



# OUR NATION'S PROMISE

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

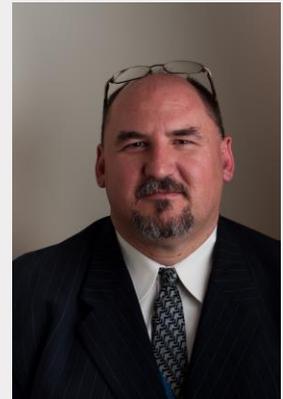
**May 2014**

## The Center for Veterans' Advancement Bids Farewell to an American Hero

Los Angeles, CA

Most have heard of the disturbing news involving the Phoenix VA Medical Center. As shocking as these events are, we should not be surprised. When General Shinseki accepted the post as Secretary for the Department of Veterans Affairs, he was aware that the VA was rife with process and accountability problems. And, as an Army general, he approached the near impossible task by making it his mission to overhaul the universally recognized broken system.

The administrative short-comings of General Shinseki notwithstanding, I found him to be a man of prodigious determination and integrity. General Shinseki was determined to eradicate veteran homelessness in five years. To my recollection, no other VA Secretary had shown such intestinal fortitude exhibited by General Shinseki in this regard. To some however, if not most, ending veteran homelessness in five years was unrealistic. Despite the people who protested "This guy won't last", General Shinseki stood by his convictions and pursued his goal with persistence and determination. Today, there are fewer homeless veterans on the streets of America.



As I reflect on the persistence and dedication of General Shinseki, the words of Calvin Coolidge come to mind:

"Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence.

Talent will not: nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent.

Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb.

Education will not: the world is full of educated derelicts.

Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent."

General Shinseki, on behalf of all previously, homeless veterans and their families, thank you for your determination and persistence. With the right support, you would have achieved even greater things.

*-Rick Little, Director, Center for Veterans' Advancement*



## The Center for Veterans' Advancement Welcomes Its 2014 Interns

### Nick Krebs - 2014 CVA Intern

Originally from Chicago, Nick came to Los Angeles to attend Loyola Law School and pursue his dream of becoming a litigator. He is now in his third-year of studies at Loyola and recently worked for the Honorable Margaret M. Morrow for the Central District of California. Nick will devote his summer to assisting veterans on a variety of legal issues, including criminal warrants and family law disputes.

### Ben Davis - 2014 CVA Intern

Ben Davis is the son of an Air Force Vietnam veteran and the grandson of a World War II Army veteran. He grew up in Washington State and obtained his Bachelor of Science degree in Biochemistry from Western Washington University. Ben worked for over 12 years in the biotechnical/pharmaceutical industry, in various roles including manufacturing, quality control, and quality assurance. In 2008, Ben and his wife, Jill, moved to southern California and in 2012, Ben began his post-graduate education in law and business. He recently completed the Master of Business Administration portion of a dual JD/MBA degree and will complete the JD portion in May of 2015. He currently resides in Huntington Beach and spends much of his free time exploring the surfing opportunities of Orange and Los Angeles county.



## The Center for Veterans' Advancement "Hits the Streets" to Educate Employers



Sonia Figueroa and her husband, Gabe

Sonia Figueroa served in the California Army National Guard where she met her husband, Gabe, a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom II. Now she joins forces with Public Counsel through our *Just 1* program to help stem the tide of veteran unemployment.

Unemployment among veterans, especially for those returning from conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan, is an increasingly critical issue in the United States. This is a problem as gainful employment has been identified as key to a veteran's successful transition from military to civilian life. More than 2.5 million of these veterans are post-9/11 (or Gulf War II Era) service members, a population that is expected to rise by 10% each year.

In August 2011, the USC Center for Innovation and Research on Veterans & Military Families (CIR) published, *Overcoming Barriers to Employment for Veterans: Current Trends and Practical Approaches*. Authored by Department of Veterans Affairs' Nickola Alenkin, Ph.D.; and Rick Little, Director of the Center for Veterans' Advancement; CVA introduced its *Just1 Program* as a tool to help bridge the gap between veterans and potential employers.

Through generous contributions provided by the *Carl and Roberta Deutsch Foundation*, the CVA moved *Just 1* program from "theory" and into practice. To help advance the *Just 1* mission, CVA contracted with military veteran and attorney, Sonia S. Figueroa.

Sonia S. Figueroa is an immigration attorney in solo practice. She previously worked for the US Citizenship and Immigration Service as an Immigration Service Officer. Ms. Figueroa received her J.D. in 2007 from Loyola Law School, and is currently a member of the Los Angeles Bar Association and the Korean American Bar Association. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband and dog Zeus.

Sonia's work has already generated tremendous success and we are thrilled to have Sonia as part of the CVA team!



of promise and free from the ravages of poverty and financial ruin" says Team CVA. "And, we are only getting warmed-up."

## Poverty Takes A Hit as CVA Advances Its Mission

During the month of May, CVA took another swipe at poverty by winning nearly **\$500,000** in retroactive benefits for veterans and their families! Furthermore, CVA increased average monthly income from **\$712** to a respectable **\$3,068**.

Ensuring veteran stability, CVA advanced its mission of *Upholding Our Nation's Promise to Veterans and their Families* by working with county officials to modify tens of thousands of dollars in interest accruing support requirements to a more manageable level.

Let's not forget about CVA's cadre of fantastic, *pro bono* partners and staff who, through their tireless efforts, appeared in court to defend veterans from the financial shackles created by warrants and quality of life citations executed against poor veterans and their families.

In the month of May, the states of Florida, Louisiana, Texas, Ohio, New York and California are celebrating the work of CVA. "We are all so grateful to be the agent responsible for helping veterans advance towards a life full

# CVA Celebrates Memorial Day at *Honoring Our Veterans* Supervisor Michael Antonovich's 17th Annual Salute to Veterans and Their Families

During the annual Michael Antonovich Memorial Day Celebration, held Saturday, May 27, the Center for Veterans' Advancement was invited by Supervisor Antonovich to provide legal services to veterans and their qualified dependents. The photo montage was created by photographs taken by Barbara Luttenberger, CVA's Program Coordinator.





From the Big Apple...



## CVA's New York Office Protects Disabled Veteran & Mother From Improper Legal Action

Like many of those who gravitate towards the greater New York City area, CVA's recent client, a disabled female veteran of the armed forces, was seeking a fresh start. Determined to help her child develop a growing talent, this veteran and dedicated mother had moved from across the country to the New York City area to immerse that child in New York's rich arts community and foster a future career. Yet, the veteran's past had followed her in the form of a legal action, then pending in New York, that was previously decided out of state. Many aspects of the case rendered it an improper action brought against this disabled veteran.

When the veteran came to CVA's New York Legal Services Office at the community-based non-profit Services for the UnderServed, CVA stepped in to advise the veteran on submitting a court document citing the many legal objections to the New York legal action. Following these objections, the plaintiff elected to drop the New York case. As part of its mission to assist New York's veterans in finding a fresh start, CVA remains dedicated to assisting the veteran however possible should future problems arise with this out of state legal matter. CVA thanks its generous volunteers who served as consult for the case on civil litigation matters.

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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](#)

*"You are capable of more than you know. Choose a goal that seems right for you and strive to be the best, however hard the path. Aim high. Behave honorably. Prepare to be alone at times, and to endure failure. Persist! The world needs all you can give."*

**E. O. Wilson**

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## 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.



A project of Public Counsel

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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