Quinnehtukqut Legal News

Volume 4 Issue 2

A Newsletter for Native Americans in Connecticut

Winter 2001



Mike Guare and Danny Mills Join Pine Tree's Native American Unit

The Pine Tree Legal Assistance Native American Unit welcomed two new faces to its staff this past fall. Danny Mills joined the Unit as a half-time paralegal. Mike Guare, an attorney, devotes 60% of his time to the Unit, except during the harvest months when he is assigned full-time to the Farmworker Unit.

Danny has worked at Pine Tree in the Farmworker Unit since the summer of 1999. He has already handled some cases for the Native American Unit and is looking forward to doing more outreach work. He enjoys meeting and helping people.

Before joining Pine Tree, Mike worked for Florida Rural Legal Services where he specialized in immigration issues. At Pine Tree, Mike, like Danny, is looking forward to doing more outreach. Mike has successfully handled a number of individual cases so far.



Energy Assistance

If you are low-income, you may be eligible for energy assistance. If your income falls within 0-150% of the federal poverty guidelines, you qualify for help from the Connecticut Energy Assistance Program (CEAP). If your income is

slightly higher AND you have a disabled or elderly (60+ years) member of your household, you may qualify for the State Appropriated Fuel Assistance Program (SAFA).

You can apply for CEAP and SAFA assistance at local Community Action Agencies. Call **1-800-842-1132** or INFOLINE at **211** for local sites. The application period is 11/1/00 through 3/15/01. If you receive AFDC, TFA, AABD or food stamps, DSS should send you preprinted application forms. The heating bills must be in the name of a household member and a copy of the bill should be included with your application.

If you use deliverable fuel (oil, propane, gas, coal, kerosene, and wood) and you use up all your heat benefits before March 16, 2001, you can get crisis benefits from CEAP or SAFA. The benefit is up to \$150 for each fuel delivery. More safety net benefits may be available after that. If you get your heat from an electric or gas utility, you cannot use this program.

Other Places to go for Help: Fuel Banks: Operation Fuel gives emergency energy assistance to people who are

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Important Tax Information



Claim your Earned Income Credit

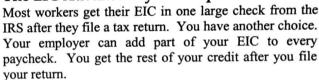


If you worked in 2000, you may be eligible for the Earned Income Credit. If so, you'll owe less in taxes, and you could get cash back. Even if you don't owe income tax, you can get the EIC.

If you raised one child in your home in 2000 and your family earned less than \$27,413, you can get up to \$2,353. If you raised more than one child in your home in 2000 and your family earned less than \$31,152, you can get up to \$3,888. If you weren't raising a child, earned less than \$10,380 in 2000, and were between ages 25 and 64, you can get up to \$353. If you were raising children in 2000, file federal tax return Forms 1040 or 1040A, **not** Form 1040EZ. **Be sure to attach Schedule EIC.** If you weren't raising children in 2000, file the return you would normally file. Be sure to write "EIC" or the dollar amount of your credit on the Earned Income Credit line of your tax form.

Get FREE Help Filing Your Taxes! VITA, a program of the IRS, helps people fill out their tax forms for free. VITA sites are open from late January through April 15. To find the VITA site near you, call 1-800-829-1040. Be patient -- the line is often busy. Remember: paying for tax preparation takes money away from YOUR refund.

Increase Your Take-Home Pay With The EIC Advance Payment Option

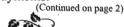


In order to qualify for this program, you must be a worker with at least one "qualifying child" and you must expect your 2001 income to be less than \$28,245. A "qualifying child" includes sons, daughters, stepchildren, grandchildren and adopted children who lived with you for more than half the year. It can also mean other children who lived with you all year and were cared for as members of the family. Qualifying children must be under age 19, or under age 24 if they are full-time students. Totally and permanently disabled children of any age are considered qualifying children.

In order to get the advance payment, fill out a W-5 form called the "Earned Income Credit Advance Payment Certificate" and give the bottom part to your employer. Your employer should have the forms available for you. You can file a W-5 any time during the year, but you must file a new W-5 at the beginning of every year in order to continue getting advance payments.







("Energy Assistance" continued from front page)

not eligible for CEAP or SAFA.. It will sometimes help with utility or energy bills not covered by CEAP or SAFA.. To apply, contact your nearest fuel bank. Call **INFOLINE** at 211 to get the name of your nearest fuel bank.

Soldiers, Sailors and Marines Fund: This program gives energy assistance, including help with utility and energy bills, for people who served in the military during certain time periods and were honorably discharged. Spouses and dependent children can also get assistance. **INFOLINE** for local sites.

Weatherization: Owners and renters who are low income can get free help with weatherization or conservation. This includes paying for services that will make your home or apartment more comfortable and reduce your energy and utility bills. If you are a renter, you must first get permission from your landlord. When you apply for energy assistance, ask for weatherization help. Call INFOLINE for more information.

Arrearage Forgiveness Programs: If you get energy assistance for your gas service, you may participate in this program. This program forgives back bills you owe based on the amount of payments you make and the amount of energy assistance you get. Apply for this program each November, or as soon after November as you can. Electric companies also have arrearage forgiveness programs, but they are not available to all low-income customers. Call your utility to see if there is a program for

Hardship: Low income "hardship" customers are entitled to have gas heat and electric service turned on between 11/1 and 4/15 of every year, even if they owe the utility money. The exception is if gas heat was provided during the prior winter because of "hardship" and the gas service was turned off between 4/15 and 10/31. If you fall into that category, you can get gas service only by paying the lesser of \$100, the minimum payments due under a payment arrangement, or 20% of the debt due to the gas company when the gas was shut off. If you are an electric customer, you are not required to make any payment in

Statewide Legal Services

Call Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut, Inc. (SLS) if you are low

income and believe you have a legal problem. It is a toll-free telephone hotline that can give you free help in the following areas:

* Housing

★ Medicare

* Family Matters

* Medicaid

★ Welfare

★ Other Government Benefits

Telephone Numbers To Call:

In the Middletown calling area:

1-860-344-0380

From other places in Connecticut:

1-800-453-3320

9 a.m.- 3 p.m., Monday through Friday

Now you can call for free advice and information on Thursday nights from 5:30pm-7:30pm, as well as <u> Monday-Friday from 9am-3pm.</u>

order to get service. However, this is a good time to set up an affordable payment arrangement. Gas and electric service must be provided year-round if a lack of service is life threatening, even if you owe money to the utility. Apply for "hardship" protection at the utility every fall.



("EIC" continued from front page)

It is recommended that you not ask for advance payment if you hold more than one job; if you expect to get married during the year; if you expect your income to increase a lot during the year; or if you have a spouse who also works, unless you both take advance payments. If something happens during the year that would change the amount of the EIC you should be getting, such as getting married or a big raise, you can ask your employer to stop putting advance payments in your paycheck. Just fill out another W-5 form and give it to your employer. If you get advance payments during the year, you must file a tax return at the end of the year and include the total amount you received as an advance payment

The Child and Dependent Care Credit

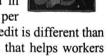
You may also qualify for another federal tax credit. The Child and Dependent Care Credit is a tax benefit that helps you pay for child care you need in order to work or look for work. The credit is also open to you if you must pay for the care of a spouse or an adult dependent who cannot care for him or herself.

You can claim this credit as well as the EIC. You should know, however, that if you earn too little to pay federal income tax, you cannot get this credit. This is different from the EIC.

In order to claim the credit, you must file Form 1040 or 1040A. Specific instructions on this Credit are included with the forms. If you need help, contact the VITA site nearest you. You may get free information about this Credit, by calling 1-800-TAX-1040.

Child Tax Credit Benefits Many Workers Receiving the EIC

The Child Tax Credit was expanded in 1999 and is now worth up to \$500 per



dependent child under age 17. This credit is different than the Child and Dependent Care Credit that helps workers who need day care in order to work.

Generally, the Child Tax Credit is equal to the amount of your income tax for the year up to a maximum of \$500 per dependent child. This credit does not affect your ability to take the EIC and will not reduce your EIC benefits.

If you have three or more children and if you are claiming the EIC, you must fill out IRS form 8812 to see if you are eligible for an extra Child Tax Credit amount. This form must be attached to your tax return. You can call the IRS at 1-800-TAX-Form to get free copies of the form.



Quinnehtukqut Legal News

Pine Tree Legal Assistance

Pine Tree Legal Assistance is a nonprofit organization that gives free legal help to poor people with civil (non-criminal) legal problems in Maine.

Pine Tree operates a special Native American Unit in its Bangor, Maine office. The unit is staffed by attorney Craig Sanborn, part-time attorney Mike Guare, part-time Paralegal Danny Mills, and is headed by Eric Nelson. Craig is a member of the Penobscot Nation. He joined the Pine Tree Staff in September of 1998 Mike and Danny both joined the Unit last fall. Eric has worked at Pine Tree for many years on behalf of migrant farmworkers and Native Americans,

Pine Tree attorneys are not licensed to practice law in Connecticut. However, the Native American Unit may be able to give information and help to low-income Native Americans in Connecticut with federal legal problems, such as questions about the Indian Child Welfare Act and the Jay Treaty. Pine Tree can also refer cases to lawyers in Connecticut. The telephone number is 1-800-879-7463.



The Quinnehtukqut Legal News is published by Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Inc. The views expressed by individual authors in this Newsletter are not necessarily shared by Pine Tree Legal Assistance or its staff.

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You may contact us at Quinnehtukqut Legal News, Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Coe Building, 61 Main St., Room 41, Bangor ME 14401. Or you can send e-mail to csamp@ptla.org or call 1-800-879-7463.





INDEX of COMMUNITY RESOURCES

This is a list of some key resources, which will offer you service or direct you to the best local resource.



CRISIS SERVICES

(available 24 hours a day)



INFOLINE

INFOLINE is a Statewide Information, Referral, and Crisis Intervention Service. Callers can get help 24 hours a day. The professional caseworkers answering the phone can give up-to-date information about agencies and programs, can make referrals, and can intervene in crises, including suicide prevention.



Child Abuse and Neglect:

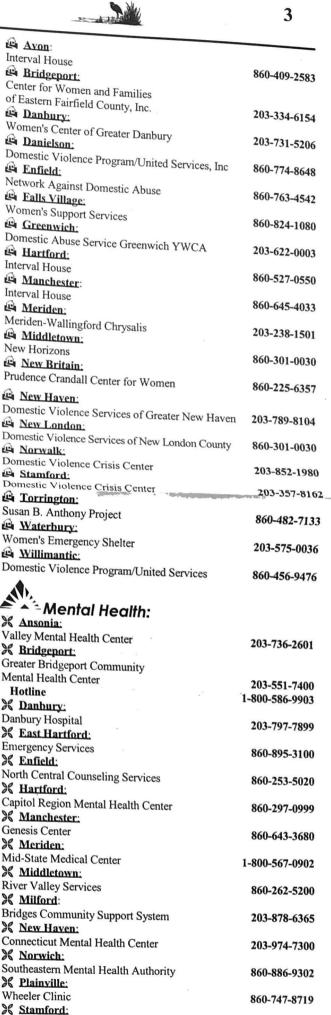
Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline 1-800-842-2288 TD 1-800-624-5518



🖴 Ansonia: The Umbrella Project

203-736-9944

F.S. DuBois Center



203-358-8500



% Torrington:	
Northwest Mental Health Authority	860-482-1560
% Waterbury:	
Waterbury Hospital	203-573-6500
Willimantic:	
United Services	860-456-2261
Poison Control:	
Connecticut Poison Control Center	1-800-343-272
ATTA	TD 860-679-434
Sexual Assault Crisis Pro	grams:
Center for Women and Families	
CE . E.C.IIC I B CC	202 222 222

Sexual Assault Crisis Program	S:
(Hotline Numbers)	
 Center for Women and Families 	
of Eastern Fairfield Co., Inc. Rape Crisis Service	203-333-2233
Women's Center of Greater	
Danbury Sexual Assault Crisis Service	203-731-5204
Hartford Region YWCA	
Sexual Assault Crisis Services	860-522-6666
 Central Connecticut YWCA 	
Sexual Assault Crisis Service	860-635-4424
Rape Crisis Center of Milford	203-878-1212
❖ New Britain YWCA	
Sexual Assault Crisis Service	860-223-1787
 Coordinating Council for Children in Crisis 	203-624-2273
Northeastern Connecticut	
Sexual Assault Crisis Service	860-456-2789
 Susan B. Anthony Project for Women 	
(Serving Northwestern Connecticut)	860-482-7133
❖ Women's Emergency Shelter Sexual	
Assault Crisis Service (ser ving greater Waterbury)	203-753-3613
Savual Assault Crisis Center	200 100 0010
(Lower Fairfield County)	203-329-2929

Youth Crisis:

Contact the nearest Youth Service Bureau through your town hall



LEGAL RESOURCES



☐ Lawyer Referral Service:

This service can recommend a private lawyer who, for a small fee, will assess a case and give an estimate of charges

203-335-4116
860-525-6052
203-562-5750
860-889-9384

☐ Legal Assistance Programs:

These organizations give free civil legal help to income eligible people. This help includes telephone advice, referrals, direct representation, and giving out self-help material, depending on the priorities and resources of the organization.

STATEWIDE	Statewide Legal Service	s 1-800-453-3320
	in Middletown 860-344-	0380

Statewide Legal Services screens cases for all legal assistance programs in the state, giving brief service and advice, community education materials, and referrals to local legal services offices for non-criminal cases

Bridgeport Hartford	Connecticut Legal Services Greater Hartford Legal Assistance	203-336-3851
	(serving Greater Hartford)	860-541-5000
New Britain	Connecticut Legal Services	1-800-233-7619
New Haven	New Haven Legal Assistance	203-946-4811
New London	Connecticut Legal Services	1-800-413-7798
Stamford	Connecticut Legal Services	1-800-541-8909
Waterbury	Connecticut Legal Service	1-800-413-7797
 	Connecticut Legal Services	1-800-413-7796
Legal Ass	sistance to Medicare Patients	1-800-413-7796

Connecticut Legal Rights Project

This organization helps mental health clients, residents of mental health facilities, and out-patient clients of community residential Telephone: 860-262-5030

Connecticut Lawyer's Legal Aid to The Elderly

This organization offers legal help to low-income elderly in the Telephone: 860-273-8164 Hartford area.

Children's Law Center

This organization gives legal representation to children in northeastern Connecticut using a lawyer/mental health team . Telephone: 860-951-7392

Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund

This organization provides a free telephone counseling, information and legal referral line for help on discrimination, harassment and family matters. The group also offers community education and training, mainly in employment and family law. For information on workshops, call 860-247-6090. Telephone: 1-800-479-2949

□ Disabilities:

Connecticut Office Of Protection and Advocacy For Persons With Disabilities

60B Weston Street Hartford CT 06120

Toll Free Telephone: 1-800-842-7303

Hartford area: 860-297-4300

TDD: 860-566-2102 Fax: 860-566-8714



Discrimination:

Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities

Capitol Region: Southwest Region: 1229 Albany Avenue 1057 Broad Street Hartford, CT 06112 Bridgeport CT 06604 Tel.: 860-566-7710 Tel.: 203-579-6246

West Central Region: 50 Linden Street Waterbury CT 06702

Tel.: 203-596-4237

Central Office 21 Grand Street

Hartford CT 06106 Tel.: 860-541-3400 1-800-477-5737 Eastern Region: City Hall, Room 210 100 Broadway Norwich CT 06360 Tel.: 860-886-5703

TD: 860-886-5707



Some Helpful Native American Web Sites

■ Nipmuc Indian Association of Connecticut:

http://www.nativeweb.org/NativeTech/Nipmuc/

Pine Tree Legal Assistance:

http://www.ptla.org

Index of Native American Resources on the Internet:

http://www.hanksville.org/NAresources/

■ Native Links: http://www.johnco.com/nativel/

Native Sense:

http://www.nativesense.com/

Aboriginal Links:

http://www.bloorstreet.com/300block/aborcan.htm

Dusters Native American:

http://www.specent.com/~duster/volc2.html

Wabanaki Confederacy:

http:communities.msn.com/WabanakiConfederacy

