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TIMPANOGOS



LEGAL



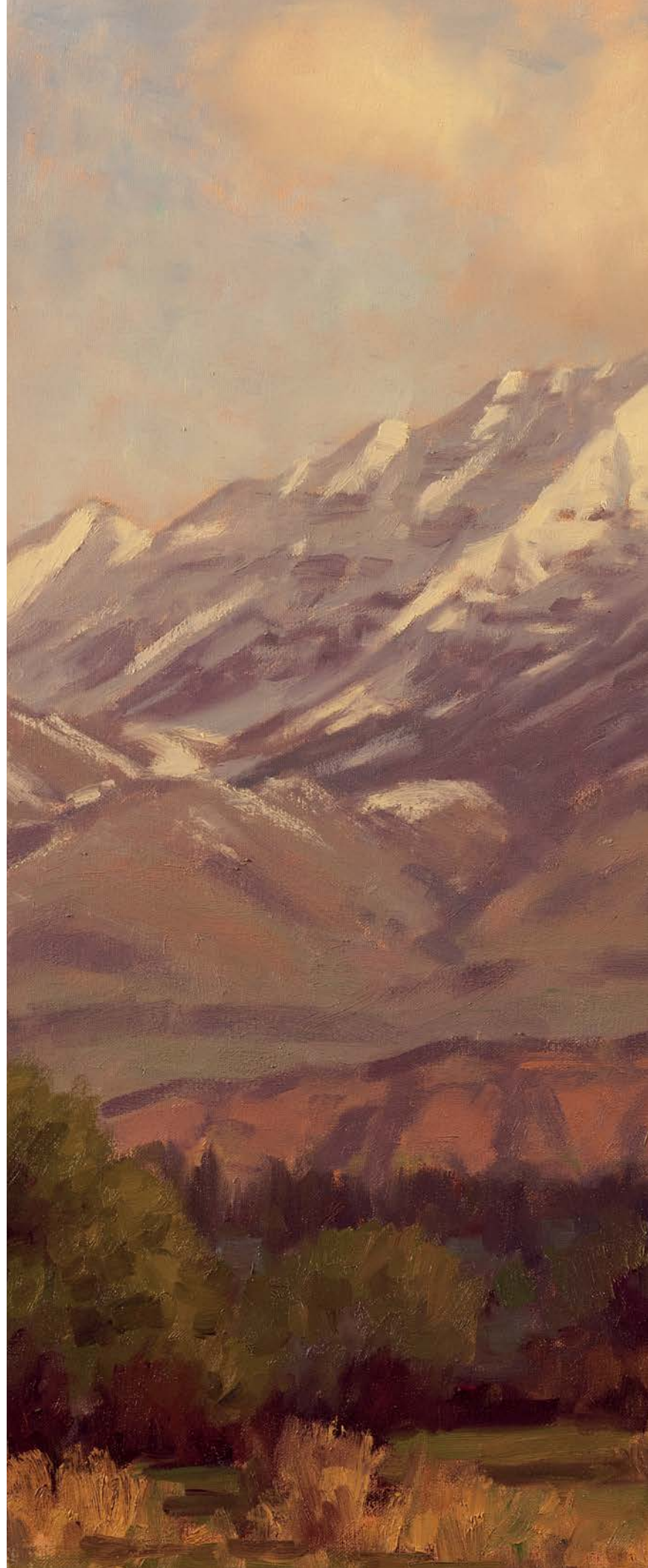
CENTER

A POWERFUL  
CONFLUENCE FOR GOOD

*by Jane H. Wise*

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PAINTING OF MOUNT TIMPANOGOS  
BY KARL THOMAS







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For years the Utah County legal community has seen the need for delivering pro bono legal services to low-income clients who weren't being helped by other organizations. The dream was to have skilled legal volunteers help at a pro bono center sustained through the legal community's donations of time and money and not founded on any one person's charisma or agenda. This was to be a community effort. There were stops and starts, but nothing sustainable was attained until the Timpanogos Legal Center (TLC) was formed in the fall of 2010. This dream became a reality because of the legal community's vision and commitment to make it succeed.

Named for the mountain that stands sentinel over Utah County, the acronym for the Timpanogos Legal Center—TLC—was chosen for the care the Center was prepared to give to its clients. TLC's mission statement is “Lifting Lives Through the Law.” The Center is open every Tuesday evening at the

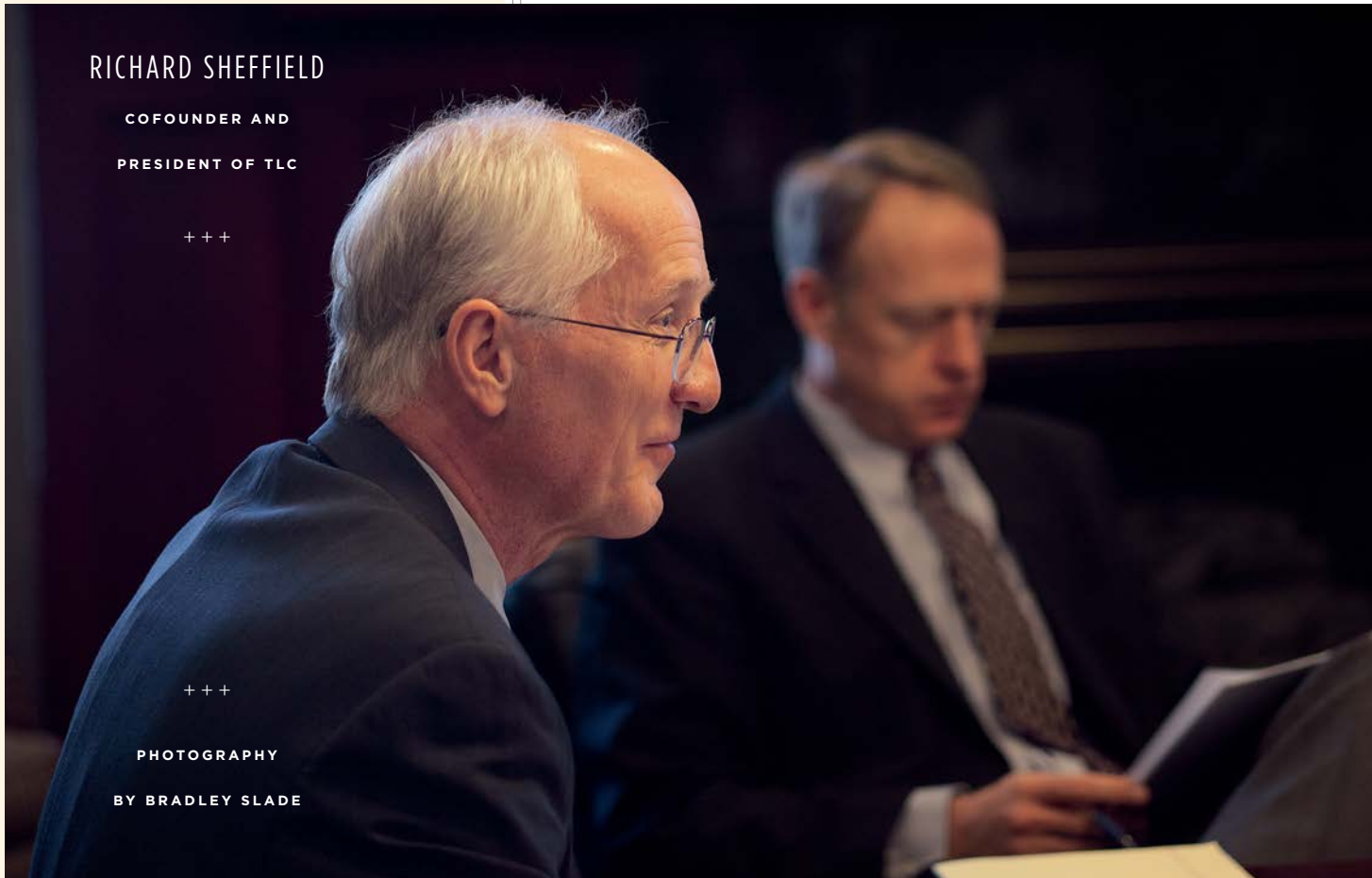
RICHARD SHEFFIELD

COFOUNDER AND  
PRESIDENT OF TLC

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PHOTOGRAPHY  
BY BRADLEY SLADE





Health and Justice Building in downtown Provo, and a special document clinic is held once a month. “We wanted to convey an image of lifting your eyes up to Timpanogos,” said Richard Sheffield, cofounder and president of TLC. “Pro bono service is a blessing not only to the people who receive the service but also to those who give. There is an uplifting feeling experienced by those who give the service that is real, that makes you enjoy the legal practice more, and that helps you be even more effective in legal practice.”

The confluence of people involved with the law along with community legal organizations made TLC happen. The list is impressive.

## PARTNERS

*Central Utah Chapter of J. Reuben Clark Law Society.* Richard Sheffield was chair of the Central Utah Chapter of J. Reuben Clark Law Society in 2010 when he looked to the Southern Utah Community Legal Center in St. George as a model for establishing volunteer legal services for Utah County. He was inspired by the scripture that was the theme for the then upcoming Law Society conference: “Put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit . . . , which shall enlighten

your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy” (D&C 11:12–13).

To found the Center, Sheffield drew together the entities he foresaw would become the best partners in coming up with a plan like the Southern Utah model. Some changes were made to fit the plan to what was unique in Utah County. “I’m doing this because I care about reaching out to the neediest in my community,” Sheffield said. “Looking for an opportunity to do good has made me find more fulfillment in my own legal practice.”

*BYU Law School.* BYU law professor James Backman has been involved in exploring means for providing pro bono services through students and volunteer attorneys since the early 1990s. He has been a champion for the Center from the beginning. As a cofounder, he says, “Every attorney is responsible to assist both pro bono clients and those organizations serving persons of limited means. This reaches to those preparing for practice, too. Law schools must provide substantial pro bono activities for their students under law school accreditation rules.”

Susan Griffith—a part-time professor at BYU Law School, a Utah Legal Services attorney, and the executive director of TLC—serves as one of the licensed attorneys at the Center. She graduated from the Law School in 1987, served an externship at Utah Legal Services while a student, and went to work there after graduation. She knows intimately the legal problems facing the poor and specializes in family law having the tools to aid



Richard Sheffield and Craig Carlile (*opposite*), Professor James Backman, cofounder (*above*), and Marilee Allred and Susan Griffith, executive director (*left*), at a Timpanogos Legal Center Board meeting.

victims of domestic violence and child abuse. She has taught courses at the Law School in elder law, domestic law intervention, street law, and lawyers as leaders in the community. Currently more than 100 BYU law students assist approximately 70 attorneys at TLC with initial client interviews, in drafting documents, and in preparing for hearings and trials. Third-year law students can help argue in court under the Utah third-year practice rule. “Law students fit well in the program as volunteers,” Griffith said. “At the document clinic they bring their computers and pair up with the attorney volunteers. Students do the typing and the legwork for the attorneys, and TLC provides the document templates.”

BYU law students have found that working side by side with practicing attorneys not only provides great work experience but also brings personal fulfillment. Camille Borg, current president of the Law School’s Public Interest Law Foundation, has served with TLC from the first. “Students should get involved because it is the right thing to do,” Borg said. “Lawyers have a responsibility to help lift lives through the law.”

*Central Utah Bar Association.* Liisa Hancock, Central Utah Bar Association (CUBA) president, is a member of the TLC Board and CUBA’s representative to the Center. Having attorneys volunteer from CUBA is essential to TLC’s staying power, with even inactive attorneys able to participate. Like students who look forward to working side by side with practitioners, attorneys enjoy working with students and mentoring them.

Utah has a rule that allows attorneys on inactive status to still do pro bono work so long as they are under the direction of a licensed attorney. “The TLC has identified and invited participation of unique groups of inactive status attorneys,” Professor Jim Backman said. “We call this group our ‘TLC team of attorneys,’ and we have had more than 40 step forward to be involved in ways permitted by newly established bar association rules for inactive attorneys to assist on pro bono matters.”

Not all inactive attorneys are those who have practiced for years and then retired. Griffith reports on a subset of this group: “I love that we can give our stay-at-home mothers a chance to do important community service work. This program gives these really



Volunteers at a TLC document clinic.

talented women the opportunity to primarily work at home. At the same time it provides an outlet for them to use their professionally trained skills.” TLC also draws volunteers from recent graduates who aren’t fully employed and want to be engaged, using their law skills to prepare documents and interview clients. Although unpaid for their services, these new attorneys are building résumés.

Utah County attorneys, whether on active or inactive status, and Utah County law firms are committed to TLC. Their donations of time and money keep TLC busy serving the low-income clients.

*Utah Valley University Paralegal Department.* Jill Jasperson of the Utah Valley University (UVU) Legal Studies Program is a member of the TLC Board. UVU paralegal students volunteer on Tuesday nights at the Center and at the document-writing clinic, using their creativity and practical skills to serve clients. They are an important part of the student volunteers at the Center.

#### OTHER TLC CONNECTIONS

Not only does TLC have partners in Utah County, it is connected with the larger state legal community.

*Utah Legal Services.* Utah Legal Services has always had walk-in clinics for low-income

clients, but it simply hasn’t been able to provide ongoing representation for most clients because of a lack of funds. There has always been a need for volunteer attorneys to fill that gap. TLC is helping to provide those services in Utah County.

Utah Legal Services provides client screening for TLC, and attorneys Sue Crismon and Susan Griffith coordinate the volunteers and supervise the inactive volunteers during clinic hours. Volunteers are given access to cases, forms, and sample pleadings provided by Utah Legal Services. Staff attorneys answer volunteer’s questions, and Utah Legal Services provides staff for continuing legal education seminars on family law issues—those most often encountered by TLC volunteers.

*“And Justice for All,” Utah Bar Foundation, United Way.* Located in Salt Lake City, “And Justice for All” helps with fund-raising efforts for its groups: Legal Aid Society, Utah Legal Services, Disability Law Center, Utah State Bar, and the Minority Bar. It has adopted TLC as a subagency so that TLC donations flow through directly for TLC along with the other donations for its other entities. The organization “And Justice for All” provides an advisory role for TLC. The Utah Bar Foundation, an arm of the Utah State Bar, provides annual grant money from the Bar to Utah Legal Services. The United Way has provided



Tamara Fackrell of the Law School trains attorneys in mediation at the Food and Care Coalition.



funding for a TLC coordinator, Debbie Myers, who helps with the case screening.

#### THE PLAN FOR VOLUNTEERS

TLC can call on a broad range of volunteers because of two Utah practice rules. With the “limited scope” practice rule in Utah, it is now possible to represent clients for only part of their case. TLC helps clients generate documents for temporary orders and other limited representation in cases, providing what is most immediate for the client. The Utah Courts website doesn’t provide online documents for temporary living arrangements. This is an example of how volunteer attorneys can help represent clients within the

“limited scope” rule. They prepare the papers for temporary order hearings and prepare the clients to appear in those hearings with documents that are understandable and clear to both the client and the court.

The second practice rule opens up practice opportunities for attorneys who are inactive to volunteer with TLC. So long as the inactive attorneys are supervised by a licensed attorney, they can work in the Center’s clinic and document center. Free continuing legal education seminars for Utah State Bar accreditation provide the training for these attorney volunteers.

For more information on how you can help the Timpanogos Legal Center or attend a free CLE, contact:

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