



OUR NATION'S PROMISE

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

February 2014

Center for Veterans Advancement Exceeds Forecasts

Los Angeles, CA

It has been a busy year so far! CVA has already advanced beyond forecasts established for period ending February 2014 and expects to exceed multi-million dollar successes that veterans enjoyed in 2013; pro bono involvement has also surpassed goals for 2014.

We are looking forward to increasing our presence in the East Coast, as well as continuing to develop and strengthen our current operations in the west.

Helping a veteran is like giving a living expression of gratitude for what these servicemembers have sacrificed for us and our country. I want to thank you for your continued support of the CVA and our Nation's heroes. Together, we will continue to bring hope and help to those who have given so much for us.

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



Stacy Wang of Holland & Knight Assists Disabled Veteran Who Pays It Forward

Stacey Wang of Holland & Knight LLP helps Edward Cleary, a disabled veteran, regain family belongings in deceased brother's estate

"I thought I would never see this day." Stacey will never forget the words of her pro bono client



Edward Cleary, a disabled veteran now in his late sixties, on this morning of September 8, 2011. They met at the Los Angeles County Public Administrator's vast Commerce warehouse, where Ed picked up what remained of his family's belongings, over three years after his brother -- who had been his only living relative -- passed away. "The pictures bring back so many good days and memories," Ed later said of his parent's effects among his brother's estate.

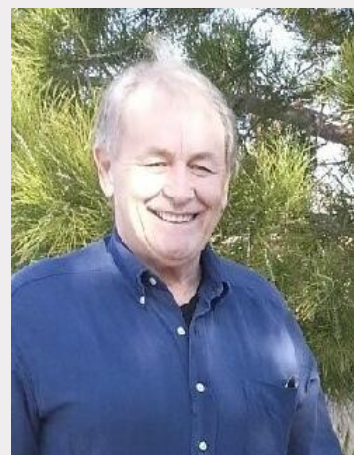
This day had been a long time coming, and it was not over yet, in what Ed could only describe as an "Odyssey." This, coming from a homeless Vietnam veteran who had served in the 2nd Air Force Combat Support ensuring that our B-52 bombers functioned as they should. Ed's brother, a special education teacher for LAUSD, had passed away in March 2008, but through a clerical mailing error, Ed did not receive notice of his death until seven months later, five months too late to attend the funeral.

Ed learned that the Los Angeles Public Administrator's Office (the "PA's office") had taken over the administration of the estate. He contacted them and, for the next two years, was on the receiving end of a series of broken promises and continued delays. When Ed found the Center for Veterans Advancement (CVA) and sought their assistance in the fall of 2010, he had received no accounting or inventory, and the assets that Ed told the PA about shortly after his initial contact with them remained uncollected. Most frustrating to Ed was that, despite his requests, the PA's office refused to distribute his brother's personal belongings to him and, at one point, suggested that they be auctioned off. All the while, the PA's office was charging monthly fees for the storage of the property. Ed, in search of help, was worried that the PA's office would "reduce the estate into insolvency simply by inactivity." CVA made several calls to the PA's office to no avail and, shortly thereafter, CVA referred the matter to Stacey Wang at Holland & Knight.

Most touching to Stacey was that, above all else, Ed's primary objective was to get back his family's sentimental items. Stacey immediately filed a petition to have Ed appointed as the administrator of the estate, only to find that the PA's office had filed its own petition to appoint itself administrator earlier that month without proper notice to Ed, despite the fact that Ed had been in contact with the PA's office since 2008, or to Nancy Wheeler at CVA, who had made several calls to the PA's office on Ed's behalf.

Thereafter, through a series of contested motions and objections to the PA's accounting, Stacey successfully vacated the PA's appointment, had Ed appointed as administrator, and negotiated a settlement to resolve the PA's negligent handling of the estate. Stacey also helped Ed collect well over a hundred thousand dollars for the estate in benefits, tax refunds, and unclaimed funds.

Ed still lives in Nevada but has moved out of the veteran's transitional housing facility, where he had been living. He is taking JAVA development courses and planning to move to Austin, Texas, where he will continue his work on starting an information technology business. With his inheritance money, Ed has been helping his fellow veterans get back on their feet. He continues to speak fondly of Stacey as "the epitome of a champion" at Holland & Knight.



From the Big Apple...



Sidley Austin Lawyers
Help Advance Mentor Program

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Sidley Austin is no stranger to serving veterans in need with the Center for Veterans Advancement and Volunteer Lawyers for Veterans. So, when the chance arose to serve one veteran with big plans to serve other veterans in need, Sidley's Marianne Bellucci, attorney and Practice Group Coordinator, Larry Tondel, Senior Counsel, and Marshall Feiring, Counsel, did not

hesitate to step up to the plate. This team with tax and corporate experience will be providing legal assistance on a pro bono basis to Dwayne Gathers, a veteran community leader, who seeks to incorporate and obtain nonprofit status for the veteran mentor group he currently coordinates on a volunteer basis.

Since October of 2013, Dwayne Gathers has been coordinating volunteer mentors to assist veterans interacting with the justice system at the new Veterans Treatment Court in the Bronx. Veterans Treatment Courts are a national best practice that seek to recognize and address, with rehabilitative goals in mind, any addiction or mental health issues afflicting veterans facing criminal charges. The Bronx Veteran Mentors program, under Mr. Gathers' direction, provides veterans involved in this program with needed mentoring and support. With Sidley's help through the incorporation and tax exemption process, the Bronx Veteran Mentors can develop and expand their services to New York's veterans in need.





Former CVA Volunteer Accepted into Air Force Academy

KJ Moore

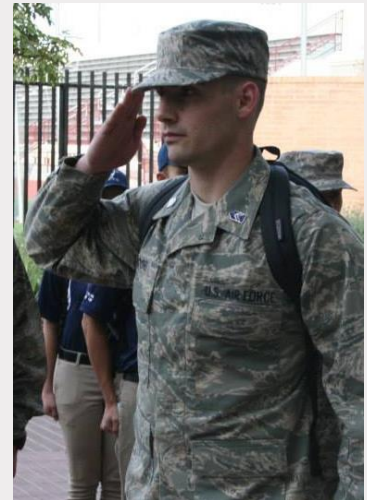
Some people have dreams of becoming rich and famous, or becoming police officers or fire fighters. Often overlooked, but just as important, are those people who dream of serving our Nation. Kenneth J. More (KJ) was one of those dreamers, wanting to join the armed forces from an early age.

As a young boy, KJ's goal was to attend a United States Service Academy. After his sophomore year in high school, he was one of 60 young adults chosen to attend an engineering camp held at the Air Force Academy - an experience which solidified his life goal.

KJ has always embraced the concept of service in his life, volunteering since he was in the eighth grade, coaching younger children in an afterschool sports program. When he entered college, he continued to serve others by expanding his volunteer commitment to his university and to the community. His time volunteering at CVA was devoted to researching and working on special projects.

To prepare for training at the Academy, KJ chose a rigorous academic path. At a time when most seniors were concerned with their prom, KJ was more concerned about preparing for his future. During his senior year in high school (and after learning that a desired AP science class would not be offered in his fall semester), KJ pursued an online, AP physics course. His choice buttressed three other AP honors classes he had already enrolled in.

When most would have quit the rigorous path towards the Academy, KJ continued to pursue his dream. KJ connected with an Academy liaison and followed the liaison's advice by enrolling in the Aerospace Engineering program at California Polytechnic University, Pomona. In February 2014, Congresswoman Napolitano nominated KJ to the Academy. The admissions process to the U.S. service academies is an extensive and very competitive process with an average acceptance rate between 8-15%. Recently KJ's dream was realized as he was notified of his acceptance into the U.S. Air Force Academy.



KJ is an excellent ambassador of American youth. His integrity, work ethic, and contributions to both his community and to his country are examples of what America's youth can emulate. It was an honor to have KJ volunteer with the Center for Veterans Advancement and we wish him "Blue Skies and Happy Trails".

"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."

~John F. Kennedy

Join Us and Help America's Veterans Rebuild Their Lives

Become Part of the CVA Team!

The Center for Veterans Advancement (CVA), a project of Public Counsel, is a national leader in veteran's advocacy, provides direct representation, or representation through *pro bono* partners, to veterans and their families. CVA provides legal representation at both the local and national levels, and coordinates its work with special "Veterans Courts" in Northern and Southern California designed to meet the unique needs of returning veterans. CVA also manages legal clinics, including one of the largest *pro bono* advocacy programs in the United States.



CVA is willing to 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. CVA assist veterans primarily throughout Los Angeles County.

If you are interested in learning about providing *pro bono* legal assistance to low-income veterans, please contact CVA Project Coordinator Barbara Luttenberger at 213-385-2977 x189, or at bluttenberger@publiccounsel.org.

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