



November 14, 2022

Dear Friend,

Gratitude, reassurance, resolve ... there was a lot packed into John Tishler's declaration that, "TJC is here to stay." A wise board member and generous volunteer, John was explaining why the Tennessee Justice Center should build its own home. It wasn't just because we kept losing our leases to Nashville's red hot real estate market. It certainly wasn't because it would be easy, or because TJC needed another challenge.

John was making a larger point. For 26 years, TJC has been an advocate for and with low-income families and children seeking access to health care, adequate nutrition, financial security and equal opportunity. We've walked with them as they have sought justice and dignity for those they love.

It has been a profound privilege, but not always an easy path. There have been grievous losses as well as transformative wins. Power concedes nothing without a demand. Power also doesn't take kindly to those making the demand. Borrowing courage and resilience from the families we serve, TJC has often had to take stands that have put its future in doubt. For many years, it was far from clear whether the organization would survive.

We *did* survive, though, and that was John's point. We are told so often by clients, partners and even strangers that TJC gives them hope. They need to know that TJC is here to stay. John had the vision to see that a permanent home would assure the community that TJC is here for the long haul. The new building is more than a workspace. It is a tangible assurance that, in the face of injustice and indifference, TJC will continue to demand dignity and respect for all Tennesseans. It is our promise to each other that, in a state and country wounded by divisions, TJC will stand with those appealing to our better angels, and will uphold the values that, deep down, nearly all of us share.

I am intensely proud of TJC's dedicated staff and, oh, so grateful for our extraordinary board. Without the wider TJC community, however, TJC would not be "here to stay." Again and again, volunteers and partners have materialized in times of crisis to help pull us through. In hard times, we have been stunned by the generosity of donors, including those whose own

circumstances have been much more dire than ours. When we have felt beaten down, heroic clients have provided the courage and determination that we so needed. The “village” that sustains TJC has given us hope when it has been in short supply. These miracles recur so often that they are woven into the very fabric of TJC. And, so, when John challenged us to raise millions of dollars during a pandemic to acquire a permanent office, we were able to see it as a promise, rather than a gamble.

The hope you give TJC gets passed on to individuals like Eduardo Sanchez-Garcia. Devastated by pulmonary disease while still in his 40’s, he was weeks from death. He had worked hard since his teens, but when illness prevented him from working, he lost both his job and the health coverage it provided. From a medical standpoint, he was an ideal candidate for a lung transplant, but he was ineligible because he was uninsured. He and his young family found hope in TJC’s promise to do all we could to save his life. We were able to find an obscure way to qualify him for TennCare, enlist compassionate social workers and state officials to rush through his application, and make it possible for him to get the surgery that saved his life. He will soon be back at work. He and his family are beyond grateful that you helped make that happen, and so are we.

Sometimes, a few clients enable TJC to benefit thousands of others. Last year, TJC led opposition to the TennCare block grant that the Trump Administration approved just before leaving office. The unprecedented scheme spelled disaster for Tennesseans and, if left standing, would ultimately undermine the Medicaid safety net on which more than 80 million Americans rely. TJC filed a suit that catalyzed a national campaign to urge the federal agency to rescind its approval. Thanks to the courageous clients and dedicated pediatrician who joined in the lawsuit, the most dangerous features of the block grant were just withdrawn. We are pressing for further reforms, but it is hard to overstate the importance of this victory for Medicaid patients nationwide.

We will soon move to our new home in Nashville’s Cameron-Trimble neighborhood, whose proud history of resilient resistance to injustice runs from Reconstruction through the Civil Rights Movement to today. We will draw inspiration from that history and learn from our new neighbors, grateful that, with your encouragement and support, “TJC is here to stay.”

Warm regards,



Michele Johnson
Executive Director