

In this issue:**What's an Ombudsman Do? ♦ New Intern ♦ Winter Sock Drive****What's an Ombudsman Do?**

For every investigative report we issue that hits the news, our staff helps solve dozens of problems without fanfare every day. Here is a recent example of how ombudsman staff use their training, understanding of government systems, and compassion to help someone with a problem.

Recently a complainant walked into our office, very angry and upset about a state agency. Communicating with the complainant was difficult, given how stressed and volatile he was. But our intake assistant used his skills (and shared his lunch) to de-escalate the situation. He was able to hear through the anger and desperation to the crux of the problem.

The complainant had asked the Child Support Services Division (CSSD) for a hardship modification to the child support he was paying, since he was disabled and couldn't work. The hardship request had not been processed, so child support was still being taken from his disability benefits each month — leaving him with only enough money for rent OR food OR medication. The situation was clearly taking a toll and the complainant was at the end of his rope.

Despite the difficult first interaction, our staff scheduled an appointment for the complainant to come back a few days later. Staff began to look into the his problem and learned that there had been an error and CSSD owed the complainant a refund of more than \$1,500.00. CSSD acted quickly, and issued a refund a week after the complainant came to our office. CSSD also initiated the closure of the complainant's child support cases, due to his disability.

So much of the work we do is like this — listening to people who often have no where else to go for help, determining whether there is a problem that can be solved, and then working with state agency staff to resolve the problem as efficiently and effectively as possible. This is just one example of how our staff embody our core values every day.

Objectivity ♦ Curiosity ♦ Respect ♦ Integrity ♦ Public Service**New Job Training Internship**

We welcomed our first Job X training intern in our Juneau office in November. Through a partnership with [SERRC-Alaska's Educational Resource Center](#), we host a youth who is seeking on-the-job training and experience to help them achieve their employment and educational goals. Lacy will be spending several months learning basic office and administrative skills, and the "soft skills" needed for long-term success.

Hello!

My name is Lacy and I am the new intern at the Alaska Ombudsman's office. I am learning many new things. I've already learned how to create a PDF, use a postage machine, operate multiple new programs, and transfer calls on a land line. I hope to learn how to communicate with people using language they understand, without making them feel like I am belittling them. I am also using this opportunity to brush up on my typing skills, as I don't type very often in my normal life. I also get the opportunity to be in a professional environment, something I've never encountered before.

I'm also learning that office jobs aren't nearly as boring or repetitive as I had pegged them to be. I have always imagined it would be dull, doing the same thing over and over again.. But I have since learned that you should never assume what a job, or type of job, will be like until you've actually tried it. I get to do all sorts of interesting projects and learn firsthand about people's rights. And while I still wouldn't want my entire career to be based in an office, I definitely wouldn't mind a career that required me to be in an office for a good portion of my time. I am very grateful for the opportunity to intern here and am excited to learn more! I'm can't wait to see what is yet to come and get as much experience as I can.

-Lacy

To learn more about participating in the JobX youth training program, contact Kate Prussing at 907-586-6806.

Winter Sock and Glove Drive

Thanks to the generosity of our staff, friends, neighbors, and partners, we delivered boxes of warm socks, gloves, and hats to The Glory Hole Shelter in Juneau and Covenant House and AWAIC shelters in Anchorage.

January Events

- ♦ Our offices will be closed January 1, 2018 for New Year's Day.
- ♦ Watch for the 2017 Annual Report, to be released in January.

Happy New Year!

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