



November 7, 2017

Dear Friend,

This has been a year of tremendous challenge and almost unfathomable hope. You have certainly read about the challenges: lawmakers repeatedly and relentlessly threatened vital programs for our most vulnerable neighbors, showing disregard for the financial security and health of families, the dignity of older adults, and the nutritional needs of low-income children. And I hope you have also seen what I have seen: that in the midst of these challenges, this year's countless miracles stand out. Love, compassion, and courage have won again and again. In my 24-year career, I can say with all honesty that I have never been more hopeful about what is possible.

Friends ask us how we refuse to fall into despair. Lord knows we at TJC have been tempted during these chaotic and long days. But we do not despair – not because we are naïve or even particularly optimistic, but because every day we have the privilege of witnessing the power of real human stories. These brave and honest stories break down barriers, inspire hope, and tap into the compassion for our neighbors that nearly all of us share.

Joe Manes is an Iraq war veteran, Trump supporter, and father of 22 year-old Ashley, who has been quadriplegic since a terrible automobile accident when she was two. When Joe learned about a bill in Congress that would gut Medicaid and put millions of people like Ashley at risk, TJC helped him share his story in a moving Father's Day op-ed. Joe wrote that Medicaid had saved his daughter's life by covering services no private insurance company would. He concluded, "Protecting Medicaid is not a Republican or Democratic thing. It's about American values and being able to count on each other. In combat, we pledge to never leave a comrade behind. Please don't leave behind people like Ashley."

When Ashley's well-being, and that of millions like her, was under threat, it was not policy analysis that ultimately led to the unpopular bill's defeat. It was a chorus of voices like Joe's, showing the bill's impact on real people. TJC was privileged to be there to help Joe and hundreds of others share that voice.

Instead of the fractured, frustrated world I often see when I turn on the news or scroll through my Facebook feed, my days at TJC are filled with people who overwhelmingly believe that Joe and Ashley and all of their neighbors deserve dignity and security, which means access to basic necessities like health, opportunity, and adequate nutrition. They are from every corner of Tennessee, from all political persuasions and walks of life – small business owners, religious leaders, moms. They are all moved by the needs of their neighbors to join with TJC in working for a system that reflects our shared values.

TJC has always lived at the intersection of individual need and complicated systems, and has made an incredible impact by doing so. Hard-pressed families in every part of Tennessee benefit from TJC's work. Even at the highest levels of nerdy policy analysis or technical legal advocacy, all our work is grounded in our relationships with the families we serve. The over 1,000 clients we served this year, the 130 trainings we conducted, the millions of people we reached through social media, and the thousands of calls we generated from real Tennesseans to their elected officials, all served to help empower and amplify the voices of real people and support systems that reflect our shared values.

TJC has been and always will be a fierce, committed defender of justice and a staunch advocate for our clients. At times, this means invoking the law and opposing systems and policies that are against our values and the needs of our clients. But we always do so by appealing to the light in everyone and recognizing that real power is not found in having the most resources or best legal minds or allies in high places – if that were the case, we would always lose. Real power is in stories like Joe's that move hearts and minds toward compassion for our neighbors.

In a world of sound bites and tweets, where barriers are pronounced and people are too often reduced to their political persuasion or ideology, we see the universal power of people like Joe to make a difference. Your support allows us the immense privilege to amplify that miraculous power. Whatever happens in Washington, whatever the crisis of the moment in the media, whatever challenges and opportunities our clients and communities face, one thing is certain: with your help, TJC will be there to support families like Joe's and work toward policies that are worthy of their courage and generosity.

Please support TJC as we champion those values and build a more just, humane, and inclusive community for all Tennessee families. We are grateful beyond words, and in spite of many challenges, we are full of hope.

Best,



Michele Johnson
Executive Director

P.S. Your dollar goes further with a gift to TJC. We secured \$31,600 in life-changing services for Tennessee families for every \$100 raised. Help us continue to change lives with a gift today.