

# NEWS FROM OUR HOUSE

## SPRING 2018

The Children's **LAW** Center of Connecticut • Protecting Children & Strengthening Families



The Children's  
**LAW**  
Center

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## The Roisman Fellowship: Preparing Future Lawyers to Make a Difference for Children

Behind the scenes at The Children's Law Center of Connecticut, we have a dedicated team of interns who help keep things running smoothly while gaining valuable professional experience in the legal and nonprofit fields. One of these interns is Elizabeth Panico, a second-year law student who is working with CLC through UConn School of Law's Roisman Fellowship in Family Law. This fellowship provides a matriculated UConn School of Law student with an opportunity to work directly with CLC attorneys and staff in each of our service programs—Legal Representation, Families in Transition, and The Children's Law Line.

The fellowship was created to benefit UConn Law students interested in working with CLC by Atty. Gerald Roisman, who has worked for decades in the field of family law. Through his experiences working within the Court system and the Institute of Living, as well as providing seminar sessions at the UConn School of Law and UConn School of Social Work, he recognizes that the most difficult family law cases deal with children's issues arising when children are living in unstable situations. He views CLC as a positive resource to support and assist children who need help. Additionally, Atty. Roisman's granddaughter is an attorney with The Children's Law Center of New York, and he enjoys conversing with her about children's issues in family court.

The fellowship has been a positive experience for Elizabeth, who would like to work with children and families in her future career as an attorney. "I have been relatively confident all along that I wanted to work in the Public Interest with children and families," she states. "Being at CLC has really served to solidify that desire. I want to strive to make sure that children are always heard and that their needs and best interests are always put first."

In her fellowship at CLC, Elizabeth has had a great deal of hands-on legal experience, which has helped her learn about the work of guardians *ad litem*, representing clients and the legal profession as a whole. "Since starting my fellowship at CLC, I have also gained an immense amount of experience in court that remains unparalleled by experiences of most law students. I am now well-versed in being able to speak in court, and have participated in report back dates, status conferences, an uncontested custody hearing, and a final dissolution of marriage. I never would have imagined having these experiences as a second-year law student—these are skills and experiences that I will be able to utilize throughout my career."

She adds, "I am so thankful that I have been able to work alongside many of the attorneys in the office and to be able to see a variety of different approaches in working with the cases they take on. I've seen first-hand that the work that is done at CLC really does help to make children's lives better."



# Thank You for Making Our 2017 Gala a Success!

Thank you to our sponsors, supporters and volunteers for another incredible Gala. Because of your support, we were able to raise over \$100,000 to help continue our work protecting Connecticut's most vulnerable children in family court.

More than 300 guests gathered at Delamar West Hartford on November 30, 2017, to help lift up the work of The Children's Law Center. Attendees heard from Theresa, a former CLC client, about how having our Executive Director, Justine Rakich-Kelly, serve as her guardian *ad litem* changed her life for the better. Live and silent auctions, a paddle raise and culinary stations also brought excitement and energy to the night. Keep an eye out for more information on our next Gala this November, where we are celebrating CLC's 25th anniversary!



**With your support, CLC was able to serve  
1,776 children in 2017!**

Through Legal Representation,  
we served 515 children  
in 332 families.

Through Families in Transition,  
we served 64 children  
in 35 families.

Through The Children's Law Line,  
we served 1,187 children  
through 875 calls.

## Families in Transition: Where Co-Parenting Develops

When Miranda and Leon began participating in our Families in Transition (FIT) program, their co-parenting relationship had been filled with anger and resentment for quite some time. They had their son Eli after a whirlwind relationship, and managed to successfully co-parent for the first few years of his life. Leon would care for Eli during the day while Miranda worked full-time, and Miranda would take Eli during weekends and evenings when Leon worked. Things began to unravel when Leon began a new relationship and eventually got married. Miranda butted heads with Leon's new wife, and began to withhold his visits with their son.



**Two of our mediators, Nicole Silva and Robert Madden**

A few months later, Miranda was arrested for driving under the influence. The court granted Leon temporary sole custody, and Eli moved in full-time with him and his new wife. Eli was put into therapy and began asking to see his mom. Leon spoke to Miranda and suggested that they attend mediation together since they were having trouble communicating, and neither of them wanted to spend the money or time to continue battling in court.

Their first session at FIT was almost their last, as Miranda angrily stormed out before the end of the hour. Although the process wasn't always easy, they both continued with mediation, stating that they were willing to do whatever it took to get along for Eli's sake. Through listening, understanding and being educated about the harmful effects that their conflict had on Eli, Miranda and Leon began speaking to each other in a significantly more positive manner. Having mediators in each session to aid the flow of conversation helped them to communicate more effectively, and they both were able to fully hear each other for the first time.

With the help of their FIT mediators, Miranda and Leon were able to come to an agreement regarding visitation while Miranda sought help for her substance abuse issues. They learned to co-parent in a non-combative manner that showed Eli that his parents could put aside their issues for him to have healthy, happy relationships with both parents. Although Miranda and Leon's new wife still have a rocky relationship, their conflict during transitions was eased with conflict reduction strategies and suggestions from the FIT mediators.

Although each day is not perfect, the mediators were able to teach these parents essential skills to help them co-parent their son. They both expressed gratitude knowing that FIT is there in the future in case they need to return to discuss any issues that come up in their co-parenting relationship, and are ready to continue working together to create the best co-parenting situation possible for Eli.

**For more information on our Families in Transition program, go to:  
[www.clcct.org/mediation](http://www.clcct.org/mediation)**

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## What's Happening at CLC

We've been keeping busy at CLC, and having fun along the way!



The CLC staff got together for our annual holiday party in December to celebrate the year's accomplishments and have some fun.



The East Hartford Moose Riders generously hosted the annual CLC Bike Ride and Show at Pet Playhouse in Milldale this past September.



We hosted our Annual Meeting in October. Pictured is Justine Rakich-Kelly, our Executive Director, with Patrick Proctor and Maureen Zavatone, the two board members to whom we said farewell at the meeting.



BK & Co. hosted the annual Wine, Women & Fashion event benefitting CLC. A great time was had by all!