



A project of Public Counsel

# OUR NATION'S PROMISE

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

**March/April 2014**

## Caregiver Collaboration Announced with the Center for Veterans Advancement

Los Angeles, CA

*On April 11, 2014, months of hard work came to fruition. At a White House event, the collaboration between Public Counsel's Center for Veterans Advancement, the Military Officers' Association of America, the American Bar Association, and the Dole Foundation was officially announced.*

*This collaboration will provide legal assistance to those "Hidden Heroes"; The men and women who care for veterans suffering from physical and or emotional disabilities.*

*We honor those caregivers today, and we thank them for selflessly sacrificing themselves for those that have protected our country.*

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



## Mr. Little Goes to the White House



*First Lady Michelle Obama spoke at a White House event for military caregivers where a new collaborative involving the Center for Veterans Advancement was announced.*

Wounded and disabled veterans can face legal issues long after their service is done. But who is looking out for the spouses, family members and friends who care for them? Public Counsel's Center for Veterans Advancement is.

At the invitation of the White House, Rick Little, Director of the Center for Veterans Advancement, attended a special White House event on April 11th with groups who are meeting the needs of military caregivers. The event was hosted by First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden through their Joining Forces initiative.



At the White House event, former Sen. Elizabeth Dole discussed in detail the national collaborative involving Public Counsel's Center for Veterans Advancement that will support the legal needs of the people she calls "hidden heroes" -- the family and friends who care for veterans living with wounds and disabilities after service.



*"Many veterans face legal hurdles that potentially compromise their quality of life. Too many veterans struggle with managing the day-to-day basics when life-changing benefits are within reach. The caregivers who stand by their side can be impacted as well. Caregivers deserve the same support provided to our veterans,"* said Rick Little about the new project.

A report by the Rand Corp. released last month showed that legal issues too often add to the challenges of recovery that wounded veterans and their caregivers face. [Click here to read about the report at the Dole Foundation website.](#)

As part of the collaborative with the Dole Foundation, the Military Officers Association of America, and the American Bar Association, Public Counsel's Center for Veterans Advancement has launched a hotline for military caregivers and will connect caregivers with our national *pro bono* network. We have assisted veterans and their families in more than 40 states. Caregivers

seeking legal help can call (213) 385-2977 x302 to receive assistance.



*CVA's Director Rick Little watches from the second floor of the White House as the President and First Lady leave the residence.*

## CVA Welcomes Its Newest Addition - Alina Stolyarova

CVA Project Assistant

Alina Stolyarova comes to us with a wealth of knowledge from her home country of Russia.



She has a Master's Degree in English, Russian and Literature from Amur State University in her hometown Komsomolsk-on-Amur. She has loved the English language since she was young and started taking English classes when she was 7. Prior coming to the United States, she taught English to children at a private language school.

Through UCLA Extension, Alina studied and received certification as a paralegal. She has volunteered at Public Counsel since September 2013, primarily with Public Counsel's Immigrants' Right Project, helping to interpret for Russian Immigrants. As Project Assistant, Alina helps to support the Center for Veterans Advancement with her paralegal skills, particularly in the areas of intake, processing, and research.

Alina used to travel frequently when she was young. Her family still lives in the most eastern part of Russia, bordering near China. She has been to China, Korea, Ukraine, Greece, Turkey and many cities in Russia. She has a love of meeting new people and learning about different cultures, including California, which is one of her favorite places due to the climate, people, and the food.

"Zdra - ctvui - te!" says new CVA Staffer Alina. A Russian greeting which conveys "Hi" and "Good Health". CVA welcomes Alina to the CVA family!

"Spa - si - bo! (Thank you!)" - Alina Stolyarova

## SeaBee Finds Hope Through \$58,000 COAP Settlement

When Joe\* came to the Center for Veterans Advancement, he was frustrated with the legal system. He blamed it for the burden he endured daily. Joe had served in the Navy during the Vietnam era. He was a member of the Construction Battalion, also known as the "Seabee's". After he was honorably discharged, he married and started a family. Sadly, Joe suffered from a myriad of disabilities, which sapped his strength daily. To mitigate the pain Joe began abusing drugs and alcohol. Gradually, he lost everything; his family, job, and home. Eventually, mounting financial obligations drove Joe to homelessness.

Some years later, Joe entered a substance abuse treatment facility at the West Los Angeles VA. While at the VA, Joe began to "reclaim his life". However, he learned that he had pending warrants for unpaid citations. Joe also owed





\$65,000 to the government for back support, \$38,000 of which was interest.

As Joe pondered how to overcome his overwhelming financial burden he learned of the Center for Veterans Advancement. After he contacted the CVA, staff attorney Nancy Wheeler was assigned to Joe's case. Within days Nancy began the complex task of unraveling Joe's past. Nancy recruited *pro bono* attorneys to help resolve Joe's tickets and warrants, while she focused on addressing Joe's support arrears.

Through the Compromise of Arrears Program (COAP), Nancy was successful in reducing Joe's support arrears by approximately \$58,000 of Joe's previous obligation. *"Thanks to an overall team effort,"* says Nancy Wheeler, *"Joe's journey toward self-sufficiency is less arduous."*

\*Name Changed

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CVA Invites You to Attend  
Yellow Ribbon Fund  
Annual Army Navy Country Club  
Golf Classic for Injured Service Members  
Army Navy Country Club  
Fairfax, Virginia  
July 14, 2014



[Click Here for Information](#)

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## From the Big Apple...



### Arleen R. Tlumak Vice President, Sr. Paralegal - Litigation Bank of America

With a satellite office in New York City, the Volunteer Lawyers for Veterans (VLV) program, staffed by CVA attorney Ruth Stein, and managed by the CVA, provides veterans and their qualified dependents with access to select legal services previously unavailable to them. The primary goal of the VLV program is to enlist, train, and mobilize a wide network of *pro bono* attorneys, paralegals, and other professionals to provide the services which help veterans and their families to attain or protect self-sufficiency and to ultimately thrive. Bank of America Vice President and Senior Litigation Paralegal Arleen R. Tlumak is one such person who is committed to the VLV goals.



"I was always interested in doing *pro bono* work and frankly, a little scared of it. It meant stepping outside my comfort zone into an area I was not familiar with. I wanted to get involved in different things this year and stretch myself, so when the opportunity came up to participate in doing *pro bono* work, especially with those who have served our country, I volunteered.

I admire those who have served and have given themselves so selflessly for our country - it is a commitment to service that goes all out. I have found that volunteering is challenging, but so gratifying on many levels. I have enjoyed doing the research in an area unfamiliar to me and organizing data which is familiar to me. If my skill set can help someone else achieve what they need, then I am most happy to assist."

From the entire VLV team, a hearty THANK YOU to Bank of America Vice President and VLV participant Arleen R. Tlumak!

*"I don't want to live in the kind of world where we don't look out for each other. Not just the people that are close to us, but anybody who needs a helping hand. I can't change the way anybody else thinks, or what they choose to do, but I can do my bit."*

~Charles de Lint

## 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. 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.

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](mailto:bluttenberger@publiccounsel.org).

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## Center for Veterans Advancement

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