

Quinnehtukqut Legal News



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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

(Continued on page 2)

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



Most workers get their EIC in one large check from the IRS after they file a tax return. You have another choice. Your employer can add part of your EIC to every paycheck. You get the rest of your credit after you file your return.

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.

(Continued on page 2)





("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. Call **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 you.

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

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.

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
- ★ Family Matters
- ★ Welfare
- ★ Medicare
- ★ Medicaid
- ★ 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 Monday-Friday from 9am-3pm.

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.



Pine Tree Legal Assistance

Pine Tree Legal Assistance is a non-profit 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.



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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

211

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



Domestic Violence:

Ansonia: The Umbrella Project 203-736-9944

- Avon:**
Interval House 860-409-2583
- Bridgeport:**
Center for Women and Families of Eastern Fairfield County, Inc. 203-334-6154
- Danbury:**
Women's Center of Greater Danbury 203-731-5206
- Danielson:**
Domestic Violence Program/United Services, Inc 860-774-8648
- Enfield:**
Network Against Domestic Abuse 860-763-4542
- Falls Village:**
Women's Support Services 860-824-1080
- Greenwich:**
Domestic Abuse Service Greenwich YWCA 203-622-0003
- Hartford:**
Interval House 860-527-0550
- Manchester:**
Interval House 860-645-4033
- Meriden:**
Meriden-Wallingford Chrysalis 203-238-1501
- Middletown:**
New Horizons 860-301-0030
- New Britain:**
Prudence Crandall Center for Women 860-225-6357
- New Haven:**
Domestic Violence Services of Greater New Haven 203-789-8104
- New London:**
Domestic Violence Services of New London County 860-301-0030
- Norwalk:**
Domestic Violence Crisis Center 203-852-1980
- Stamford:**
Domestic Violence Crisis Center 203-357-8162
- Torrington:**
Susan B. Anthony Project 860-482-7133
- Waterbury:**
Women's Emergency Shelter 203-575-0036
- Willimantic:**
Domestic Violence Program/United Services 860-456-9476



Mental Health:

- Ansonia:**
Valley Mental Health Center 203-736-2601
- Bridgeport:**
Greater Bridgeport Community Mental Health Center 203-551-7400
Hotline 1-800-586-9903
- Danbury:**
Danbury Hospital 203-797-7899
- East Hartford:**
Emergency Services 860-895-3100
- Enfield:**
North Central Counseling Services 860-253-5020
- Hartford:**
Capitol Region Mental Health Center 860-297-0999
- Manchester:**
Genesis Center 860-643-3680
- Meriden:**
Mid-State Medical Center 1-800-567-0902
- Middletown:**
River Valley Services 860-262-5200
- Milford:**
Bridges Community Support System 203-878-6365
- New Haven:**
Connecticut Mental Health Center 203-974-7300
- Norwich:**
Southeastern Mental Health Authority 860-886-9302
- Plainville:**
Wheeler Clinic 860-747-8719
- Stamford:**
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
1-800-343-2722
TD 860-679-4346



Sexual Assault Crisis Programs:

(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 (serving greater Waterbury)	203-753-3613
❖ Sexual Assault Crisis Center (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.

Fairfield County	203-335-4116
Hartford	860-525-6052
New Haven Area/Waterbury/Middlesex County	203-562-5750
New London/Norwich	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 Services **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	Connecticut Legal Services	203-336-3851
◆ Hartford	Greater Hartford Legal Assistance (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
◆ Willimantic	Connecticut Legal Services Legal Assistance 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 facilities.
Telephone: **860-262-5030**

☞ Connecticut Lawyer's Legal Aid to The Elderly

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

☞ Children's Law Center

This organization gives legal representation to children in northeastern Connecticut using a lawyer/mental health team approach.
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:
1229 Albany Avenue
Hartford, CT 06112
Tel.: 860-566-7710

Southwest Region:
1057 Broad Street
Bridgeport CT 06604
Tel.: 203-579-6246

West Central Region:
50 Linden Street
Waterbury CT 06702
Tel.: 203-596-4237

Eastern Region:
City Hall, Room 210
100 Broadway
Norwich CT 06360
Tel.: 860-886-5703
TD: 860-886-5707

Central Office

21 Grand Street
Hartford CT 06106
Tel.: **860-541-3400**
1-800-477-5737



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/native/>
- ☞ 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>

