

Chicago Volunteer Legal Services

Because equal access to justice is everyone's fight.

Upcoming Events

December 25 - CVLS Closed

January 1 - CVLS Closed

January 14 - New Volunteer Orientation; CVLS Office 12:15 pm

January 15 - Seminar: Allocation Judgment; CVLS Office 12:15 pm

February 20 - Seminar: Real Estate Closings; CVLS Office 12:15 pm



LEGAL PREP SUCCESS

Former PILI Fellow Returns for Round Two!

After graduating from law school, Natasha Serafin worked for CVLS as a Public Interest Law Initiative Fellow before starting at Chapman and Cutler LLP. Tasha enjoyed her experience so much that she came back as a volunteer! Tasha and her colleagues at Chapman were staffing the Community Law Clinic at Legal Prep Charter Academy when they first met Irma. Irma had come to the clinic looking for representation to obtain legal guardianship of her adult son with down syndrome. As a Spanish-speaking single mother, she had limited understanding of the legal process and needed an attorney.

After meeting with Irma, Tasha decided to take on the case personally. She represented Irma throughout the guardianship process, assisting her with all of the required paperwork and speaking with her son's medical professionals. The Court appointed a Guardian ad Litem who recommended guardianship. At a final hearing, the Court agreed with the GAL's

recommendation and appointed Irma as legal guardian!

To commemorate their success, Irma and Tasha agreed to take a photo together. The lawyer and satisfied client are pictured below along with Sara Ghadiri, Chapman's pro bono counsel.

When we asked Tasha about her work on the case, she explained, "Adult GAL pro bono work is very important to me as I was able to cultivate these skills during my PILI Fellowship with CVLS, and I am glad to be able to continue this important pro bono work at Chapman and Cutler."

*Irma (left), Natasha Serafin (top),
Sara Ghadiri (right)*

REMEMBER CVLS THIS SEASON

Soon we will all say goodbye to 2019 and welcome in a new year of pro bono. In this season of giving, please remember CVLS and the very important work that our wonderful volunteers do each and every day. Your gift will change lives. Whether you donate \$50 or \$500, your dollars will make a difference. Thank you for helping us grow Chicago Pro Bono!

Donate today at:
cvls.org/donate

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

KIRKLAND & ELLIS LLP

Schiff
Hardin
SIDLEY

New FREE CLE seminars available online!

A Professional Lawyer Is a Healthy Lawyer

Stephanie Villinski, 2 Civility
<https://bit.ly/2LlIsxU>

Conflicts: Not Just During a Family Thanksgiving

Mary Robinson
<https://bit.ly/34LmkDP>

Human Trafficking and Children: What Lawyers Need to Know

Center for the Human Rights of Children
<https://bit.ly/33NoYrh>

Reverse Mortgages

Terry Bivins, Federal Savings Bank
<https://bit.ly/2rTo9jy>

More available at
www.cvls.org/onlinecle

housing FORWARD

ending homelessness
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

CVLS needs volunteers to help people staying in homeless shelters understand and navigate their legal problems. Our rotating clinic, co-sponsored by Housing Forward, is held in Oak Park, Forest Park and Berwyn churches, one evening a month between May 1 and October 31.

This is a great opportunity for all of you River Forest, Oak Park and other near western suburban attorneys, to help the people you see every day who are struggling. CVLS will help you help them by providing training and legal support. Interested or have questions? Email Kathy Koester at kkoester@cvls.org.



Charles De La Cruz

MAILBOX MISHAP

Summer Intern Outsmarts Housing Authority

Charrika is a tenant with a housing authority subsidy. One of her obligations under the housing authority's guidelines is to attend an annual "recertification" appointment to make sure she is still eligible for the subsidy. Missing appointments can result in termination from the program.

And that's exactly what happened to Charrika.

Except she never received notice of the appointments. It turns out her former landlord never gave Charrika access to her mailbox. By the time Charrika figured out what had happened, she had already been kicked from the program, missed her deadline to request a hearing to review the decision, and was months behind in rent.

Charrika filed suit against the housing authority but struggled with service, so the Court referred her to CVLS. Once CVLS served the housing authority, we placed the case with summer intern, Charles De La Cruz. Charles put together a demand letter outlining all of the errors committed by the housing authority. He was even able to show that the housing authority itself was aware that Charrika had no access to her mailbox.

Charrika was recently reinstated to the program due to Charles' advocacy. As for Charles, he is back to student life at DePaul University College of Law. His time and work product at CVLS were appreciated by all his supervisors. We wish him the best of luck with the rest of law school!

A FORK IN THE ROAD

The Full Foreclosure Experience



Barbara Mallon, Mallon & Johnson

Still suffering from the aftereffects of a less than favorable 2007 home loan, Benesse and Kenneth faced foreclosure. After being wrongfully denied a loan modification, the husband and wife were referred to CVLS by a foreclosure judge. Through CVLS' partnership with Spanish Coalition for Housing, they submitted a new modification application, and the bank offered the couple a trial period plan (TPP) to move towards modification of the loan.

Awesome! Wait a second; not so fast. Within days of making the offer and before Benesse and Kenneth could make their first payment, the bank issued a new TPP. Keep in mind, this was towards the end of December...

Although the bank received the couple's first TPP payment by the due date, it was received in between holidays and was not processed by the bank until later in January when the funds were no longer available in their account... What, pray tell, did the bank do next? Of course, it considered the couple in default and refused to accept any payments to remedy the situation.

CVLS volunteer, Barbara Mallon, pulled up her sleeves and got ready to battle it out. Despite Barbara addressing the bank's absurd decision with both bank and counsel, the bank would not budge. To complicate matters, the file was transferred from one bank to another.

Finally, through Barbara's perseverance, months of struggle, shifting strategies, and another application, Benesse and Kenneth received a new TPP offer which they completed. Their loan was permanently modified, the foreclosure was dismissed, and their home was saved. Benesse and Kenneth were thrilled to share their story and gratitude for Barbara's valiant efforts.

PRO BONO BOND PROJECT NEEDS VOLUNTEERS

Legal representation often determines whether an immigrant remains safely in the United States or is deported without ever having any legal counsel. Additionally, whether or not an immigrant is detained during removal proceedings greatly affects the outcome of their immigration case. While an immigrant can legally have an attorney represent him or her at any point in proceedings, representation cannot be at government expense. Statistically, only 14% of detained immigrants are able to obtain representation.

The AILA/CVLS Pro Bono Bond Project finds attorneys to represent detained immigrants that are unable to afford an attorney at their bond hearing. This project is for the limited representation of the detained immigrant at their bond hearing, but this limited representation is extremely helpful for the ultimate outcome of their removal proceedings. You do not have to be an immigration expert to make a difference! The Project provides initial training, as well as a helpful guide that includes a list of mentors who you can reach out to for case specific questions.

If interested, please contact us today to sign up for the next training. Email us at rebekah@cvls.org.

JUSTICE IS A DISH BEST SERVED COLD



Renita Ward

Dawn had signed a lease with her landlord more than two decades ago. Suddenly, and with little notice, her property was sold. To complicate matters, her landlord had passed away years ago and the parties with authority to sell refused to return her security deposit after she moved out. The reason: it was never received...

Through CVLS' Trinity UCC Legal Clinic, volunteer, Renita Ward, stepped in to take care of business. First, she sent a demand letter to the buyer and seller. When they refused to work something out and return her security deposit, she filed a lawsuit against both sides.. After months of court dates and negotiations Renita reached a settlement for well above the original security deposit. Case over, justice served, and then some.



Margaret Benson (middle) and Phil Mohr (right) receive grant from AAML President David Pasulka (left)

AAML SUPPORTS THE CHILDREN

Their Generosity Continues to Inspire

On November 19 American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers President and longtime CVLS volunteer David Pasulka presented CVLS executive director Margaret Benson, and Deputy Director Phil Mohr with a check from the AAML's National Foundation to further support our Child Representative Program.

Tens of thousands of pro bono attorneys have provided high quality free legal services to low-income Chicagoans through CVLS since 1964. Last year alone, CVLS volunteer attorneys handled more than 3,000 cases for Chicago area clients for free. More than 2/3 of those cases involved litigation in the Circuit Court of Cook County.

Included in those numbers are 300 children that had attorneys for their custody cases, thanks to CVLS' Child Representative Program. Domestic Relations judges appoint CVLS to serve as Child Reps in nearly two hundred cases every year. Thanks to this program, children from poor families have their own attorneys to advocate for their best interests in court and with their families. This program gives these children a voice.

Thank you to the AAML for their generous support of this crucial work.

KIND WORDS FROM AN OLD CLIENT

It is always gratifying when we get to see how CVLS volunteers have changed peoples lives. Sometimes we are lucky enough see old clients many years after we took their case which is even better. We recently received a fantastic surprise when we were contacted by an old client wanting to make a donation. her words touched us and we would like to share them with you:

"28 years ago, Attorney Bernice Burman, a CVLS employee, helped me through a divorce, when I was a poor law student. Thanks for all you do!"

- Julie



Margaret Benson , Rich Campbell and Peter Ashmore post with honoree Justice Mary Ellen Coghlan

Mayer Brown LLP generously hosted a reception at their offices for the CVLS Probate Court Assistance Project (PCAP). We had a great time mingling with the Probate Court and our wonderful PCAP volunteers.

CVLS executive director Margaret Benson presented Justice Mary Ellen Coghlan with an award for her role in PCAP and her dedication to CVLS' mission.

Special thanks to Rich Campbell of Mayer Brown for his expertise on these cases and for arranging this event, to the Cook County Probate Court for their support, and of course, to our volunteers for the great work they do!



Schiff
Hardin

40 YEARS STRONG
1979-2019

CHICAGO
VOLUNTEER
LEGAL
SERVICES



40 years ago the world saw its very first Happy meal, walk-mans and dust-busters were just hitting the shelves, and a small legal clinic was formed in partnership between CVLS and Schiff Hardin LLP. Adopted and run by young Schiff associates, this clinic paved the way for a new model of pro bono legal services in Chicago. Since then, other law firms and organizations have adopted their own clinics and spread the reach of legal aid throughout the city.

That partnership has lasted to this day, and last night we celebrated the clinics 40th anniversary! It was so good to see all of the wonderful people who have worked together over the years. Thank you to all of the past and present clinic chairs, volunteers, and supporters who were there. Thank you especially to Paul Dengel, co-founder of the clinic all those years ago, and great friend to CVLS today.



VINO + VAN GOGH

Junior Board hosts 10th Annual Fundraiser

On November 15 the Junior Board of Chicago Volunteer Legal Services showed once again that they can throw one heck of a party. Nearly 300 people attended the event at Ovation Chicago on Friday night raising \$55,000 for legal aid. We are truly grateful to be supported by so many people every single year we have held this event. It is amazing to see all of your faces at the party and be surrounded by people who are touched and encouraged by our mission of providing equal access to justice to Chicago.

Thank you to all of our sponsors, attendees, donors, and local artists who helped make this year's event so successful. We wish you all a happy holiday season and look forward to seeing everyone next year!



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT IN 2019

Justice is only justice if it's equal

Being poor in Chicago is a struggle as federal, state and local safety nets erode. Even our legal system tilts toward people with money--it is virtually impossible for anyone to fight a bank, an insurance company, a landlord or an abusive spouse without an attorney. People who can't afford attorneys have to fight their courtroom battles alone. But CVLS changes the odds against the poor by providing skilled, caring, supported pro bono attorneys to counsel and represent thousands of low-income clients, for free, in civil cases that make a difference in their lives.

Please make an investment in your community this holiday season by making a donation to Chicago Volunteer Legal Services. All gifts to CVLS are entirely tax deductible. Thank you all for your generous support over the years and we wish your family a wonderful holiday season.

We look forward to continuing the fight for equal access to justice in 2020!

In 2019

Your generosity makes a difference.

Last year's donations provided life changing support to thousands of families.

Look how much good a gift to Chicago Volunteer Legal Services can do!



Closed 3,558 Cases

In 2019 alone, CVLS changed thousands of lives



24 Community Legal Clinics

Hosted evenings and weekends in Chicago's community organizations and Churches



Appointed in 1,342 Cases

As Chicago's trusted legal aid provider, CVLS was appointed by the courts in hundreds of litigation cases



2,483 Active Volunteers

Using volunteers helps to keep our cost-per-case extremely low. We added 362 new volunteers in 2019!



7,514 People Helped

Thanks to our wonderful volunteers, thousands of Chicagoans received legal representation



HAVE A WONDERFUL HOLIDAY SEASON!

PLEASE CONTINUE YOUR SUPPORT
cvls.org/donate



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