Dynamic Growth Ahead for Our 15th Year!

How the Center for Heirs’ Property Preservation continues to expand and to serve.

[See page 4 for full story]
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 — whether they live on the land, help pay the taxes, or have never 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

**Impacting Those We Serve — Looking Forward to Our 15th Year**

In 2002, the executive directors of Coastal Community Foundation and SC Bar Foundation and community leaders desired to have impact by creating a project which used new ideas to address the challenges of heirs’ property ownership. From the beginning, the vision was to go beyond educating landowners on their rights and helping them clear their title issues. The ultimate goal was to help landowners learn how to fully realize the economic asset of land ownership for themselves and their families.

As the Center is about to begin its 15th year of operation as a nonprofit, we have helped realize that ultimate goal. This force—the work of the Center and its partners—is having impact within our service area, our state, the southern region and our nation. We look forward to continued growth, serving additional areas, and by building a new home, the Opportunity Center.

Leadership Team

**Jennie L. Stephens, Chief Executive Officer**
**Josh F. Walden, Chief Operating Officer**
**C. Renee Gregory, Director of Legal Services**
**ReZsuan Lewis, Executive Assistant to CEO**
**Steve Patterson, Director of Forestry**
**Alex Stephens, Director of Outreach**
**Brett M. Wadford, Director of Development**
**Jacqueline W. Wilson, Associate Director of Administration**
**Jeffrey Winget, Director of Communications**

Staff

**Bilal Abdul-Rahmaan, Outreach Liaison**
**Trey Bailey, Forester**
**Brianna Bogan, Staff Attorney**
**David Bourgeois, Forester**
***Rick Gallison, Staff Attorney**
***Anna Garrick-Camara, Legal Secretary**
**Sharmaine George, Forestry Associate**
**Lesley Graham, Database Management Clerk**
**LaVerda Kearse-James, Paralegal**
**Sharon Pigg, Legal Secretary**
**Mary E. Powers, Forester**
**Kelsey Roberts, Outreach Liaison**
**D. Hope Watson, Staff Attorney**
**Walter Whetstone, Forester**
***Orangeburg Office**
2020 “Commitment to Justice” Event Will Honor Christine Osburn Jackson

On March 19, 2020, the Center will honor Christine Osburn Jackson at its “Commitment to Justice” Award Reception at the Francis Marion Hotel [881 King St.] from 5:30-8:00 PM. Christine Osburn Jackson was born in Marion, Alabama. She moved to Charleston in 1963 as a home economist for Clemson University Extension Service. She followed her husband, the late Rev. E.L. Jackson, who moved here after losing his job as a football coach for simply participating in a civil rights march. The fight for equality and justice was a part of the couple’s D.N.A.; it is a family trait. Ms. Jackson is first cousin to Coretta Scott King, widow of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Ms. Jackson led the Greater Charleston YWCA, formerly the Coming Street YWCA, for 37 years. When she became Executive Director in 1966, the organization was a segregated institution. Under her leadership the YWCA witnessed vestiges of racial segregation to emerge as the local community’s premier organization inspiring generations of young women to become strong leaders and advocates for opportunity.

Please join us to honor Christine Osburn Jackson and support the Center! To become a Sponsor or reserve tickets, contact Brett Wadford, Director of Development at [843] 747-7057/bwadford@heirsproperty.org.

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Www.heirsproperty.org
Setting the Table for the Center’s 15th Anniversary!

A great deal of amazing things are happening as we approach our 15th anniversary!

An article in July written by ProPublica and co-published in The New Yorker magazine brought the Center national attention. The story was about the cruel truth of Black land loss. Although it wasn’t focused on the Center, it featured a quote by our Chief Operating Officer Josh Walden on the unique work done here. That mention resulted in many direct inquiries and nearly $250,000 dollars in charitable contributions!

One anonymous donor said, “The recent article in the New Yorker caused me to contact you. Shame, shame, shame that those practices still go on today. The enclosed check is to further your efforts to support Black land owners and bring them justice. Please do your level best to correct these dishonest and unethical practices.”

On December 10th in Washington D.C., at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture, the Center was part of the premiere of Episode III of the PBS series “America’s Forests with Chuck Leavell.” Leavell is a forest owner and has been a keyboardist for the Allman Brothers, The Rolling Stones and many others. The episode features the unique stories of three African-American forest owners as well as highlighting the work of the Center! Chuck was in attendance along with executives, esteemed colleagues, partners, and friends affiliated with the Sustainable Forestry and African American Land Retention Program.

It was announced in August that the Center, along with three other Charleston area charitable organizations, were partnering together to create and operate a new concept for non-profits. A $2.7 million grant awarded in May from the Economic Development Administration, was the catalyst in purchasing the former 31,350 square-foot building in North Charleston. The former furniture store will soon be renovated, creating the Opportunity Center. This unique space will combine job training, a business incubator, entrepreneurial shared space and the offices of the three non-profits all under one roof. Owning the building and sharing expenses will not only cut costs, but will also help generate revenue for the three organizations.
We Are Here to Help You. Who Are We?

The legal department at the Center wants to help families preserve ownership of their inherited land. However, it is understandable that people are skeptical about trusting strangers with what is often their most valuable asset. So, we would like to introduce you to our legal staff.

Renee Gregory, hired as a staff attorney in 2016, became Director of Legal Services in 2019. She is a native of Berkeley County. Renee said, “Sadly, before coming to work at the Center, I was not able to help most of the people who approached me about assistance with issues with family land because they did not have the financial resources. Now, I am able to help them and I don’t have to bill them…. My favorite moments are the calls and cards received expressing appreciation for the services provided by the Center.”

Hope Watson volunteered with the Center as a law student. In 2014, Hope officially joined us as the Community Outreach Coordinator. She transitioned into a staff attorney position in 2015. Hope was born and raised in McClellanville, SC. She is a proud veteran of the United States Army and a Certified Civil Court Mediator. Hope says, “I primarily love this work because I enjoy helping families protect their ownership of their land. My favorite moments are when I call or see a client and I am able to tell them their legal action is done, and their title is good.”

Rick Callison is the attorney in the Center’s Orangeburg office. Rick grew up in Charlottesville, VA. While Rick is not a native of SC, his family has decided to make SC their home. Rick said, “My favorite moment was in early 2019 when the Center opened its first satellite office in Orangeburg with a ribbon cutting ceremony. In addition to the pageantry of this well-orchestrated event, the opening meant that residents from new parts of SC would now have increased access to the Center’s services.”

The Center’s newest attorney is Brianna Bogan. A native of Stone Mountain, Georgia, Brianna came to SC to attend Charleston School of Law and decided this would be her home. Brianna joined the Center in May 2019. She revealed that she joined the Center “because of its direct impact to the community and involvement in heirs’ property legislation.” According to Brianna, her English degree equipped her to effectively communicate and present complex legal issues.

One of Brianna’s favorite moments was a recent wills clinic. She said, “The clients considered it a gift that we provide such an important service for free.”

The legal department staff also includes: LaVerda Kearce James, paralegal; Sharon Piggs, Legal Secretary; and Anna Garrick-Camara, legal secretary. They are vitally important to the service the Center provides.

If you have questions about title to land in SC or a probate matter, call the Center to make an appointment for a free one-hour consultation. Call our main office at 843-747-7055 or our Orangeburg office at 803-987-4481.
**MATTERS**

THANK YOU! YOUR GIVING MATTERS...in every way that you do it!

The following donors made gifts to the Center between September 1, 2018 and August 31, 2019.

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

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**GOVERNMENT**

- US Department of Agriculture
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- Conservation Service [DC]
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- Conservation Service [SC]
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On the Hunt...for Generational Wealth

What is a hunting lease?
In short, hunting leases are a contract by which one party conveys land to another for a specified time, usually in return for a periodic payment. They are desirable because hunting private land allows for more privacy, less pressure, guaranteed access, and less foot traffic making for a better hunt.

You may find an example of a basic hunting lease at this website: https://cforms.com/rental/hunting-lease-agreement/.

Benefits of leasing
There are less obvious benefits to leasing as well. If you live far from the land, having someone actively managing the land will make it less likely that people will trespass, dump trash, or set forest fires. Our foresters have worked with many landowners who were taking on liability they knew nothing about, and were not being compensated for the service they were providing.

How much money can I make leasing land for hunting?
Hunting lease prices vary a great deal, even in our service area. The acreage, location, habitat, wildlife abundance, access and other amenities all factor into lease rate.

What about liability?
Many insurance companies offer hunting insurance. You can quickly and easily get a quote for your land over the internet. As an example, you can purchase a two million dollar policy for 45 acres of land for a little over $100 per year.

Where can I find out more information?
If you have questions about your specific land holdings, and the potential to lease your land contact the foresters at the Center for more information.
Welcome!

Please welcome the newest members of our team! [From Above Left] Bilal Abdul-Rahmaan, Outreach Liaison; Brianna Bogan, Staff Attorney; LaVerda James, Paralegal; [From Center Left] ReZsaun Lewis, Executive Assistant to the CEO; Mary Powers, Forester; Kelsey Roberts, Outreach Liaison; [From Below Left] Alexa Stephens, Director Outreach, Walter Whetstone, Forester; and Jeffrey Winget, Director of Communications.