



## OUR NATION'S PROMISE

*A Newsletter Dedicated to the Legal Issues Facing Veterans and Their Families*

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*September 2013*

### *Public Counsel's Center for Veterans Advancement Opens New York Office*

*New York, NY --*

The Center for Veterans Advancement is pleased to announce the opening of our New York office serving the greater New York area. Staffed by attorney Ruth Stein and based in the Bank of America Building in Rockefeller Plaza, the Center for Veterans Advancement is working to bring help and hope to those who have dutifully served our country, but need assistance in navigating the legal and veterans systems.



- **Rick Little**, Director, Center for Veterans Advancement at Public Counsel

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## New York Counsel

**Ruth Stein, Esq.**



Ruth's passion for *pro bono* law began during her first year at N.Y.U. School of Law when she volunteered at a clinic for indigent individuals with the student organization R.E.A.C.H. (Research, Education & Advocacy to Combat Homelessness). Through her service to those individuals, Ruth directly encountered the devastating poverty and homelessness among veterans that drives her work with Public Counsel's Center for Veterans Advancement today.

Most recently, Ruth completed a two-year Hunger Fellowship, and later worked as a staff attorney at New Mexico Appleseed, part of the Appleseed network of 17 public interest justice centers in the U.S. and Mexico. Previously, Ruth completed a summer internship at South Brooklyn Legal Services, participated in a law school clinic with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York, served as an Executive Editor of the N.Y.U. Review of Law and Social Change, and graduated *summa cum laude* with a bachelor's degree from the University of Pennsylvania.

"As we further our mission to provide New York's veterans with the legal assistance they need and deserve, I have truly been inspired by the talent and passion of my colleagues at the Center for Veterans Advancement and Volunteer Lawyers for Veterans. It is a privilege to work with a team so dedicated to improving the lives of veterans in need."

- Ruth Stein

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## Sidley Austin LLP Serves Veterans on 9/11

Marianne Bellucci, *Practice Group Coordinator*  
Janet S. Zagorin, *Client Services Officer*

### New York -

Recently, on 9/11, we had the opportunity to volunteer with Volunteer Lawyers for Veterans (VLV) at their offices in downtown New York, near the World Trade Center. On this very difficult and emotional day for all of us, a day when we try to count our blessings, we believed that helping our veterans was a small way of expressing our gratitude for their service. We never dreamed that our experience with VLV and with the veterans we met was in fact going to be an enormous gift to us.

Working with VLV, a *pro bono* partnership between the Yellow Ribbon Fund, Public Counsel's Center for Veterans Advancement (CVA), and Bank of America, we conducted intake for several veterans who needed assistance in obtaining a range of legal services.

We met humble, yet inspiring veterans seeking very basic assistance, unsure of whether they even had a right to request aid. Through the intake process, we were able to identify specific needs that should be addressed and help develop a path for the provision of *pro bono* aid. In each case, the veterans had inspirational stories of service to their country, love of family, integrity, and desire to continue to contribute to their communities. They also were desperately in need of basic benefits that may be due them. They have acute health, housing or legal issues that seem insurmountable for a veteran on his or her own, but can be addressed with the support and expertise of VLV.

We are very proud that our firm, Sidley Austin, and so many other firms in the City, are willing to step forward and commit to supporting the efforts to provide *pro bono* legal services to VLV and the veterans they serve. We both left the VLV offices that day feeling incredibly blessed, inspired and humbled. The memory of meeting those gentlemen is a gift we will always cherish.



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## *Lawyers Volunteer for Veterans in New York* Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP

On September 11<sup>th</sup>, attorneys from Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP volunteered at a Volunteer Lawyers for Veterans clinic at the new legal services offices of Public Counsel's Center for Veterans Advancement in lower Manhattan. "We are particularly honored to be able to counsel veterans on September 11th. Our attorneys welcomed the opportunity to assist those who fought bravely for our country as a means of paying tribute to all of the 9/11 victims,

survivors and responders." said Jennifer Kroman, the Firm's Director of Pro Bono Practice.



The Cleary Gottlieb lawyers staffing the clinic found the experience to be extremely rewarding. After working with a veteran on housing-related matters, Cleary Associate Darryl Stein noted that "there is no shortage of veterans who need legal help and there is an endless permutation of [legal] services that each could benefit from." Mr. Stein worked with fellow associate Kimberly Brunelle at the clinic. Ms. Brunelle noted that working at the clinic "helped solidify the enormous gratitude [she] feels for those who risk their lives for us every day."

The following week, Cleary Gottlieb attorneys partnered with Bank of America's legal department to staff the clinic. Suneela Jain -- one of Cleary's associate volunteers -- said of the experience "it was extremely gratifying to volunteer at the clinic. The veteran we assisted has experienced a number of setbacks as a result of various [service-related] disabilities. I enjoyed speaking with him and I look forward to next steps."

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## *Homeless Veteran Finds Hope*

*"I am a disgrace...I deserve this life."*

Empty of spirit and bereft of hope, it took everything "Molly" had to get through each day. Honorably discharged, Molly could never reconcile the events she endured during her service in the Army. The angst she experienced nearly convinced her that suicide was the respite she needed for an existence that "just got in the way of others." "God knows," she thought to herself, "I should have never allowed myself to be assaulted. I am a disgrace... I deserve this life."

Homeless, Molly ate discarded food, collected recyclables, and begged for money to make ends meet. When recyclables and generosity were scarce, Molly would rely up on the unthinkable just to survive another day. When a "female bed" could be accessed through a local shelter, sleep and safety were often elusive. More often than not, Molly chose the independent comfort of highway overpasses, threadbare blankets, and discarded cardboard, rather than the risks of a shared shelter.

After enduring another sleepless night, the following morning Molly learned of the Center for Veterans Advancement (CVA). "I wonder if they will think I am a veteran" she thought as she reached out to the CVA and spoke with its Director. Within a week, Molly was offered *pro bono* assistance, and within 18 months, Molly received over \$140,000 in compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs. More importantly, with the award of these benefits, Molly learned that she was indeed a veteran and entitled to our Nation's respect and admiration.



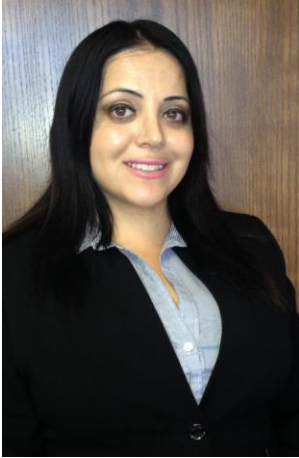
Molly has since engaged a network of counselors to help her overcome the depression and stress she suffers daily. As a result of the efforts of the Center for Veterans Advancement, Molly finally has the income and recognition she needs to secure housing for the first time in nearly a decade.

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# Jansi Muradyan

## My Ticket Rescue - Rescues Veterans in Need in Southern California

Jansi Muradyan received her Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the University of California at Irvine, and her Juris Doctorate from Thomas M. Cooley Law School in Lansing, Michigan. Prior to becoming a member of the California State Bar, Ms. Muradyan worked at the Glendale District Attorney's Office and at the United States Attorney's Office Central District of California. She is an active member of the Armenian Bar Association.



Ms. Muradyan established her own practice in 2012. The Law Offices of Jansi Muradyan - My Ticket Rescue in Sherman Oaks practicing in the areas of traffic violations and criminal defense. She takes pride in fervently defending her clients by focusing on their particular needs.

While attending a *pro bono* seminar organized by Public Counsel's Center for Veterans Advancement (CVA), Ms. Muradyan was very touched by the work of CVA and volunteered to assist veterans in need of her expertise. Through the CVA - LACBA Pro Bono Veterans Project, she was contacted regarding several veterans in need of legal representation. Without hesitation, Jansi agreed to represent each veteran.

One case involved a veteran who had a bench warrant and was charged with a misdemeanor violation of driving without a license, as well as having no registration and insurance. With her passionate advocacy, Ms. Muradyan was successful in not only recalling the bench warrant, but also dismissing all the underlying charges.

For more information about My Ticket Rescue, you can contact Jansi at (855) 558-4253.

## Join Our Partner - Services for the Underserved (SUS) at their 5th Annual Golf Benefit

Wednesday, October 9, 2013  
The Saint Andrew's Golf Club  
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY

**CORPORATE SPONSORS**

VASSALOTTI ASSOCIATES  
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**GOLF COMMITTEE**

Adam Cole  
Annette Hall  
Ed Hubbard  
Barbara Lehrer  
Thomas McCauley  
Peter and Marie Mirnick  
Carolyn Powell  
Victor Rosenzweig  
James Vassalotti, II

**5th annual SUS golf benefit FOR THE SUS VETERANS FUND**

Please join us for the

Wednesday, October 9, 2013  
The Saint Andrew's Golf Club  
10 Old Jackson Avenue  
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY

10:30 am – 11:45 am: Registration, Brunch, Practice Range  
Noon: Shotgun Start, Mens, Ladies, Mixed Foursomes

**FEATURING**  
Brunch, Favors, Cocktails, Dinner, Prizes and Silent Auction

Contact Janet Perez for more information  
jperez@sus.org / 917.408.1634

List in progress

Contact SUS at <http://sus.givezooks.com/events/5th-annual-sus-golf-benefit>

*CVA-LACBA Veterans Pro Bono Project Helps  
Veterans Remove Legal Barriers to Employment  
and Housing*



## Join us and help America's veterans rebuild their lives

The Los Angeles County Bar Association (LACBA) is one of the largest metropolitan voluntary bar associations in the nation and has more than 21,000 members. LACBA, and Public Counsel's nationally acclaimed Center for Veterans Advancement have joined forces to help "uphold our nation's promise to veterans and their families" and to stem the tide of poverty among our nation's veterans and their families. LACBA will work with CVA to recruit and train *pro bono* attorneys to provide free legal assistance and representation to Veterans on a range of legal matters, including family law, and ticket and warrant matters, which can become major obstacles to employment or housing stability. This joint partnership will assist veterans throughout Los Angeles County.



If you are interested in providing *pro bono* legal assistance to low-income veterans, please contact Project Coordinator Barbara Luttenberger at 213-385-2977 x189, or LACBA Pro Bono Coordinator, Laurie Aronoff at 213-833-6776. LACBA is engaged in advancing the administration of justice and meeting the professional needs of lawyers. For more information on LACBA, visit [www.lacba.org](http://www.lacba.org).

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### *Other Opportunities to Serve* *Pro bono attorneys are always welcome!*

These veterans need your help now. Opportunities are open to all attorneys in the California bar and throughout the United States.

- U.S. Marine, Vietnam Veteran needs assistance with multiple bench warrants and failures to appear.
- 60 year old Army Veteran needs assistance with a ticket so he can regain his driver's license.
- Army Veterans' car has been towed and impounded. Veteran would like assistance in getting his car back.
- Veteran needs assistance in preparing a letter for Judge's consideration for tickets.

If you are interested in helping these veterans, please contact Project Coordinator Barbara Luttenberger 213-385-2977 x189, or [bluttenberger@publiccounsel.org](mailto:bluttenberger@publiccounsel.org).

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### Center for Veterans Advancement

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