

Have You Seen Our Annual Report?



CVLS is sui generis. CVLS is the oldest and largest pro bono legal aid program in Illinois. We began as a pro bono program and we remain a pro bono program.

Unlike traditional legal aid programs, our volunteers are supported by a small staff with specialized knowledge, skill, and experience.

Our unparalleled staff ensures that clients receive high-quality legal services and volunteers receive an equally high quality pro bono experience.

Our volunteers, donors and supporters make it possible for CVLS to do pro bono our way, making CVLS a class in and of itself.

Because of you, CVLS is sui generis.

Equal access to justice is everyone's fight. CVLS fights every day to provide legal aid for those who cannot otherwise afford it, but we can't do it without you.

Please help us continue our work by making a contribution today.

CVLS.org/donate

**View and download CVLS' 2015 Annual Report!
CVLS.org/annual-reports**

Law Student's Creative Exception Saves Client from Homelessness



Evelyn is 81 years old, the mother of 8 and the grandmother of 12. Her only income is social security. She survives with a CHA housing voucher for

rent and food stamps.

Several of Evelyn's grown sons are transient, in and out of jail, and often on parole. Over the past few years, her sons would use their mom's address when they were released on parole because parolees must have verified address.

While Evelyn admits her sons came to her apartment often, she denied they lived there. Not persuaded, the CHA terminated her housing voucher because of unauthorized occupants. When Evelyn filed an appeal, the Honorable David Atkins appointed CVLS to represent her under the Access to Justice Program.

Staff attorney **Matthew Hulstein** managed to convince the CHA to give Evelyn a new hearing without litigating the issue.

At that point, University of Chicago law student **Rachel Zemke** agreed to represent Evelyn at an administrative hearing under Matt's supervision.

This time, although the judge found that Evelyn's sons had in fact resided with her in the past in violation of CHA's rules, he found that Evelyn's age and health were mitigating factors and ordered the CHA to make an exception.

And make an exception they did. Evelyn's voucher was reinstated, her landlord has been paid, and she doesn't have to worry about being homeless at the age of 81.

Immigration Win!



Julia had been fighting to get a green card for nearly 20 years when she came to CVLS' **AILA Immigration Legal Clinic** and met **Nicole Minnis**. Nicole,

who had been sworn in as an attorney that week, had never had a case, pro bono or otherwise. Interested in gaining immigration experience, she came to the AILA clinic where chair Matt Kriezelman guided her through Julia's intake interview.

Later, Nicole referred to Julia's visit to the AILA clinic as her "last-ditch effort to get legal status" after 20 years, three lawyers and five unsuccessful attempts. Once she agreed to try to help Julia, she received invaluable support from Matt and his fellow AILA clinic volunteers Ann Peters and Gina Reynolds. For her first case ever, Nicole was with her client every step of the way; from her initial intake interview, to coordinating with the police department to get necessary documents, to filing the case, appealing it and, eventually, success!

In order to obtain the visa Julia needed, Nicole had to rely on information regarding a crime that took place almost 20 years ago. Julia had entered the country legally, on a K-1 marriage visa, but after her husband was charged with domestic violence, they were divorced. Julia was free of her abusive marriage, but her immigration issues were just beginning. In order to prove Julia's legal basis to stay in this country now that her marriage visa was invalid, Nicole needed to prove Julia's husband had committed a crime against her.

She visited courthouses for old, archived documents. She discovered that a police officer's initial statement regarding the domestic violence

charges led to the original denial of Julia's visa. Nicole convinced the police department to reissue a statement on appeal, which was eventually successful! Julia, now the proud owner of a U-visa establishing her legal immigrant status, will be eligible for a green card to stay in the U.S. permanently. Julia is now officially documented in this country!

"The case took over 3 years to close, but it was well worth the effort," Nicole says. "My client is kind-hearted and has been through a lot of trauma. It's so gratifying to have been able to help her become documented. It comes as such a relief to her, and makes me feel good that I can help."

Julia was so grateful with the outcome of her case she wrote a very sweet letter and sent it to Nicole, Matt and CVLS. Below is an excerpt:

"It was attorney Matthew Kriezelman with his unusual talent, expert skills, and professional experience [who] settled my case. With his sympathy and integrity he took over my case because of my situation. He sent me to attorney Nicole [Minnis] ... who is very nice, caring with passion, responsible ... She is a very nice, humble young attorney who I admired.

With her responsibility, determination and enthusiasm she fought for my tough case three times. She co-operated with Chicago Volunteer Legal Services attorneys for their help and support.

They really did their work and tried their best professionally to fight for my case to win. With their effort and smart strategy they won my case.

My heart has been moved and touched. I feel like from unable to walk person, now I can stand up like others. My life became light."

AFDA Honors Judge Rooney's Memory with Donation to CVLS



The Association of Foreclosure Defense Attorneys Board voted to give a donation to CVLS in memory of **Judge Jean Rooney**, who served on the Cook County Circuit Court for five years, protecting the rights of mortgage foreclosure defendants. Judge Rooney passed away in December 2015.

"We wanted to honor her memory with a gift to an organization that supports the rights of Foreclosure Defendants," said Erica Crohn Minchella of the AFDA.

"We feel that this is an opportunity to give support to CVLS, foreclosure defendants and sends a message that Judges who were generally fair in their decisions toward defendants are honored by the defense bar."

We thank the AFDA for its support of CVLS, and for honoring a truly outstanding lawyer and advocate.

Clients Say ...

"I really appreciate you taking the time to review my case and for trying to find me an attorney. I really need your help and I hope that you will be able to assist me.

I feel like they are trying to take advantage of me and desperately need legal representation, that without you, I could not afford."

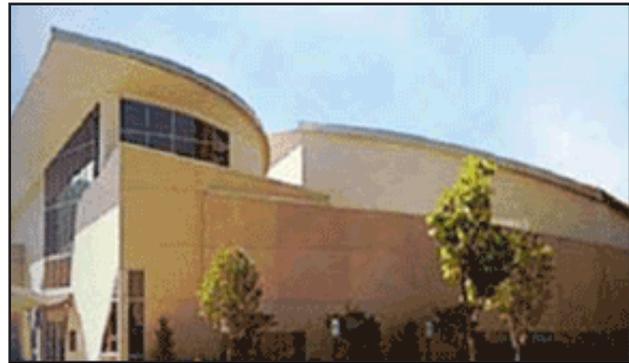
Visitation Legal Clinic has Moved!

CVLS' Visitation Church Legal Clinic has moved!

Volunteers, take note: the clinic, previously hosted in Englewood, will now meet at Old St. Mary's Church, located at:

1500 S Michigan Ave, Chicago, IL 60605

Now officially called **Visitation Legal Clinic at Old St. Mary's**, the clinic will still meet the 3rd Saturday of the month at 9:30am.



Thank You, Charlie! Welcome, Jon!

As Crowe Horwath's **Charlie Kuyk** retires from his job as a director in the firm's advisory services group, he will also retire from our Board of Directors. The



Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, Charlie has been an asset to CVLS as a board member and a volunteer. Another Crowe Horwath CPA, **Jonathan Theobald**, will take over Charlie's seat on the board.

Thank you, Charlie, for your commitment and support during your board tenure. Please join us in wishing Charlie well, and welcoming Jon. We're looking forward to working with him!

Upcoming CVLS Events

NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE:

GAL for Minors | GALs and School-Related Issues

- Presented by Brianne Dotts,
Legal Council for Health Justice

View this seminar online at:
CVLS.ORG/ONLINECLE

Most GALs for Minors are not experts in education or school law, but virtually all GALs work with children who are in school (or may be entitled to school services or early intervention). Therefore, it is critical to know the basics of education law, how it can impact your representation as a GAL, and how to advocate for your child in common school-related issues.

This session will provide an overview of the basics of education law, including:

- What to do if the minor is facing suspension or expulsion
- How to advocate for minors with special education needs, including signs that a child may have unidentified special education needs
- Rights of minors with limited English proficiency
- Early intervention for children ages birth to 3 years old
- Student confidentiality and records access issues

GAL for Minors | Trauma Informed & Motivational Interviewing

- Presented by Lisa Parsons,
Legal Council for Health Justice

View this seminar online at
CVLS.ORG/ONLINECLE

Lisa Parsons, Supervising Attorney at The Legal Council of Chicago, will provide an overview of trauma informed and motivational interviewing for attorneys, how to employ these techniques and how the approach might benefit pro bono clients and cases.

TRAININGS

New Volunteer Orientations

CVLS Offices, 12:15 PM

- Thursday, February 11
- Thursday, March 10

We'll cover the skills required to be a successful volunteer attorney, as well as the issues that may come up during cases. Training is for new volunteers working with CVLS.

GAL for Minors Orientations

CVLS Offices, 12:15 PM

- Thursday, February 25

We'll cover the skills required to be a successful GAL for a minor as well as the issues that may come up during the case.

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

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