



Community Justice Center Opens Its Doors to Disabled Vets, Others

TRENTON – Disabled veterans and others will now benefit from free and low-cost legal services offered by a newly formed non-profit law firm, the Community Justice Center. Centrally located in Trenton, the Community Justice Center will provide statewide legal representation for eligible disabled individuals in front of the Veterans Administration and the Social Security Administration, at little to no cost. The Community Justice Center will host a grand opening at its office at 310 West State Street, Third Floor, Trenton, NJ, on Thursday, March 19, 2009, at 11:00am.

Comprised of attorneys, veterans rights advocates, disability rights advocates, volunteers, and other activists, the Community Justice Center will work in collaboration with grassroots and service organizations to address the legal needs of this underserved population.

According to a 2008 study by the Rand Corporation, 20% of the 1.6 million soldiers who have served in Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom since October 2001 have experienced psychological impairments that impede their ability to function upon their return to civilian life. According to the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs—Veterans Benefits Bureau, approximately 3,000 National Guard troops with these and other types of impairments will be transitioning to civilian life. Many are in need of legal assistance in accessing disability benefits from the Veterans Administration and Social Security Administration, yet have had no where to turn. The Community Justice Center intends to be at the forefront in providing legal representation, education, and support to these individuals, as no other public interest law firm addresses these concerns.

The low-income population with non-service-related impairments falls into two broad categories: those with mental health disabilities, and those with physical disabilities. In many instances, individuals suffer from a combination of both. This population must rely on the Social Security Administration for disability payments to sustain its livelihood. Because of personal experience, the Community Justice Center staff is uniquely qualified in assisting these individuals.

For more information about the Community Justice Center and its programs, about how to make a donation or volunteer, or to see if you qualify for legal assistance, visit www.nj-communityjusticecenter.org. Also, be sure to attend the Grand Opening at 310 W. State Street, 3rd Floor in Trenton, on March 19th!

Contacts:

Melissa A. Gertz, Esq.
C. Patterson McKenna, Esq.
609.218.5120