The question of a “raised” child...

Jerome and his sister wanted to share the land they inherited from their father with their “raised” sibling...even though she’s not an heir.

[See page 3 for full story]
WHAT IS HEIRS’ PROPERTY?

Most heirs’ property in the Lowcountry is land that was either purchased by or deeded to African Americans after emancipation. Much of this land has been passed down through the generations without the benefit of a will so that the land is owned in common by all of the heirs, regardless of whether they live on the land, pay the taxes or have ever set foot on the land.

This unstable form of ownership puts heirs’ property at high risk for loss because any heir can sell his/her percentage of ownership to another who can force a sale of the entire property.

A Note From Jennie

A Promise Kept

The vision for the Center is that we will be the trusted source on heirs’ property related issues and will serve as a model for working with historically underserved landowners to protect their land and facilitate their access to the resources needed to maximize the economic benefit of its preservation and use.

With this vision leading us, the Center has matured into the organization the community leaders and planning committee envisioned in 2002. Families are being empowered to resolve their title issues and prepared to leave legacies for generations to come. These individuals’ fore-parents always wanted the homestead to be a place to which all of the relatives could return. One generation plants the seedling and the next generation will harvest it and replant for generations to come—a legacy, a history, and a promise fulfilled.
The question of a “raised” child...

Who is an heir and who is not?

- When there is no will, the heirs are determined by the applicable law at the time of the interest holder’s death, whether or not that person was the original landowner or not.
- A legally adopted child is an heir with a final adoption decree (court order) as proof.
- “Raised” – but not adopted – children are not heirs, according to SC law, and cannot legally share in the estate of a person who dies without a will.
- Children born out of wedlock (sometimes called “outside” children) can be legal heirs and may inherit from a mother or a father who died without a will.

The question of the rights of “raised” children as heirs to inherit property within families comes up fairly often. The law is quite clear. A non-biological child, who has been raised within a family, but not legally adopted, is not an heir.

As the Center’s Supervising Attorney has often said, “Heirs are determined by the law — not by popularity.” That is the law, but as far as Jerome and his sister, Martha, were concerned, Carrie, their much younger, “raised” sister, deserved to own part of their father’s estate just like them.

“He was the only father she ever knew and she was grateful for him,” said Jerome. In the last years of their father’s life, Carrie took him into her own home and cared for him. “That’s when I knew that she was going to have to be part of it,” said Jerome. “And my sister agreed to that.”

Jerome knew that he needed to change the deed to the land from his father’s name, but it was a friend at the town of Bluffton’s water and sewer department who told him to call the Center for help. Luckily, there was still time to probate the estate, within the ten years required by law.

With funds granted by The Beaufort Fund of Coastal Community Foundation for direct legal services and associated legal costs [fees to open a probate, recording fees, etc.], the estate was probated in Beaufort County.

When Jerome grew up in Bluffton, it was nothing but country. He’s painfully aware of how much land has been lost in that area. “The land’s been eaten up!” So, he appreciates even more what Center Attorney Josh Walden did for him. “Like he said it was going to be, it came out just like that.”

With the estate settled, Jerome and his sister can now transfer an interest in the property to Carrie, who looks forward to living on it with her son.
RURAL MATTERS:
Fulfillment of a Legacy: The Power of Productive Land

A promise kept...

Rural America is where the solutions are

A new crop of conservationists-in-the-making.

Whether your land was a gift from an ancestor or land you purchased, it is not enough just to hold on to it. You must know what it’s worth and how to make it work for you.

What does that mean? It means letting go of what “working the land” used to mean and learning about 21st century farming. It means growing trees in a state where timber is an $18.6 billion industry. Money may not grow on trees but “trees do pay,” said Gene Kodama, State Forestry Commissioner.

It means learning all that you can about your land and how it can build wealth for your families. It means coming together and developing long term goals that overcome short term differences.

“Historic land loss disrupted our community and our culture and affected our health,” said Center partner, Ebonie Alexander of the Black Family Land Trust. “We can’t afford to lose another blade of grass, let alone an acre.”

Speaking at the National Rural Assembly, USDA Secretary Tom Vilsak said - “Rural America is where the solutions are.” Solutions to food production, clean air, water and energy options. Rural America is also where people have been historically under-served and generationally poor. The Center’s Sustainable Forestry is changing that.

“Trees not only regulate climate and water flow, they are the economic vibrancy of rural communities,” said Carlton Owens, president of the U.S. Endowment of Forestry and Communities, who hopes to see — “more people of color active in forestry and understanding trees’ importance for the next generation.”

Rev. John T. Wiggins...imagining the possibilities in the midst of a sea of pine seedlings
THANK YOU! U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, Inc. for funding the Center’s land retention and forestry program for three more years. Its impact can be heard in the voices of those who now KNOW the value of what they have...

We have wealth that we didn’t know we had.
Now is not the time to disagree and argue. Now is the time to work together.
Reunions are not just a time to hoop and holler. It’s a time to educate.
It is my hope that we not only keep our land but start to buy more.
I’m happy to finally do something more with my land rather than pay taxes.
Every time a baby is born. Every time someone dies. Every time someone gets married or divorced heirs’ property gets more complicated.
What I have learned I am passing on, because I want others to share in the wealth.
Land and learning equal wealth.

Don’t leave the re-growth of trees to God alone!
I may not live to see all that is done on the land, but it’s nice to think that I’ll be remembered for what I tried to do on my family land.

ASK before you AXE!
10th Anniversary ANGELS, Annual Campaign Donors and Dedicated Funders!

THANK YOU!

YOUR GENEROSITY enables the Center to continue to help families honor their legacy of family land and use it to transform their lives and those of the next generation. The following donors made gifts to the Center between September 1, 2014 — August 31, 2015.

If we have left anyone out, please let us know and accept our sincere apologies.

Individual
Burney L. Adams
Kate Bullard Adams
Dana Adkins
John Ansley
Julie Armstrong
Margaret Blackmer
Myles Bland
Nancy Bloodgood
Catherine E. Boag
Catherine Buxton
James & Yvonne Broaddus
Shirlee B. Brockington
Edward M. Brown
Leonard Brown
Mary Frances Brown
Sarah Lee Burnell
Rebecca Campbell
College of Charleston
Aigal Collinson
Steve & Nancy Clegg
Ruth Williams Cupp
Leon Daniels
Amand Derfner
Susan K. Dunn
Carol DuPre
Margaret D. Fabi
Donald Fowler
J.M. Friar
Deloris Frierson
Hilda D. Gadsden
John D. Geathers
Bernadette R. Hampton
Christine W. Hampton
Susie Hodgwood Linda Howard
Richard A. Hrick
O. Allen Jeffcoat, III
Richard T. Jenne
Wilbur E. Johnson
Walton A. Jones
Sandra D. Jones
Lawrence Keitt
Linda Ketter
Charles G. Lane

Patricia P. Lee
David J. Mack, III
David E. McCann
Cynthia McCoy-Smith
Georgette C. McKenzie
Judy L. McMahon
Judge Joseph S. Mendelsohn
Eric Meyer
Charles & Janie Middletown
Rev. Dr. Dave A. and Mrs. Daisy Mitchell, III
Bishop Andrew Mole, Sr.
Joanne B. Moses
Anthony O’Neill
D. Ashley Pennington
Bernard & Lorraine Powers
Whitney Powers
Marjorie Rath
Renaissance Charitable Foundation
Everard & Ethel Rutledge
Zoe & Alex M. Sanders
Elizabeth A. Santagati
Michael A. Scardato
Julian Lee Scott
Luther W. Seabrook
Ronald C. Vermeule
Simmons
Veronica G. Small
Starr W. Snead
Verneatha Spell-Profitt
Heather Templeton
Najmah Thomas
Marlyn Mitchell Warner
Charladyne P. Vick
Charles S. Way, Jr.
John T. Wiggins
Everett Wilcox & Jan Pomerantz
Gloria Gantt Wilford
Gwendolyn R. Williams
Annie S. Williams
Jacqueline Wilson
Mary Wrighten

Government
City of Charleston
US Dept. Agriculture
Farm Service Agency
Forest Service
Natural Resources
Conservation Service
USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary of Civil Rights

Foundation/Corporation/Firm
Ceres Foundation
Charleston School of Law
Coastal Community Foundation
Beaufort Fund
Open Grants
Social Venture Partners SC Fund
Sharon and David Ward Family Fund
Design from Dixie
Frances P. Bunnelle Foundation
Gaylord and Dorothy Dement Foundation
Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation
May & Stanley Smith Charitable Trust
Post and Courier Foundation
SC Bar Foundation
SC Forestry Foundation
Spaulding Paolozzi Foundation
Sustainable Forestry Initiative
The Joanna Foundation
U.S. Endowment for Forestry & Communities
Wells Fargo

CCF - Lowcountry "Giving Day" Individual Donors + $10,000 incentive grant from the Frances P. Bunnelle Foundation
Anonymous
Karen Abrams
Kate Adams
Dana Adkins
Nathaniel A. Barber
Lauren Beck
Margaret Blackmer
Lilie Brown
Roslyn Browne
Nancy Cawthorn
Kay & Charles Chitty
Anne and Will Cleveland
Jacqueline Cooney
Martha Craft-Essig
Tabara Curry
Jason Darby
A. Stan Davis
Jennifer Davis
Robin Dease
Deanna Demory
Ashley Denothenes
Wendy & Steve Dopp
Eric Doss
Mollie Fair
Mary Edma
Willie Frazier
Conchatta Gregory
Richard Haverstam
Richard Hendry
Marvin Hendley
Patrick Rivers Jones
Howard Krammer
Amanda Lawrence
Anne Lee
Incentee Lemon
Ira Levy
Tish Lynn
Michelle Mapp
Harriet McDougall
Madeleine McGee

James Alan McGregor
Lisa Metreos
John Miller
George Morrison
Margaret Mount
Margaret Mullis
Renee Murray
Ruby Murray
Weesie Newton
Muriel O’Tuel
Whitney Powers
Marjorie Rath
Thomas Richardson
Alan Roussau
Wendy Rout
Michelle J. Sager
Sara Sanders
Kate Schaefer
Alex Singleton
Jeanne T. Singleton
Tiffany Spanni-Willatt
James & Mary Sutton
Nancy Vinson
Josh Walden
Saban Walker
Sharon and David Ward
Robin Wheeler
David White
John T. Wiggins

Sasam Island Sponsors
Platinum
W. Frazier Construction
Silver
Mills Bee Lane Foundation
Bronze
SC USDA NRCS
AgSouth Farm Credit
Anne Rhodes Lee
W. McDonald Rhodes, Co., Inc.
SC Forestry Foundation
Weyheraukere
Bronze
Nancy Bloodgood

Giving is made easy online at: www.heirsproperty.org or by sending your gift in the donation envelope enclosed. Please include your e-mail address on the envelope.

10th Anniversary ANGELS

- Judith Haskell Brewer Fund of TCF serving Richmond & Central VA
- Sam Cook
- Robin C. Duke
- James & Rachel Hutchison
- Julia & Lee McLeod Endowment of CCF
- Julie S. Muckenfuss Family Fund
- Anne Rhodes Lee
- Lothman Family Fund of CCF
- Dr. Celeste Patrick
- The Duke Endowment in honor of
- Bernard Mazzyck
- Robert Schofield, III
- Mary A.C. Ingram Charitable Lead Unitrust in honor of W. Kenneth Swing, Jr.
- Jennie L. Stephens
2016 “Commitment to Justice” Will Honor
Chief Justice Jean H. Toal

On Thursday, March 31, 2016, the Center will honor Chief Justice Jean H. Toal at its “Commitment to Justice” Award Reception at the Francis Marion Hotel [387 King St.] from 5:30-8:00 PM.

Described as a “doer, dreamer and driver,” Toal became the first woman partner at Belser, Baker, Barwick, Ravenel, Toal and Bender, the first woman to chair a standing committee of the SC House of Representatives, the first woman and first Roman Catholic to sit on the State Supreme Court [1988-2006] and then to serve as Chief Justice [2010-2015].

2016 Host Committee
Charles J. Baker, III
M. Elizabeth Crum
Anne S. Ellefson
Faith Rivers James
Wibur E. Johnson
John S. Nichols
Alice F. Paylor
Bradish Waring

Early Sponsor Leadership
$5,000
Charleston County Bar Association
$2,500
Young Clement Rivers, LLP
$1,000
Duffy & Young, LLC
Justin O’Toole Lucey, P.A.
Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice, LLP

$500
Elaine Fowler
Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough
Sue Erwin Harper
Join us and become a sponsor.
Contact Tish Lynn at:
[843]749-7035

Supreme thanks to the generous 2015 Host Committee, Sponsors and guests. You filled the room with love and admiration for a most deserving Lucille S. Whipper.

2015 Host Committee
Dr. P. George Benson
George E. Counts
F. Ramee Gaters
Dr. Barbara D. Dilligard
Dr. Patricia Williams Lessane
Judge Daniel E. and Mrs. Ruby N. Martin, Sr.
Phil Noble
Dr. and Mrs. Kenneth [Priscilla] Robinson

Presenting Sponsors - $5,000
Charleston County Bar Association
Robin C. Duke
International Paper

Event Sponsors - $1,500
MWV
Rhodes Forests, LLC
Young Clement Rivers, LLP

Sponsors - $1,000
Avery Institute for Afro-American History and Culture
Dr. and Mrs. P. George Benson
Berkeley County Bar Association
Charleston [SC] Chapter of The Links, Inc.
Dr. Barbara D. Dilligard
Dixon Hughes Goodman, LLP
Richard E. Field Charitable and Education Fund of Coastal Community Foundation
Francis Marion Hotel
Friends of Jim Clyburn
Jonathan Green
Hayesworth Sinkler Boyd, PA
Heritage Trust Federal Credit Union
Gedney M. Howe, III
Kay Koonce
Law Offices of F. Ramee Gaters, LLC
Justin O’Toole Lucey, P.A.
Judge Daniel E. and Mrs. Ruby N. Martin, Sr.
Trant-Thomas Walker, PA
Dr. and Mrs. Kenneth [Priscilla] Robinson
Susan and Robert N. Rosen
SC Legal Services
South State Bank
Steinberg Law Firm, LLP
TD Bank
The Bank of SC
The College of Charleston Avery Research Center
W. Frazier Construction
W. M. Smith-McNiel Funeral Home
Seth and Carrie Whipper
Whipper Law Firm
Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice, LLP

Supporters - $500
Ascot’s Auto Body & Paint Shop, Inc.
Elizabeth Colbert Busch and Claus W. Busch, III
Craft-Essig & Associates, LLC
CresCom Bank
Eduardo and Tamara Curry
Dorchester County Bar Association
Donald L. Fowler
Helmian Yates & Tisdale, PA
Tish Lynn
Harriet P. McDougal
Greg Padgett
Dr. Harold M. Rhodes, III and Saume M. Rhodes
SC Community Loan Fund
Sally Webb
Dr. Boyd Wright and Brenda Landerback
Chad Yonce, CCIM, CPM — Commercial Real Estate

Supporters - $50
Nancy Bloodgood
J. Sidney Boone, Jr.
Brookdale Branch Partners, LLC / Yvonne Knight-Carter and Eleanor C. Brown
Kay K. Cravy
Counts & Hugel, LLC
Deborah Deas MD, MPH
Fielding Home for Funerals
Eline H. Fowler
Dorothy G. Harrison
Kinley and Arthur Jamison
Dr. Sue Sommer-Kress and John Kreese
Dr. Patricia W. Lessane
Rev. and Mrs. James B. Lewis, Sr.
Love Family Foundation
Ralph C. McCullough, II
Phil Noble
David Rivers
SCACDC
W Kenneth Swing, Jr.
John and Sandy Tockenhorn
The Space Company
Rev. and Mrs. McKenley Washington, Jr.
Watts Law Firm, PA
Charles S. Way
Erna & Bill Womble, Jr.
William and Mary Wrighten
Last spring, the USDA/Office of the Assistant Secretary of Civil Rights funded the Center to share its work with leaders in Georgia, Arkansas, Virginia and Mississippi to encourage similar efforts. The turnout and response was strong in every state and the need for heirs' property and land utilization services are undeniable.

Arkansas at work at the Clinton School of Public Service

The Jackson, Mississippi contingent