

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.

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 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 some-

one 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.

Introducing ... Two New Clinics!

We're very proud to announce the opening of two new CVLS clinics! For more information or to get involved, contact CVLS' Clinic Coordinator, Dan Santrella, at dsantrella@cvls.org.

NEW LIFE COVENANT LEGAL CLINIC

New Life Covenant Legal Clinic opened its doors at the tail end of last year. It is now offering a wide variety of legal services and bringing a new sense of community to the Grand Crossing Area.

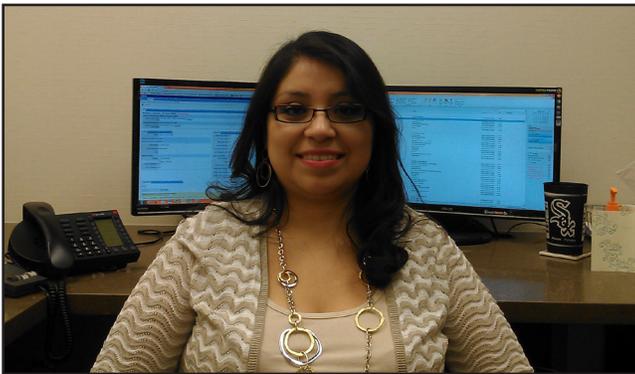
Spearheaded by Clinic Chair **Paraisia R. Winston**, the clinic meets the first Saturday of every month by appointment.

LEGAL PREP CHARTER ACADEMY LEGAL CLINIC

Teaming up with Legal Prep Charter Academy and the **Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI) Alumni**, the LPCA Clinic opened its doors January 13 to serve the high need community in West Garfield Park.

Legal Prep Charter Academy, an open-enrollment high school, employs a unique law themed curriculum and culture of high expectations to cultivate compassion, self-motivation, and reflection in young adults to prepare them to succeed at outstanding four-year colleges.

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.

4th Agreement (and a Volunteer)'s the Charm!

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/endzellow>

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.

Visit <http://cvls.org/orientation/gal-minors-training-25> for information and registration.

Please visit www.cvls.org/cle to register for a seminar!

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