Chicago Volunteer Legal Services

Because equal access to justice is everyone’s fight.

HELP IS HERE

Evictions, foreclosures, and unresolved debt issues can have a long-lasting, negative impact on someone’s future. If you know someone struggling with debt, have them call the Early Resolution Program to speak with a lawyer and get connected with other resources.

855-956-5763

www.cookcountylegalaid.org

Upcoming Events

February 11 - Minor GAL Training; 12:00 pm; Zoom;

February 12 - CVLS Closed; Lincoln's Birthday

February 15 - CVLS Closed; President’s Day

February 24 - Seminar: Preparing 2020 Income Taxes; 12:15 pm; Zoom

March 1 - CVLS Closed; Casimir Pulaski Day

March 3 - Seminar: DACA Issues; 12:15 pm; Zoom;

Visit cvls.org/event for more details.

COLLISION CONUNDRUM!

Clinic Volunteer Curbs Catastrophe

CVLS' mission is to help not only low-income families but Chicago’s working poor. We are often able to represent clients who earn an income and might not financially qualify for traditional legal aid services. The following story about Mr. B. illustrates why our wider approach to pro bono provides essential legal services to people who cannot afford them.

Mr. B. is an immigrant and a fourth-year engineering student. He and his wife take care of four children in Chicago. While working his way toward a degree to improve his income earning potential, Mr. B. drives a taxicab to support his family.

During a shift in his cab one day, Mr. B. was involved in an accident. Although he had insurance through the taxicab company, the insurance provider was never notified of the other driver’s claim. In fact, the first Mr. B. knew about the claim was when he received notice of a default judgment and his driver’s license was suspended. He learned that he had to satisfy a $3,500 default judgment to get his license back.

Unable to afford the payment and desperately needing his license to keep working, Mr. B. reached out to the CVLS clinic at Old St. Mary’s Church. There, volunteer attorney, Jim Costello, and his associate, Sukhi Kaur, met with Mr. B to evaluate his case. After hearing Mr. B.’s story, Sukhi agreed to take the case on for representation.

After months of negotiations and follow-up with both insurance companies, Sukhi convinced the taxicab’s insurance company to cover half of the $3,500 judgment. Mr. B. struggled to come up with the money but managed to pay. To Sukhi’s surprise, she received a call the next day,

Continued on page 2

Sukhi Kaur, Costello, McMahon, Gilbreth & Murphy, Ltd.
THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

KIRKLAND & ELLIS LLP

Schiff Hardin

SIDLEY

New FREE CLE seminars available

Basics of Landlord-Tenant Law in Cook County
Martin Cozzola, Wayne Shapiro
1.00 hours CLE credit https://bit.ly/2LNZyq2

Chapter 7 Bankruptcies
Matt Hulstein, Justin Storer
1.75 hours CLE credit https://bit.ly/3oHvona

Estate Planning
Richard Campbell
1.50 hours CLE credit https://bit.ly/3i8zhyW

Tricks of the Trade: Best Practices for Attorneys Representing Children
Olivia St. Clair Long, Jessica St. Clair, Agnes Olechno, Jennifer Lavin
2.00 hours CLE credit https://bit.ly/39pzfPg

More available at cvls.org/onlinecle

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

that Mr. B. was no longer responsible for any of the claim. The insurance company returned Mr. B.’s money and agreed to vacate the judgment against him.

Mr. B. was studying at the university library when he got a call from Sukhi with the good news. He could not believe it. Through the representation of one of our attorneys, Mr. B. received an incredible financial relief and recovered his livelihood. He can now focus on bettering himself and supporting his family.

STARTING THE YEAR OFF RIGHT.

Adult GAL Volunteers Aren’t Waiting to Get Going

It’s no secret that CVLS volunteers are the backbone of Chicago Pro Bono. Without their sacrifice and dedication, thousands of people would needlessly suffer without representation.

With 2021 just underway, we’d like to recognize our amazing Adult GAL volunteers who have already signed up for new cases in the new year:

Ashley C. Coppola
Carla D. Fiessinger
Julie Fox
Paul S. Franciszkowicz
Caroline O. Shoenberger
Elaine C. Sit
Hugh F. Smart
Steve Raminiak
Marios A. Resendiz
Mollie A. Whitehead

Thanks to caring advocates like these, Chicago Pro Bono is going to have a big impact in 2021.

RULE 23 AMENDED

Chief Justice Anne M. Burke and the Illinois Supreme Court announced the amendment of Rule 23, effective Jan. 1, 2021. The amendment allows litigants to cite unpublished opinions from the Illinois Appellate Courts for persuasive purposes.

“Changes to Rule 23 have been discussed and studied for a long time,” Chief Justice Anne M. Burke said. “This amendment is a welcome change and will improve the administration of justice in Illinois.”

Under Rule 23 as previously constituted, litigants could cite rulings from other jurisdictions as persuasive authority but were not able to cite unpublished Illinois Appellate Court rulings. This led to a confusing situation where an Illinois trial court ruling could be cited without running afoul of the rule, but an unpublished appellate order affirming that very same trial ruling was not allowed.

Previously, Rule 23 was considered necessary at a time when the majority of legal research was done using books. As described by the late Chief Justice Michael A. Bilandic in 1994, there was “an avalanche of opinions” from Appellate Courts at the time and many were simply “too long.” But with today’s text-searchable electronic legal research databases this is no longer a significant concern.

RULE 23 AMENDED
CONDOMINIUM MISCOMMUNICATION
Pro Bono Attorney Resolves Parking Space Dispute

Ms. R. has owned and lived with her school-aged daughter in her Rogers Park one-bedroom condominium for over two years. For the past year, Ms. R. noticed poor water drainage near her designated parking space at the building. Water accumulated on and near her parking space, freezing and causing dangerous, icy conditions. Last winter, her young daughter slipped and hurt herself.

Concerned for her and her daughter’s safety, Ms. R. contacted the condo association. They said it would cost her over $1,000 to have the problem fixed. Ms. R. already pays association dues of $238 per month and could not afford to pay more toward the repair of this issue, which she rightfully felt was the responsibility of the condo association. Ms. R. reached out to the City of Chicago for dispute resolution without success.

Ms. R. decided to contact the CVLS South Asian Legal Clinic for legal advice. Volunteer attorney Furqan Mohammed agreed to talk to the association on her behalf to reach a resolution. He bridged the communication gap between Ms. R. and the association, confirming that the parking lot would be rebuilt this summer to the client’s satisfaction.

Furqan also negotiated a unique, temporary solution: This winter, Ms. R. will switch parking spaces with the association president.

We educated, privileged lawyers have a professional and moral duty to represent the underrepresented in our society, to ensure that justice exists for all, both legal and economic justice.

-Justice Sotomayor

Congratulations to CVLS staff attorney Debi Martin and her husband Trevor on their new baby boy! James Dempsey Martin was born on January 4th, weighing in at 7 lbs. 6oz. Mom, dad and baby are all doing well and back at home.
LHOC Assists with Severe Medical Issues

One of CVLS’ newest clinics, Lawyers Helping Our Community (LHOC), was recently able to provide legal support to a client with major health problems. In 2017, the client was involved in a car accident without proper insurance coverage. He owed about $16,000 to the other driver’s insurance company. For the past three years, in addition to saving money from employment, the client borrowed from friends and family to make ends meet while also meeting his obligation under the monthly repayment plan.

In 2019, the client suffered multiple brain hemorrhages and had to be hospitalized. He worked when he could and did his best to make his monthly payments but could not keep up. When the COVID-19 pandemic started, he lost his job as a restaurant delivery worker and nearly became homeless. The client found temporary, part-time employment at a supermarket, but he was unable to keep making payments, and his outstanding balance was sent to a collection agency. Overwhelmed by debt and his medical conditions, the client’s mental health began to deteriorate.

LHOC met with the client remotely during the pandemic and assessed his situation. They needed a multi-faceted approach to vastly improve his quality of life. First, Erica Yang of Katten Muchin

“MY HAPPIEST CASE YET!”

GAL Recommends Return of Children to Mother

Those who practice family law know that “happy ending” is not necessarily a phrase thrown around often. But occasionally, a case ends in such a heart-warming way that you remember why you work or volunteer in this area. That is what keeps you coming back for more.

Patricia Radkowski of Kirkland & Ellis LLP is a stellar volunteer in the CVLS Guardian ad Litem (GAL) for Minors Program. There is no denying her effort and attention to detail when advocating for the best interests of children in contested guardianship cases. In this case, she was charged with making a recommendation about whether a young girl and boy – ages two and four, respectively – could be reunited with their biological mother.

In early 2019, the children’s mother was faced with a difficult choice. Not having a stable job or permanent housing, she relinquished care of her son and daughter to their aunt, who petitioned the Court for guardianship. By November 2020, the mother was able to establish a residence, secure employment, and build up a support system for the children. The mother also visited her children as often as possible during their separation.

Patricia, in her role as GAL, performed a thorough investigation as she does in all her cases. She interviewed not only the guardian, the mother, and the minor children; she also interviewed the children’s grandmother, the mother’s partner, and the partner’s sister. Patricia even took the time to conduct a home visit via Zoom to make sure that the children would have the proper living arrangements.

Based on her written recommendation to the Court, Judge Miller discharged guardianship and returned the children to the care of their biological mother. Both parties, the GAL, and the Court were happy with the result. Patricia’s investigation showed that the children would thrive given the deep love that their mother has for them. After sharing the outcome with CVLS, Patricia was proud to report that this was her “happiest case ending yet!”

Erica Yang, Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP

Weizi Zhang, Paul Hastings LLP

Although the client has a long road ahead of him, CVLS and LHOC were able to solve one of his most pressing problems. The client was so grateful for LHOC’s pro bono help that he said he would be willing to donate to our cause once if he ever has the opportunity.
KEEPING CHICAGO PRO BONO ALIVE DURING PANDEMIC
Local Firms Answer the Call

CVLS would like to thank attorneys from Kirkland & Ellis, Mayer Brown, Winston & Strawn and K&L Gates for being an essential part of our remote intake program last year. When the pandemic hit and our in-house panel intakes and our neighborhood clinics were forced to close, you stepped up to offer your time and talents to ensure that our client’s needs were met. Your assistance was critical in keeping our intake process running seamlessly during a very difficult and stressful time. CVLS and our clients are so very grateful!

VINO + VAN GOGH GOES ONLINE

COVID-19 may have forced us to stay indoors for most of 2020 but it didn’t stop our Junior Board from throwing one of the best Vino + Van Gogh events ever! Over 160 attendees joined us in our new ZOOM format, ready and eager to paint a Van Gogh classic. We had an absolute blast and would like to thank everyone who attended and supported us either through ticket and raffle purchases, donations, and especially our sponsors. Thanks to your efforts, we raised over $50,000 for Chicago Pro Bono! We look forward to working with you all in the new year and hope to see everyone in person at Vino + Van Gogh 2021.

Get Involved in 2021

Become a Chicago Pro Bono Volunteer

CVLS offers attorneys and law firms a wide range of pro bono transactional and litigation opportunities, from brief consultations or transactional projects to representation in pending litigation. With a vast array of training and support materials, our dedicated and knowledgeable staff can help you develop the pro bono program that is right for you.

Interpreters

We connect volunteer attorneys with low-income clients who are in need of legal representation which is a linguistically diverse population. Our clients sometime need interpreters to help communicate with attorneys in depositions, at trial, and in the completion of paperwork. Your language skills could be critical in helping these clients receive essential legal assistance.

Join the fight

Cvlsls.org/volunteer

Chicago Volunteer Legal Services