Home for the Holidays

For most of us, "Home for the holidays" is a phrase that brings back warm memories of love, companionship, and laughter. But for many of our neighbors, the holidays will not be filled with joy and happiness. Far too many people will spend the holidays alone, without a healthy place to live. Inner City Law Center exists to serve these people . . . people like Linus Sanger.

Linus Sanger (not his real name) grew up in Los Angeles as an athletic young man who dreamed of being an artist. After graduating high school, Linus joined the Army and served abroad for four years. While in the service he was severely injured and he lost all ability to move his right foot.

Linus returned to Los Angeles. But he experienced depression, developed reclusive behavior, and was unable to hold down a job. He disengaged from society and was hospitalized for psychiatric problems several times. As his mother put it: "Linus seemed to get moodier and drink more when he was home. He kept to himself and wouldn't talk much about his military time. Linus was very artistic as a young man and wanted to do something in the field of art . . . . After his service, he doesn't care about himself or anyone else." Linus eventually became homeless. By the time ICLC attorneys met him, he had been homeless for six years, was dealing with crippling depression, and was regularly saying things like "Life doesn't seem to matter. I don't have a future."

ICLC helped Linus to apply for VA disability benefits. ICLC submitted briefs, including a letter from Linus' VA therapist supporting his claim that his unemployment, dissatisfaction with life, and homelessness stemmed mostly from the depression that he began experiencing after losing the use of his right foot.

Earlier this month, one year after ICLC filed his application, Linus received a 70% disability rating from the VA for depression secondary to right foot injury. He received over $44,000 in retroactive benefits and will receive $1,525 a month for the rest of his life. Linus is now living in supportive...
housing and plans to use his retroactive benefits to buy a bed, a table, and a stove. He has invited another veteran to eat Christmas dinner with him at his new kitchen table. This year, for the first time in many years, Linus will be "Home for the holidays."

We urge you to click here today to make a contribution to support the Homeless Veterans Project, so that we can continue to fight for justice for our nation's heroes.

Overcoming Housing Barriers

Gene Thomas (not his real name) lived in the same one-bedroom apartment for over ten years. Because he paid a below-market rent, his landlord wanted him out. When Gene mailed in his rent, the landlord refused to accept his check and it returned marked, "Refused - Return to Sender. Soon thereafter, the landlord filed for eviction. Gene came to ICLC for assistance. We soon discovered that even though Gene was paying a below market rent, the landlord had actually illegally increased the rent nine times over the course of the tenancy. In fact, one of these illegal increases had previously been identified and ordered rescinded by the LA Housing Department. We had the theme for our case: The rent was paid! And nine illegal rent increases were made!

When we informed the landlord of our theme, he offered to allow Gene to stay for one month rent free, if he would agree to move out at the end of the month. Gene lives on a fixed-income, and this was insufficient to allow him to move to another place. We refused this offer and began preparing for a jury trial in Long Beach. After extensive negotiations, on the day of trial, the landlord agreed to allow Gene to stay rent free for two months and to provide him with $4,200 to cover his relocation costs. Gene is one of the thousands of low-income tenants that ICLC helps avoid homelessness and remain stably housed every year.

Please click here to partner with us to keep people in their homes.

About Inner City Law Center

Inner City Law Center is the preeminent housing and homelessness legal-services organization working on behalf of poor people in Southern California. As the only provider of legal services located on Skid Row in downtown Los Angeles, ICLC combats slum housing throughout Los Angeles and develops strategies to end homelessness.

Each year, ICLC's staff of 40 (including 20 attorneys) provides free, high-quality legal representation to thousands of low-income tenants, working-poor families, immigrants, people who are homeless or disabled, and veterans. Driven by the fundamental principle that every person should always be treated with dignity and respect, ICLC works for long-term, positive, and meaningful change.

Walking Tours

To learn more about our homelessness and slum housing work, join us for one of our monthly walking tours of Skid Row.

Our next tour will be held on:

Friday, January 23, 2015
from 10:00-11:30 a.m.

The tours begin and end at ICLC's offices at 7th and Central and are usually conducted by Adam Murray, ICLC's Executive Director.

Please contact:
Erin Thompson at EThompson@innercitylaw.org or (213) 891-3209 for information about walking tours.