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IDAHO LEGAL AID HELPS RESIDENTS OF RUSHMORE MOBILE HOME PARK RECEIVE COMPENSATION

Boise, ID—On April 19, 2016, Idaho Legal Aid Services successfully negotiated a settlement to compensate residents of the Rushmore Mobile Home Park in Nampa, Idaho so they will be able to move or relocate their mobile homes.

Since late-February more than 60 people residing at the Rushmore Mobile Home Park have lived in unsafe and unsanitary conditions because of a failed, septic system that resulted in raw sewage bubbling up from the ground. When the septic system first failed, the Park owner restricted residents' access to water to 15 minutes per day. Residents' water access was eventually increased to one hour per day to perform essential tasks such as basic hygiene, bathing, cleaning, and cooking.

In mid-March, the City of Nampa posted a Notice to Vacate on the front doors of the homes instructing residents to either vacate their homes or move them from the Park by April 17th because the living conditions were unhealthy and violated Health and Safety Codes. The City also required the Park owner to provide residents with 5 hours of water per day. The Park residents are low income, and did not have the funds to move their manufactured homes. Some homes could not be moved because they were too old and could not meet current legal requirements without extensive and expensive updates. Some residents feared homelessness once the Park was officially closed.

Idaho Legal Aid attorneys, with the help of Intermountain Fair Housing Counsel and a team of social workers from the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, held several meetings with Park residents to help them understand their legal rights and develop options to prevent their eviction. The attorneys from Idaho Legal Aid served notices on the landlord requesting that he repair the septic system or connect the homes to the City sewer, or face legal proceedings. Idaho Legal Aid attorneys negotiated an extension of the City's Notice to Vacate until May 31st to give the residents more time to vacate or move their homes and to negotiate a Settlement Agreement with the Park owner. The Park Owner agreed to a settlement that will compensate the residents so they can find new residences or pay for the cost of having their homes moved to a new park.

Howard Belodoff, Idaho Legal Aid attorney stated, "The situation faced by the residents was dire because they were living in an unhealthy environment, and were being forced to abandon their homes because they had no funds to pay the cost of moving, and updating their homes or renting a new place to live. The settlement was a fair compromise, and was accomplished expeditiously without expensive and prolonged litigation."

Jennifer Giuttari, Idaho Legal Aid attorney added, "We couldn't have accomplished this positive outcome for our clients without the help of our community partners. Everyone pulled together to offer help and resources to the individuals and families experiencing tremendous stress. It was heartening to see this kind of support being offered to people in need."

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