal educational opportunities are available to all children in New Mexico.

Pegasus Jewelry Extravaganza 2010

Held this year at Bosque School, the Pegasus Jewelry Extravaganza was a huge success. Pegasus friends attended to enjoy great food created by Susan Conway and shop for jewelry and silent auction items generously donated by supporters and sponsors. If you are interested in donating to, or becoming involved with, this amazing "extravaganza" please contact Pegasus. Next year we need to cast the net even wider to bring in enough donated jewelry, so please spread the word to your family and friends!!



Shoppers perusing jewelry at the 2010 Jewelry Extravaganza.

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2010

In Memoriam

— of —

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Joe Strawn

Betty Duncan

Gloria M. Roney

Judie Framan

Mission Statement:

Our mission is to promote and defend the rights of children and youth to safe and stable homes, quality education and healthcare, and a voice in decisions that affect their lives.