



In just ten short years, the Alliance Defense Fund has been involved in hundreds of cases in defense of religious freedom, the sanctity of human life, and traditional values. The stories below are just a small sampling of the ongoing battle to protect our religious liberty, reclaim what we have lost, and shape a future where religious freedom is affirmed.

### **THE CASE OF THE BANNED SANTA CLAUS**

An elementary school in Baldwin City, Kansas had a tradition of letting an individual from the community to come and visit the school dressed as Santa Claus to celebrate Christmas with the school children.

But then the ACLU got involved.

The ACLU took special exception to this past year's Santa, who was an associate pastor from a local church. When he asked the children why Christmas was celebrated, a little girl said it was because it was Jesus' birthday. That brought out the censors from the ACLU who immediately sent a letter demanding that this practice be stopped. ADF attorney Dale Schowengerdt sent a letter to the Superintendent to equip him with the law in regard to the school's ability to invite outside guests.

As a result, the school has stood up to the ACLU and the ACLU has backed down.

### **THE CASE OF THE SENIOR CENTER**

For twenty years, senior citizens at the Balch Springs (Texas) Senior Center have used the facility for social programs and recreational events. A group of Christian seniors had also gathered – without government interference -- at the center to sing gospel songs and hear the Word of God from a retired pastor. These seniors also quietly say a word of thanks to the Lord when they receive their meals at the center. All prayers and participation in the worship service are voluntary – no one is coerced into praying or attending.

Then things changed. In August 2003, the city of Balch Springs enacted a new policy that stated that all mealtime prayers, gospel music, and "religious messages" cease immediately. No other group was censored, only Christians.

Liberty Legal Institute, with ADF's backing, jumped in to defend the right of these seniors to worship God at the center. Liberty Legal immediately sent a demand letter to the city – which was ignored -- to reverse its policy or face a lawsuit on the grounds that they had denied the seniors their First Amendment right to worship freely. The seniors were willing to take a stand. Some began to very peacefully picket the center to protest the actions of the city.

Then the city fired the center's events planner and bus driver – cutting off the seniors' access to museum outings, the state fair, and funerals of their friends. They even refused to allow the seniors to go to the drug store to get their prescriptions filled!

As promised, Liberty Legal – led by ally Kelly Shackelford -- filed a lawsuit against Balch Springs – alleging multiple violations of both the Texas and U.S. Constitutions. The city's response? They threatened to stop the meal service to the seniors if they did not drop the lawsuit!

The situation had gotten so bad that the United States Department of Justice got involved – opening an investigation of the city's policy.

Finally, at the federal courthouse in Dallas, Balch Springs agreed to end its discriminatory policy. In addition, the judge ruled that the seniors were to receive monetary damages from the city.

