



HEIRS' PROPERTY

MATTERS

BBQ at McLeod Plantation
Saturday, Dec. 3rd 12-5 PM
Call for tickets TODAY!

*Clearing Title
Opens
Economic Doors*

Johnnie Mae wanted to cut the trees on her mother's land...but who would be paid? It was heirs' property.

[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

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.

the generations without the benefit of a will so that the land is owned in common by all of the heirs - whether they live on the land; help pay the taxes, or have never set foot on the land.



A Note From Jennie *The Bigger Picture*

There are two dimensions to this bigger picture of the Center — breadth and depth. The breadth involves expansion. The depth involves our impact.

Expansion has already begun in response to the many calls we receive from all over the state and in response to the research we have completed to determine how much heirs' property is left to protect statewide. We provide our legal services across seven counties [Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston, Colleton, Georgetown and Jasper], and our sustainable forestry services now include Hampton, Horry, Orangeburg and Williamsburg counties.

The impact of our work has humbled us all. We are not just protecting heirs' property. We are not just helping families better manage their forested acres for more income. We are, in fact, helping families unlock the wealth-building asset of landownership for themselves and future generations.

The Center's combined work is creating an economic engine for rural landowners, who have been historically and systematically underserved and left out of economic advancement for lack of knowledge and access. This economic engine has started and it's full speed ahead.

**Believe it. Celebrate it.
Support it!**

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1535 Sam Rittenberg Blvd., Suite D,
 Charleston, SC 29407

[843] 745-7055 [phone]

[843] 745-7054 [fax]

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Clearing Title Opens Economic Doors



As executor of her mother's estate, Johnnie Mae knew that she had to probate it but, after attending several of the Center's forestry education workshops, she realized that there was a lot more legal work to do.

She wanted to cut the trees on her mother's land, but the lumber company needed to know who owned the land and to whom the money would be paid.

Various family members had different ideas about what they wanted to do with the land. Center forester Joe Murphy met with them to explain their options. Ultimately they decided to develop a plan for long term, sustainable management of their forest.

The Center's Director of Legal Services Josh Walden arranged a "Family Presentation" — a customized mediation and information meeting to explain the legal process of probating their mother's estate and to explore their legal options regarding eventual division of the land. Forester Murphy also met with the family and provided

the forestry information they needed to make the best decision about what to do with their land.

Ultimately, the estate was completed and Deeds of Distribution recorded, adhering to a Private Settlement Agreement reached by the family.

The heirs are now in the process of acquiring a partition survey on the larger tract of land as well as exploring their options to sell/manage timber. Soon, each family member will be able to decide what is best to do with their piece of land.

"The Center was a great help to us and took away the headache if we'd gone another route," Johnnie Mae said. "Josh Walden and Joe Murphy just made us all feel comfortable. Any time I called to ask a question to better understand something, they would walk us through it. It's just been a smooth journey."

Remember — All heirs have the right to full use and benefit of their family land. If trees are cut, every heir has the right to receive his / her percentage of the profit.

TIMBER THEFT WHAT TO DO?

If your timber has been stolen, don't wait to report it! Call the SC Forestry Commission for help at: (843) 896-8840. For more timber theft information, go to: www.trees.sc.gov/1e.htm

Beware if

- Someone you don't know wants to cut your trees.
- Someone tries to pressure you into a quick sale.
- Someone says that you have pine beetles and you need to cut your trees right away.
- Someone makes you an offer to cut your trees and you don't know what your trees are worth. Contact the SC Forestry Commission for advice and guidance.

BEST ADVICE -

WORK WITH A PROFESSIONAL FORESTER

...and don't sign anything
you don't understand!

THANK YOU! New Annual Gift Match - \$5,000 In Memory of Robin C. Duke

The following donors made gifts to the Center between September 1, 2015 — August 31, 2016. If we have left anyone out, please let us know and accept our sincere apologies.

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 U.S. Endowment for Forestry & Communities
 Wells Fargo Foundation

CCF - Lowcountry "Giving Day"

With the \$7,500 incentive grant from the Frances P. Bunnelle Foundation [FPB]

the Center raised \$19,560. Then, FPB awarded the Center an additional \$1,000 because 100% of our board gave \$100 or more! **THANK YOU!**

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 The "Unique Lowcountry Feast" on Nov. 7th [2015] was enjoyed by all thanks to our generous hosts: Dr. Harold Rhodes, III, Keith "Perry" Waring and Ricky Brown.

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IMPACT

The Center's combined legal and forestry work has started an economic and land conservation engine that is creating inter-generational wealth among historically under-served landowners through land retention and land management and production.



LAND PROTECTION [2005 - TODAY] - The Center has prevented the growth of and protected heirs' property.

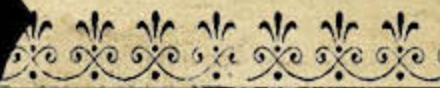
- 1,734 families have received legal Advice and Counsel
- 414 clients have received direct legal services to clear title
- 639 simple Wills have been drafted at free, community Wills Clinics
- 151 titles have been cleared on family land with a total tax-assessed value of \$8.3 million

LAND UTILIZATION [2013 - TODAY] - The Center has promoted sustainable land use through the delivery of forestry education, technical and financial assistance.

- 64 families have developed forest management plans [FMPs]
- 23 have realized \$1,319,598 from timber sales
- 89 families have received a total of \$859,294 in NRCS EQIP [Environmental Quality Incentive program] financial assistance to help pay for work done on their land according to their FMPs

Believe it. Celebrate it. Support it.

Make your gift today!



A Woodland Community Advocate's Testimony

The way forward is through the truth

There were many inspirational speakers at the inaugural "S.C. Rural and Limited Resource Landowners Symposium" hosted by the Center and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service on June 21-22nd on the campus of Voorhees College, but one stood out.

Joe Hamilton, District 12 "Tree Farmer of the Year", and a Woodland Community Advocate for the Center, spoke plainly about the challenge of bringing the Center's message to his community.

He spoke about the fear and suspicion within the African American community that still hold people back. He called it the "crab mentality" which caused a lot of heads in the audience to nod. He believes that the truth of the past has to be faced, talked about and put to rest in order to move forward.

We were taken advantage of so many times. We are naturally defensive and distrustful - even within our own families.

My great grandfather was a slave who put an "X" on a piece of paper to get his first piece of land — 139.5 acres and, by the grace of God, it wasn't taken away from him.

I remember, as a boy, my father going to the cotton gin with his harvest to be cleaned, weighed and to get paid. He'd



leave in the dark and be the first one there and wait to the side...and wait... and wait...into the heat of the day while the white farmers were served before him. He bowed his head, not looking into people's eyes. I was ashamed and asked my mother why he behaved like that and she said — "Don't you know that your daddy is doing what he has to do to live?"

Today, I am a retired civil service employee with prior military commitment in excess of 40 years, and now I have a whole new timber business thanks to the Center's forestry program. If my dad returned here now he would say — "Surely you can't have this. Surely you can't own this. Surely you can't retire at 60 and be OK."

Joe is proud of what he's done, and refuses to be trapped by the pain and anger of the past. He is moving forward making the land his great grandfather and father passed down — work for him and bringing the Center's message to anyone who will listen.



Welcome Vince Keeler, our new Director of Forestry! A native of Coffeeville, Mississippi and graduate of Tuskegee University, Vince has worked for the US Forest Service for 15 years.

To find out more about Vince go to our website at www.heirsproperty.com



2017 "Commitment to Justice" Will Honor Rev. McKinley Washington, Jr.

On Thursday, March 9, 2017, the Center will honor Rev. McKinley Washington, Jr. with its "Commitment to Justice" Award at the Francis Marion Hotel [387 King St.] from 5:30 PM - 8:00 PM.

Reverend Washington grew up the son of a sharecropper in Sumter County to become the beloved pastor of the Edisto Presbyterian Church for 50 years, while helping to lead the struggle for Civil and Human Rights in his community and across the state.

He helped start the Sea Island Comprehensive Health Care Corporation, and the NAACP's first Edisto Branch in 1967. He also served for 16 years in the SC Legislature and 10 years

in the SC Senate, when the words "hot seat" really meant something. There is so much more, but you must come to the "Commitment to Justice" reception to hear it!

Please join us to honor Rev. Washington and support the Center by becoming a sponsor. Contact Tish Lynn at: [843]745-7055

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Heartfelt thanks to the 2016 Host Committee, sponsors, program participants, and guests for making the 2016 "Commitment to Justice" evening so special for The Honorable Jean H. Toal.

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1535 Sam Rittenberg Blvd., Suite D
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USDA Natural Resources Conservation
Service and Voorhees College

The Inaugural "South Carolina Rural &
Limited Resource Landowner Symposium"
brought 160 landowners, partners and
funders together on the campus of
Voorhees College to learn about how to
protect and manage the asset of their land.

**HURRAH! TO THE 2016 "WOODLAND
COMMUNITY
ADVOCATE" GRADUATES**

EDUCATE — ADVOCATE — INSPIRE

"Advocacy is talking about what is and turning it
into what should be!" said keynote speaker, Ms.
J. Latrice Hill, Assistant Deputy Administrator
of Field Operations USDA Farm Service
Agency to the 20 new Woodland Community
Advocates at their graduation on Sept. 17th.
"To be successful, you must always go out on a
limb, persevere, be positive, and have mental
strength." A-men to that!

