



## Tort and Sweet: Thank You, Volunteer Roenan!



While Roenan Patt has only been taking cases from CVLS for a year, he certainly has made his presence known. After taking his first tort defense case for experience, Roenan now eagerly accepts multiple cases involving multiple issues and defenses. Whether his opponents work for law firms or for the government, Roenan is never afraid to stand up to them and fight for his clients.

For Roenan, however, pro bono work is about more than just developing new strategies or getting more experience under his belt, it is how he quenches his passion for equal justice for all. "As much as you hear about the underserved, you don't understand them until you work with them. They put their cases on hold because they are intimidated by the system," Roenan says.

Roenan says the gratitude expressed by his clients makes everything worthwhile, and it inspires him to do even more. We look forward to sending Roenan off to do battle on behalf of scores of CVLS clients to come!

## Volunteer Honor Roll



Melissa Manning has dedicated hundreds of hours representing clients in some of the toughest cases referred CVLS' panel referral program as well as helping others referred from CVLS' Chinatown Legal Clinic.

Last year, Melissa represented a mother who lost her CHA Housing Voucher because her son had been arrested multiple times for alleged gang-related activity. Undaunted by the mountain of negative evidence, Melissa petitioned for and won a rehearing, claiming that CHA had not met its burden.

On a different note, Melissa is currently representing a client sued for allegedly giving his girlfriend herpes. After Melissa's careful analysis of the facts and her deposition of the plaintiff's doctor, it is clear that the plaintiff is just as likely to have given Melissa's client the disease as the reverse. Melissa is prepared to try—and win—that dispute.

Melissa is a joy to have on these pro bono cases. She cares for all her clients despite the allegations levied against them, and she works tirelessly for the good of her clients, our cause and the legal profession.



A longtime member of the legal aid services community, panel volunteer **Salvador Lopez** recently joined forces with fellow volunteer Kathleen Robson, and began taking foreclosure mediation cases.

Already, he has represented dozens of borrowers in their fight to save their homes. His commitment to our clients is invaluable.

## Join the CVLS 50/50 Volunteers!



We want to celebrate our 50th anniversary with you, the people who have helped us fight for equal access to justice for the past five decades. We created the 50/50 Volunteers to recognize your hard work and your incredible support of CVLS. We wouldn't have made it to our 50th birthday without our volunteers, so we want to share the festivities with you!

### **Show Your CVLS Pride!**

Donate \$50:

Receive a commemorative 50th Anniversary pin

### **See Your Name in Print!**

Donate \$150:

Sign our 50th Birthday Card in Chicago Lawyer

### **Gain V.I.P. Access!**

Donate \$500:

Receive a V.I.P. ticket to our Anniversary Gala

### **Judicata Special!**

The first volunteer to donate \$500 wins the honor of Race Starter at Race Judicata 2014!

Learn more at: <http://cvls.org/50years/volunteers>

For more information on CVLS' 50th anniversary, visit:  
**[cvls.org/50years](http://cvls.org/50years)**

## Client No Longer Hounded by Dog Bite Woes

When Efraim, a retired veteran, was attacked by an unleashed dog, he received emergency medical treatment for puncture wounds. Due to his other unrelated health conditions, he feared that this treatment would cost him because it could exceed the benefit limits of his health insurance. Efraim visited our Drinker Biddle & Reath clinic for legal advice, and volunteer **Sara Shanti** agreed to help.

Efraim was worried for his physical and financial health. He wanted an assurance that the dog bite had not exposed him to any potentially harmful diseases, and he wanted to ensure that his emergency room expenses would be covered.

To his relief, Sara obtained records of the dog's health and vaccination history, which showed that the dog was in good health and did not pose a health risk. To his relief, Sara obtained records of the dog's health and vaccination history, which showed that the dog was in good health and did not pose a health risk.

Then, Sara appeared before an Administrative Law Judge in the city's lawsuit against the dog owners and argued that her client was entitled to full restitution because the Chicago Municipal Code required that animals be restrained. Her request was granted, and the owners of the dog were ordered to pay the out-of-pocket costs resulting from Efraim's emergency room visit.

Sara ultimately negotiated a settlement agreement with the owners to ensure any future expenses would be covered and, further, to compensate Efraim for his distress and inconvenience.

Extremely grateful for Drinker Biddle's assistance, Efraim is looking forward to enjoying his well-deserved retirement with the additional security of addressing his future health care needs without a threat of devastating expense.

# CVLS WEBSITE UPDATES

You may have noticed we've been re-arranging our website! We're making a few updates so we can feature our CLE Seminars more prominently and make volunteer resources more accessible.

Volunteer resources are now available at [cvls.org/volunteer-resources](http://cvls.org/volunteer-resources). Read more about our expansion of this section below.

CLE and seminar information is now available at [cvls.org/cle](http://cvls.org/cle). There, you'll find links to pages for Live CLE, for information and registration for upcoming seminars, and Online CLE, for previous seminars now available for online viewing and CLE credit.

Let us know what you think!

## New Training Resources Available on CVLS.org

Divorce case difficulties? Filing foibles? Prove-up predicaments? Look no further than CVLS.org, where we've assembled Phil Mohr's Divorce Case Walk Through featuring written and video training materials!

Phil, who oversees CVLS' Family Law program, explains each step of the process in easily digested 5-minute bites of information and includes views or samples of the pleadings and court forms you need to handle a divorce. Manuals, templates, pleadings and all documents described in the videos are also available for download.

All materials are online at:  
<http://www.cvls.org/resources-divorce>

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Now available on our website: Everything you wanted to know about a bankruptcy but were afraid to ask!

Training videos featuring CVLS' resident Bankruptcy expert, Supervising Attorney Avani Patel, cover eligibility requirements, fees, pre-filing and preparing the petition, reviewing and filing the petition, meeting with creditors, post-filing debtor education and closing the case. You'll also find downloadable manuals, guides and any forms you'll need for a bankruptcy case.

All materials are online at:  
<http://cvls.org/resources-bankruptcy>

## New Seminar Available for Online Viewing: Transgender Law

CVLS was excited to host a recent seminar on Transgender Law, burgeoning area of practice. If you're interested in learning more about this intriguing and thought-provoking topic, we've uploaded the seminar in its entirety to our website, where it is available for CLE credit. View it here: <http://cvls.org/seminar/seminar-transgender-law>

Did you know that an estimated 2-5% of the population is transgender? This group experiences significant discrimination; in a San Francisco Department of Public Health study, 83% of male-to-female transgender people reported verbal abuse, 52% do not have insurance, 35% tested HIV+ and 20% are homeless or without stable housing. Enter the TransLife Center at Chicago House, a social service agency serving individuals and families disenfranchised by HIV/AIDS.

Owen Daniel-McCarter, Legal Director and Staff Attorney for the TransLife Center, spoke about some of the legal issues encountered by those at the TransLife Center, including the process of changing ones name and gender, the rights of transgender detainees, special issues related to family law and transgender advocacy.

## Congratulations, Al!

Please join us in congratulating one of our own, CVLS Paralegal Al Piedra, and his wife, Carmella, on the birth of their new baby girl! Genevieve Clara Piedra was born at 10:15 p.m. on March 19, at 6.07 lbs and 19.5 inches long.



Genevieve joins an older brother and sister. She and Carmella –“a tough chick,” says Al – are both doing well. Congrats, Piedra family!

## Several Daley Center Help Desk Changes

Please note that several help desks in the Daley Center are being relocated to the new Resource Center for People Without Lawyers, located in Room CL-16 (the space next to Starbucks) in the basement.

The help desks and their moving dates:

- Domestic Relations Advice Desk: March 17
- Municipal Advice Desk: March 31
- Chancery Advice Desk: April 7

The relocation was announced on March 13 by Judge Timothy Evans.

## ISBA Ethics Question of the Week: Our Response

An ISBA Ethics Question of the Week recently answered a question regarding the level of experience necessary for client representation, an issue CVLS addresses every day.

When asked, “Can I represent a client in a field of law I’m not familiar with?” the ISBA’s ethics panel responded that “a lawyer need not necessarily have special training or prior experience” to handle unfamiliar issues, and that “the requisite level of competence can be achieved by reasonable preparation,” citing RPC Rule 1.1: Competence.

We encourage the idea of a well-supported attorney representing a client in an unfamiliar field. CVLS’ program model - employing a small staff of attorneys with specialized training to support our wide network of volunteers - perpetuates the concept of attorneys taking cases outside their purview, not only from an organizational standpoint, but also as a means of professional development for our volunteers.

Our volunteers learn to represent clients in a wider range of areas than they would otherwise practice because they want to make a

difference to as many people as possible.

To support our volunteers’ efforts, we offer extensive volunteer resources in Adoption, Guardian ad Litem (GAL) for Minors, Minor Guardianship, Adult Guardianship, Bankruptcy and Divorce. We guide volunteers through the entire process using extensive tutorial videos, guides, templates and instruction manuals compiled by our own staff attorneys.

In its opinion, ISBA’s ethics panel also pointed to the RPC 1.1 comment that a novice lawyer could also associate with a lawyer of “established competence” in the field; our staff attorneys ensure that volunteers are never alone to handle a case, particularly one outside of their experience.

By expanding competence in your profession, you are also expanding the availability of justice to those in need. We want you to fulfill the sense of justice that drove you toward the world of pro bono, and toward supporting CVLS’ efforts in providing legal help for everyone, not just those who can afford it.

## Volunteer Validates Daycare's Income Value

Marisol moved into her home in 2008. Taking her career into her own hands after a time of separation and underemployment, Marisol opened a daycare business in her home but she struggled to make ends meet and defaulted on her mortgage. After applying for a loan modification, she entered the Cook County Foreclosure Mediation Program, where CVLS volunteer **Rich Orman** agreed to represent her.

Rich learned that Marisol had been denied for any and all modification programs. Inspired to make things right, he pored over her finances and determined the denials had been based on her earlier, and much lower, income.

A grueling mediation session made it clear that convincing the bank Marisol was earning enough to sustain a loan modification was not going to be an easy sell. The bank did not believe that Marisol's income could have increased so drastically in such a short time, but Rich and Marisol provided undisputable proof.

Upon a re-review, the bank approved Marisol for a loan modification and gave her a payment structure she can afford and sustain. Thanks to Rich, Marisol kept not only her home, but her business too!

## Ark Triumph! A Volunteer's Condo Association Victory

CVLS' Ark Clinic reached out to volunteer **Ross Edwards** when several homeowners received notice from their condominium association demanding immediate payment of thousands of dollars in overdue assessments and repair bills. The condominium association claimed a possessory interest in the clients' condominiums and demanded immediate relinquishment of their ownership rights to satisfy the overdue association fees.

After conferring with the homeowners, Ross sent the association a notice disputing the amounts owed which temporarily halted the collection process. He then contacted the association's attorneys and negotiated a settlement which reduced the amount his clients owed and established a manageable monthly payment plan.

The association agreed to stop the immediate collection efforts. Now, the homeowners, all low income and many with mental or physical disabilities, are steadily paying the reduced bills without the threat of losing their homes hanging over them.

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## Volunteer's First Case Leads to CHA Decision Reversal

Latasha and her three children had lived in Chicago Housing Authority Section 8 housing for many years. In 2011, her daughter got into a fight at her high school after an inflammatory conversation on Facebook, and was charged with misdemeanor battery. Despite fulfilling her community service and attending anger management classes, graduating high school and enrolling in City College, the CHA terminated Latasha's Section 8 voucher.

Latasha appealed CHA's decision to the Chancery Court, which sent the case back to the CHA for a new hearing and appointed CVLS to handle the case through the Access to Justice program. Brand new volunteer **Bibek Das** agreed to take the case, despite a lack of experience in administrative hearings. Bibek represented Latasha well at the hearing, leading to a reversed decision from CHA. Latasha now has her CHA Section 8 voucher back and all is well.

# Upcoming CVLS Events

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**April 17**

**Seminar: Nursing Homes  
CVLS Offices, 12:15 PM to 1:15 PM**

How can we best advocate for residents of nursing homes, assisted living facilities and other adult care facilities?

Join us as we discuss resident rights under the Nursing Home Care Act, Medicaid regulations and licensing requirements for nursing homes, as well as the role of the Long Term Care Ombudsman and its relationship to a Guardian ad Litem.

**April 24**

**GAL for Minors Training  
by Susan DeCostanza, CVLS Staff Attorney  
CVLS Offices, 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM**

Learn to represent the best interests of society's most vulnerable citizens in Probate Court! Susan DeCostanza will cover the skills required to be a successful GAL for a minor as well as the issues that may come up during the case. This training is for new GALs working with CVLS.

Please visit [www.cvls.org/seminars](http://www.cvls.org/seminars) to register

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**May 1**

**New Volunteer Orientation  
by CVLS Staff  
CVLS Offices, 12:15 PM to 1:15 PM**

**Why Volunteer?**

**Attorneys:** We accommodate your needs to make it possible for you to provide free legal services to our clients. You help us realize equal access to justice!

**Law Students:** We welcome you with internships and externships, either privately funded, through PILI or unpaid. Get hands on experience across multiple areas of law by assisting staff and volunteer attorneys!

Please visit [www.cvls.org/volunteer](http://www.cvls.org/volunteer) to register

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