
Hughes Hubbard & Reed

Firm Helps Project Sunshine Get New Lease on Life

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One Battery Park Plaza • New York, New York 10004-1482 • +1 (212) 837-6000

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Hughes Hubbard helped pro bono client Project Sunshine get a new lease on life.

Project Sunshine is a nonprofit that provides free recreational programs to children with medical challenges. Over 15,000 volunteers bring programming—recreational (arts), educational (tutoring and mentoring) and social service (HIV and nutritional counseling)—to 100,000 ill children and their families in 175 cities across the United States and in four international locations: Canada, China, Israel and Kenya.

In May 2014, Project Sunshine founder and CEO Joseph Weilgus asked Hughes Hubbard's Tom Furst to help negotiate an extension on the expiring lease of the nonprofit's headquarters in midtown Manhattan offices. The landlord's terms for renewal, however, were onerous and were consequently unacceptable. The landlord then forced Project Sunshine into a difficult position, threatening to impose significant penalties for any continued occupancy after the original lease expiration date of June 30, 2014.

Under significant time pressure, Furst negotiated a lease for a new location a few blocks away. At the same time, he held his ground against the landlord and secured a short-term extension for the current location that mitigated many of the harsh terms which the landlord had demanded. As a result, Project Sunshine was able to move into its new space within seven weeks of the original lease expiration date and avoid penalties for overholding in its existing space.

In August 2014, Beatrice Kernan, executive director of Project Sunshine, sent Furst a special note titled "Tom Our Hero," thanking him for his work. She also reported that Project Sunshine is very pleased with its new location, which offers many operating efficiencies, as well as a friendly landlord.