Mark Your Calendars Now!

2/18
Seminar:
A Closer Look at Guardian ad Litem
Illinois Disability Association
12:15 PM

3/12
New Volunteer Orientation
CVLS Offices
12:15 PM

3/18
Seminar:
Special Needs Trusts
Illinois Disability Association
12:15 PM

4/09
New Volunteer Orientation
CVLS Offices
12:15 PM

4/22
Seminar:
POA Abuse in Adult Guardianships
Illinois Disability Association
12:15 PM

Undeterred Team of Client & Volunteer Secures Loan Modification

When Emy was laid off of her job, the loss of income caused her to default on her mortgage, and before she knew it, she was in foreclosure. Despite her devastation, Emy was determined to make the best of the situation. She returned to school for the few remaining classes she needed to earn her Bachelor’s degree, and found another job.

Knowing she didn’t want to go through a foreclosure process without legal help, she also asked that her foreclosure suit be referred to the Circuit Court of Cook County Mortgage Foreclosure Mediation Program.

Once in the mediation program, her new attorney, CVLS volunteer Marc Abramson, worked to secure Emy a loan modification based on her new income. Unfortunately, her income was still too low to qualify her for a loan modification. This would have deterred many people – but not Emy and Marc. He fought to keep her case in the mediation program.

Soon after, Emy graduated from college and got a teaching job. Her new salary qualified her for a modification. Marc submitted the application documents and Emy was offered a trial modification, which was later converted to a permanent modification. Now Emy is living comfortably in her home and enjoying her new career, thanks to her persistent attorney.

Volunteer Fights for Young Mother’s Future

Keira, a mildly learning disabled part-time college student, was only 18 years old when she became pregnant with her second child. She was taking great care of her 3-year-old son and going to school, but didn’t feel she could care for another child. She contacted an adoption agency and began receiving prenatal care.

Everything was fine, but the baby came weeks early, early in the morning. Keira delivered very quickly in her bathroom at home before she really knew what was happening.

Unfortunately, the baby didn’t survive long enough for the paramedics to arrive. To add to the families’ misfortune, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services “indicated” Keira for child neglect. An “indicated” finding would remain on her record for 50 years and make it impossible for her to realize her dream of becoming a nurse.

Keira appealed the DCFS decision and Judge Kathleen Pantle appointed CVLS under the Access to Justice Program. Kirkland & Ellis attorney Jessica Fricke dug into the case, reviewing the transcript of the hearing and reviewing relevant DCFS regulations and case law. Her fight for Keira was successful—DCFS’ decision was overturned. Keira is now able to become the nurse she’s always wanted to be.
Volunteer Spotlight: Rawn Reinhard

Recent CVLS Volunteer Recognition Award winner Rawn Reinhard, a partner at Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg and a longtime GAL for Minors volunteer, recently made the front page of the Chicago Daily Law Bulletin!

Rawn, who has handled a staggering 22 pro bono cases in the past three years, works with Neal Gerber paralegal Aiden Quinn on CVLS cases and often has five or six open at a time. We’re extremely fortunate to have someone like Rawn around, and thankful to Neal Gerber for supporting his pro bono efforts!

In talking with the Law Bulletin’s Jamie Loo, Rawn explained how he overcame his initial hesitation in taking on GAL cases without much experience in that area of law:

“I like the fact that you feel like you’re not only helping the court and you’re getting some influence in how something gets resolved, but I really do feel like in these cases, as guardian ad litem, it’s my job to look after the best interest of the children and that’s good,” he said.

GAL for Minors Program Director Rebekah Rashidfarokhi praised Rawn’s commitment in the article, telling the story of a previously settled matter that resurfaced – when she offered the case to Rawn, she did so with a caveat that if it was too much, CVLS would handle it. Turns out the caveat wasn’t necessary. “It’s going to take a lot more than yelling and screaming to put us off,” Rawn replied.

“For them to say they’re committed to sticking by this kid says a lot,” says Rebekah.

Updated Federal Poverty Guidelines Released

The 2015 Federal Poverty Guidelines have been released, and are available for viewing at federalregister.gov.

You can also find them under “CVLS Resources” on Legal Server.

Volunteers, as you’re interviewing clients, remember that potential clients who are eligible for CVLS’ services are also eligible for a fee waiver. They do not need to pay filing fees.

If you are in doubt about fee waivers, contact a CVLS staff person—BEFORE you pay any filing fees.

Volunteer Breaks Through “Certified” Limit

When Elizabeth had to close her business, she immediately got another job, but couldn’t catch up on her mortgage payments.

Volunteer John Fehr took Elizabeth’s case through the Circuit Court of Cook County Mortgage Foreclosure Mediation Program.

Elizabeth ran into unexpected trouble after she accepted a trial modification. While her monthly mortgage payment was $1050, her bank limited certified checks at $1000. Naturally, she got two separate checks and sent them together, but the bank rejected the payment - for this reason - and denied her a modification.

John refused to accept such ridiculousness. He won the fight to reinstate her trial plan. Elizabeth now has a permanent modification.

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Staff Spotlight: Norma Perez, Intake & Receptionist

“Intake and Receptionist” barely scratches the surface of Norma Perez’s role at CVLS.

As the Keeper of the Front Desk, Norma answers the constantly ringing phones, handles walk-in clients, determines whether potential clients qualify for CVLS’ services and schedules them at one of our clinics or for an in-house interview, makes herself available for any and all staff, volunteer and client needs, serves as a Spanish language interpreter and schedules a rotating calendar of interns, students, volunteers and legal clinics – all with a smile on her face, and candy at her desk.

So how does Norma, a two-and-a-half year veteran of CVLS, juggle all her responsibilities to, in her own words, “take things at CVLS from ordinary to extraordinary”? She says with a lot of patience, and by learning new things little by little, so that, “all of a sudden, you’re just good at it.”

She enjoyed her previous jobs in the legal field, but loves working at CVLS because of the opportunity to make a difference, or in her words, because “it feels really good to help someone who is in true need.” Norma also says the warmth of the staff and office environment keeps her coming in every day. So does the accomplishment she feels from working hard for a cause she believes in.

For instance, Norma recently interpreted for a Spanish-speaking client in an adult GAL case. She translated documents and interpreted at all meetings and in court. Norma participated throughout the entire case.

Norma is often the first person clients talk to at CVLS. While they don’t have the pleasure of her “Friday Humor” emails or cheer on the White Sox with her, it’s easy to see how they get the same impression of her that CVLS staff and volunteers do – that she is a talented, friendly, hard-working person who will do whatever she can to help.
Ross and Gretchen had lived in their home for nearly 25 years when hard times hit. Ross had extensive heart surgery, Gretchen’s real estate business got hit by the recession, and their newly-installed roof was severely damaged by hail. They fell behind on their mortgage and tried to remedy the situation themselves.

That resulted in three different repayment agreements with the bank, none of which ever caught them up on their payments or modified their mortgage.

Thankfully, Ross and Gretchen entered the Circuit Court of Cook County Mortgage Foreclosure Mediation Program and volunteer attorney Cheryl Robinson agreed to take their case. She submitted an initial application for a loan modification, which was denied.

That might have been the end for Ross and Gretchen, had it not been for Cheryl. She fought tirelessly and eventually got the bank to agree to make several exceptions to their standard rules.

It took nearly a year, but finally Cheryl was successful! Ross and Gretchen now have a permanent modification and are safe and secure in their home, permanently.

After the case, they were so happy with the result that Ross sent a heartfelt thank-you note to Cheryl:

“I would like to express (our) sincere gratitude for all your counsel & wisdom (and patience!) as we travelled along this long and uncertain journey. I am not so sure how we would have fared, were it not for your help. Thank you does not convey enough our deepest appreciation, but thank you nevertheless. In any event, we are very pleased with the outcome and are grateful that CVLS allowed for your continuity and follow-thru with this unnecessarily so, extremely complicated (nee arduous) case.”

Welcome, Nora!

If you’ve been around our offices recently, you’ve probably seen a familiar face – Nora Endzel!

She’s now running her socially conscious Divorce & Family Law practice, Endzel Law, LLC, out of Room 419. We’re thrilled to have Nora, a Justice Entrepreneurs Project alumna, back at 33 N. Dearborn.

Learn about Endzel Law at http://endzel-lawllc.com/ and keep up with Nora on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/endzellaw

Welcome to the office, Nora!

New CSLP Forms

Reminder! The Access to Justice Act allows legal service providers, including pro bono programs, to use a fee waiver for any client who meets the financial eligibility guidelines of the legal services provider.

In other words, if a client is financially eligible under CVLS’ guidelines, the client is eligible for a fee waiver at court.

The Supreme Court standardized fee waiver language for civil legal service providers (IL SCR 298). While most clerks and sheriff personnel will still accept the old forms, some insist on the new, standardized CLSP.

CVLS’ updated form templates for Adoption, Domestic Relations, Probate - Adult Guardianship, Probate - Minor Guardianship, Chancery and Municipal 1st District are available in Legal Server or by emailing a CVLS Staff Attorney.
Upcoming CVLS Events

**Wednesday, February 18**
Seminar: A Closer Look at Guardian ad Litem
Presented by Vida Cruz, Illinois Disability Association
IDA Offices, 12:15 PM to 1:15 PM

**Wednesday, March 18**
Seminar: Special Needs Trusts
Presented by Eileen Durkin, Illinois Disability Association
IDA Offices, 12:15 PM to 1:15 PM

We’re proud to partner with the Illinois Disability Association for an exciting collaboration designed to expand CVLS’ ability to handle Adult GAL cases and provide high quality pro bono legal services to low-income persons with disabilities and their families.

The collaboration also provides education for CVLS volunteers. The IDA will present a CLE seminar series featuring IDA staff and friends on relevant topics including, “A Closer Look at Guardian ad Litem”, “Special Needs Trusts” and “POA Abuse”. The first seminar, “Deconstructing the Role of a Care-Manager,” was a major success and we’re looking forward to continuing the series!

Visit http://www.cvls.org/livecle for information and registration for each seminar.

**The collaboration is now able to accept donations online at:** http://cvls.org/illinois-disability-association-partnership. Please consider making a contribution, and helping to enhance pro bono services for low-income persons with disabilities and their guardians!

**Thursday, February 12 & Thursday, March 12**
New Volunteer Orientation
CVLS Offices, 12:15 PM to 1:15 PM

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/cle to register for a seminar!