



# PEGASUS

LEGAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

Promoting and defending  
the rights of children and  
youth to safe and stable  
homes, quality education  
and healthcare, and a  
voice in decisions that  
affect their lives.



## ANNUAL REPORT 2017



**Pegasus staff, donors and board members made 2017 a successful year of transition. Bette Fleishman, Pegasus Executive Director, and other Pegasus team members delivered on our mission statement to provide comprehensive, high-quality legal services to some of the most vulnerable children and youth in our state.**

**Thanks to our generous donors:** We raised \$140,874 to support our work and over \$10,000 for our endowment to support Pegasus in perpetuity. We appreciate all your investments in creating justice for children!

**The Pegasus Board welcomed new members:** Matt Loehman, Dan Hyman, Alison Pauk and Eva Buchwald. Each of these leaders bring important perspective and experience that benefits the Board and organization. I anticipate the new energy among staff and Board will drive Pegasus to meaningful accomplishments during 2018/2019.

Ian Esquibel, MBA  
Out-Going Pegasus Board President



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## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

1. We directly impacted 668 children and 476 families through direct legal representation; indirectly impacting over 3,500 individuals through statewide outreach, education, policy advocacy.
2. Pegasus' model is unique in New Mexico; we cover ground that few national organizations do. We focus on individual representation and broader policy goals that have significant impact on the lives of children and youth.
3. This year we expanded our representation to the Pueblo of Isleta. Four Pegasus attorneys were admitted to practice in the Pueblo of Isleta Tribal Court.

# THE PEGASUS TEAM



**BACK ROW** (Left to Right): **Marta Hines**, Legal Assistant; **Cassandra Dennis**, Office Administrator; **Ella Brown**, Social Worker; **Natalie Catanach**, High School Intern; **David Monson**, Finance Officer; **Matthew Bernstein**, Senior Staff Attorney

**FRONT ROW** (Left to Right): **Cindy Quinonez**, Receptionist; **Lynda Romero**, Administrative Assistant; **Miriam Rea**, Program Director; **Bette Fleishman**, Executive Director; **Meyghan McCrea**, Staff Attorney; **Nicole Saunders**, Paralegal; **Harlena Reed**, Staff Attorney; **Mariel Willow**, Staff Attorney

**NOT PICTURED:** Alyssa Otero, Office Assistant.



## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends, It has been an honor, and a humbling experience, to be appointed the Executive Director of Pegasus and follow in the footsteps of the founders: **Liz McGrath** and **Tara Ford**, whose vision continues with the dedicated work of the entire Pegasus staff.

That vision has become a reality. This past year the American Bar Association (ABA) selected Pegasus as a Homeless Youth Legal Network Model Program site. This network was developed to increase legal services and improve outcomes for homeless youth and young adults; including those transitioning from the children welfare system and exiting the juvenile justice system.

This work would not be possible without the generous support of our funders, donors, and volunteers and we thank you for believing in this work. I also want to thank our clients, of all ages, for trusting us and teaching us about the challenges and struggles facing our children today.

Sincerely,

Bette Fleishman, Executive Director



**MARIEL WILLOW,**  
Staff Attorney

**Mariel Willow, received her B.A. in Sociology from the University of New Mexico in 2010, and her J.D. from the Tulane University School of Law in 2014. Prior to joining Pegasus in May of 2017, Mariel served as a Staff Attorney for DNA-People's Legal Services in Farmington, and an Assistant District Attorney with the Second Judicial District Attorney's Office in Albuquerque.**

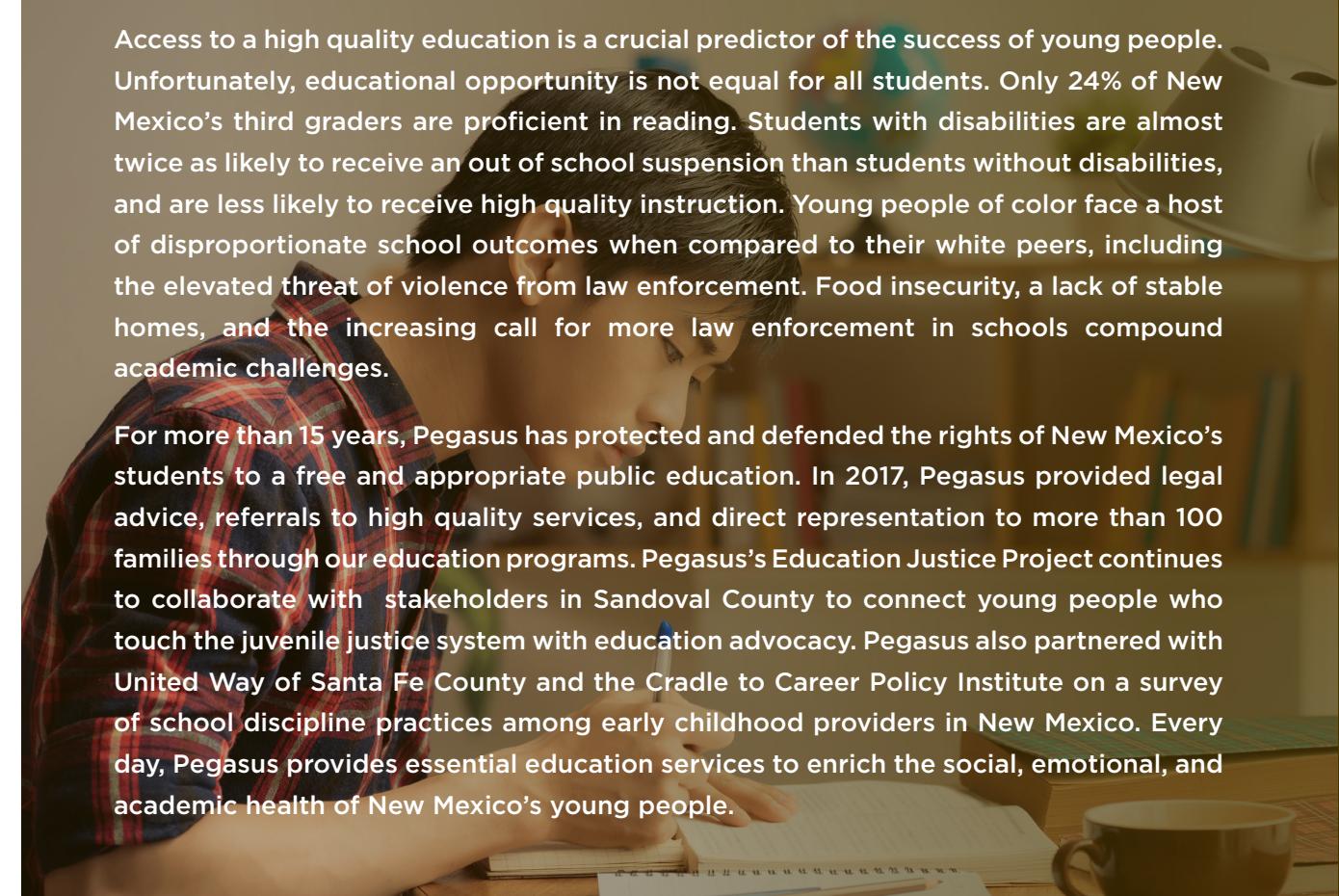
As a Staff Attorney at Pegasus, I get a glimpse into lives of children and family members in our community dealing with the most difficult of issues. They are often bogged down in the “system” and overwhelmed by their experiences. I have the privilege of empowering caregivers by providing a legal avenue for accessing healthcare, education, and other decision-making powers of a parent.

Often times our clients are raising children as their own for years before they have the legal ability to make health care and other decisions about their children. I love my work at Pegasus! My favorite thing about working at Pegasus is handing a client a piece of paper which says they can make all decisions about their child. Providing my clients with a remedy if they have been denied the legal right to take care of their children, is a most basic right which I am proud to protect.

# SPOTLIGHT: EDUCATION LAW

Access to a high quality education is a crucial predictor of the success of young people. Unfortunately, educational opportunity is not equal for all students. Only 24% of New Mexico's third graders are proficient in reading. Students with disabilities are almost twice as likely to receive an out of school suspension than students without disabilities, and are less likely to receive high quality instruction. Young people of color face a host of disproportionate school outcomes when compared to their white peers, including the elevated threat of violence from law enforcement. Food insecurity, a lack of stable homes, and the increasing call for more law enforcement in schools compound academic challenges.

For more than 15 years, Pegasus has protected and defended the rights of New Mexico's students to a free and appropriate public education. In 2017, Pegasus provided legal advice, referrals to high quality services, and direct representation to more than 100 families through our education programs. Pegasus's Education Justice Project continues to collaborate with stakeholders in Sandoval County to connect young people who touch the juvenile justice system with education advocacy. Pegasus also partnered with United Way of Santa Fe County and the Cradle to Career Policy Institute on a survey of school discipline practices among early childhood providers in New Mexico. Every day, Pegasus provides essential education services to enrich the social, emotional, and academic health of New Mexico's young people.





# CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

Children have rights, however, those rights are meaningless unless they are defended and honored. Pegasus was founded on the premise of promoting and protecting the rights of children. To be empowered, children need more than just the protection of well-meaning adults – they need a voice in the critical decisions that will decide their future.

Children's Law Advocates have made strides toward actualized children's rights. However, there is still more work to do.



**WHAT IF...**  
kids had an effective right to counsel in all proceedings that affected their basic rights?

**WHAT IF...**  
we treated kids like kids?

**WHAT IF...**  
we did not separate families but instead focused on families first?

**WHAT IF...**  
youth drove the policy that shaped their lives?

**WHAT IF...**  
kids were placed in the least restrictive setting?

The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognize that children need special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection. Pegasus, along with many other great Child Advocate Attorneys, will continue to make sure that children's rights are protected.

## Commencement Address



**ALYSSA OTERO,**  
Pegasus Office Assistant &  
Former Foster Youth

**“Good after noon my name is Alyssa. Congratulations – We made it, class of 2018. A lot of us are so focused on our past, like how did we get here today? What makes you, you? Each of us in this room has a story to tell. Believe it or not, being dealt a rough hand is a gift. It is a gift you should cherish. This gift is unique and only few survive. We are survivors.**

It took me 12 years in the foster care system, nine different high schools, and over 30 different homes to get here today. I never gave up, even when I got pregnant with my wonderful son; I kept going despite the odds against me. Some of us grew up without parents. Some of us will get jobs before college. Some of us will get married young. Some of us graduated at 18 and others at 23. My point is, everything in life happens according to our time. You may look at your friends and some may seem

to be ahead or behind you, but they are not. Each of us has our own journey, so be patient. We will all become something great; like doctors, firefighters, or even the president.

I myself, have many career ambitions and have worn many hats; as of now the one I am most proud of is being a published author of poetry and I would like to share one of my pieces with you, that helped me come to peace with myself.



## THE JOURNEY

With this boat I've brought me upon  
With crashing waves in this roaring sea  
I'm at ease  
Even if the day has vanished, along  
with the sun, that was once full of light  
that has now become a vicious fight  
I wonder, it's hard enough being lost  
But worse if you don't know what your  
lost from  
I see rain up ahead  
Lightning,  
Striking water with a sting, so fast  
I can barely see  
Forgetting where I came from  
I let the sea guide me  
Guiding me to wherever I shall be  
Life's a mystery  
Until you truly find peace  
It's only the end of the beginning

To end, I want to thank all those who have guided us to the end of this journey. We are surrounded by amazing people who gathered here to share in this great accomplishment. No one can ever take this day away from us; we worked too hard to get here!”

**CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2018**

# RIDE FOR CHILDREN

OCTOBER 28, 2018



Day of the Tread (DOTT) is an annual cycling event for which Pegasus is the primary beneficiary. This amazing event benefits children's charities and other local businesses. Over the years, DOTT has brought families, friends and our community closer together. The DOTT promotes healthy choices for people of all fitness levels. New Mexicans celebrate with food, music and costumes. Last year the DOTT raised \$29,000 for Pegasus to help with the legal needs of New Mexico's children and youth. We hope you will consider supporting Pegasus in 2018 by participating in, volunteering for, or sponsoring the Day of the Tread.

[www.dayofthetread.com](http://www.dayofthetread.com)



HARLENA REED,  
Staff Attorney

Harlena Reed worked with children in both the juvenile justice and abuse and neglect systems in Detroit and Albuquerque as a clinical therapist prior to her legal career. A Detroit native, Ms. Reed is passionate about advocating for the rights of marginalized youth. In addition to her law license, she maintains a clinical social work license.

When I say I represent youth throughout New Mexico, some people say "Oh you are so good. Teenagers are hard and I couldn't work with them." I see young people quite differently. When given accurate information, young people are capable of making good choices for their lives. We should never underestimate the incredible strength, wisdom and resiliency of young people. They simply need advocates to support them along the way.

Pegasus continues to offer presentations to teen and young parents throughout New Mexico about child custody related matters. This year, Pegasus

rolled out a webinar of the presentation, expanding our reach and allowing for more opportunities for young people to learn about their rights. Even more exciting is a new tool we have access to as a result of the generosity of Roybal-Mack & Cordova, P.C. Pegasus is now able to provide young parents 25 and under with the ability to complete their Petitions to Establish Parentage, Custody, Time-Sharing and Child Support online at no cost for completing the documents.

*Pegasus also continues to educate homeless youth on their legal rights.*



**MEYGHAN McCREA,**  
Staff Attorney

**Meyghan McCrea, graduated with honors from both the National University of Singapore, and from Columbia School of Law. Prior to working for Pegasus, Meyghan worked as an attorney with the Administration for Children's Services in New York City, and as a corporate attorney, where she was involved in child welfare litigation on a pro bono basis.**

Pegasus represents children in foster care in the 2nd and 7th judicial districts. In working on behalf of these clients, I've gained new appreciation for the institutional knowledge Pegasus has cultivated and the community relationships it continues to develop and strengthen. Children in the foster care system face not only the trauma and powerlessness of being separated from their families, but often ancillary legal issues related to education, immigration, housing or obtaining appropriate and timely

medical care. Pegasus represents clients holistically, attending educational meetings, communicating with doctors, visiting foster homes and most importantly, listening to our clients, and communicating their concerns before a legal system in which they are often overlooked.

When I joined Pegasus earlier this year, I didn't appreciate how significant a charge it is to represent children in all aspects of life in which an attorney

might be helpful. It's both overwhelming and incredibly freeing. I love that in a single day, I can address bed bug issues with uncooperative landlords, counsel a client on the prospects of an emancipation from foster care, obtain support for another client's educational needs in school, attend a delinquency proceeding for another client, and witness another exit from the fosterhood system and return home to the parents that love her.

This wide-ranging advocacy wouldn't be possible without extensive collaboration among Pegasus attorneys, social workers and other staff, as well as our clients' family members, educators, medical providers and members of the larger legal community. I'm grateful for the community of subject-matter experts willing to consult on a host of legal and non-legal issues and grateful that few issues are outside the scope of our representation of one of New Mexico's most vulnerable populations.

## AUDITED FINANCIALS: FY17

REVENUE:	\$1,304,153	100%
Contracts	907,539	69%
Grants	218,272	16.6%
Charitable Income	140,874	11%
Attorney's Fees	22,696	2%
Other Income	14,772	1%
In-Kind Contributions	5,155	.4%
EXPENSES:	\$1,116,214	100%
Program	969,999	87%
Management + General	115,550	10%
Fundraising	30,665	2.5%
In-Kind Contributions	5,155	.5%

## VOLUNTEERS:

PA Blalock	Tom Hines
John Alston	Sandy Humphries
Amanda Aragon	Carol Kirk-Rodriguez
Nancy Jo Archer	Roberta Lester
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Barbara Dodge	Christine Romero
Isiah Duran	Jessica Lee Romero
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Josephine Graf	Barbara Shapiro
Maria Griego	Melinda Smith
Vanessa Griego	Deborah Solove
Martha Griego	Elena Suffling
Jacquie Harlow	Adriana Vargas
Jessica Hash	Yvonne Wood
Marsha Heyman	Virginia Yen

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Go to our website [pegasuslaw.org](http://pegasuslaw.org) to donate through a one-time donation or setup monthly donations.

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Sign up online at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) and a percentage of your regular Amazon purchases will go directly to Pegasus.

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Sign up online at [smithsfoodanddrug.com](http://smithsfoodanddrug.com) and Smiths will donate a percentage of your purchases to Pegasus at no extra charge to you.

## MY CHANGE

Have your purchases automatically rounded up to the nearest dollar. Your "change" will go directly to Pegasus. Sign up at [mychange.com](http://mychange.com).



**SAVE THE DATE**  
**Sunday, DECEMBER 2, 2018**  
**12:00-3:00 @ BOSQUE SCHOOL**  
**JOIN US AS WE CELEBRATE OUR 11TH ANNUAL**  
**JEWELRY EXTRAVAGANZA**

Pegasus continues to increase and grow support from the community in its important work on behalf of children and youth in New Mexico.

Jewelry donations, corporate sponsorships, and business sponsorships are now being accepted. Please email [info@pegasuslaw.org](mailto:info@pegasuslaw.org) for more information.

**DONATIONS ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE.**

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# PEGASUS

LEGAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

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[www.pegasuslaw.org](http://www.pegasuslaw.org)