

NEWS FROM OUR HOUSE

FALL 2018

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



The Children's
LAW
Center

30 ARBOR STREET
HARTFORD, CT 06106

P: (860) 232-9993
<http://www.clcct.org>

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Be part of our 25th Anniversary mural by tagging your photos on Instagram or Facebook
#CLC25th

25 Years Strong Connecticut's Bridge Over Troubled Water

The Children's Law Center turns 25 this year! Still strong after a quarter-century, CLC reaches this milestone with friends like you who support our work to protect children and strengthen families. Founded by Judith Hyde and Debra Ruel, CLC was formed out of a coalition of concerned professionals and parents united to examine the weaknesses in a system that failed six-year-old Ayla Rose, who was shot and killed by her father during a supervised visitation session in 1992. In February 1993, a conference on children's legal rights was held and six months later, CLC opened its doors. "I cry with happiness when I see the changes there have been in family court," Judith said, remembering a time when some Connecticut jurisdictions had no representation for children in court. Now, in her words, "the children have someone."

CLC's Legal Representation program has come a long way since hiring its first attorney, Garrett Tuller, in 1995. With twelve staff members and hundreds of children represented every year, this program has had a positive impact on the lives of thousands of children and families.

Shortly after opening, the board voted to expand services, establishing the Children's Law Line: a free legal resource that can assist callers on a variety of issues. This service is an important resource for anyone seeking to navigate a complex and unfamiliar legal system. There is no income screening to access the service and no limit on how many times a person can call.

In 2004, CLC's programs expanded once again when we established the Families in Transition (FIT) Program. Often, by the time our attorneys are appointed to represent children, conflict between parents has escalated significantly. We recognized that if we could reach parents before escalation—educating parents early on about the harmful effects of conflict on children, encouraging them to find ways to work together as co-parents—this would create the best outcomes for their children and promote loving, safe homes. FIT provides parents with an opportunity to work out their custody and visitation disputes in a non-adversarial, mediation setting, while keeping the costs low for indigent families.

We are proud to have touched so many lives and happy to share our accomplishment with you.



Looking to the Future

Earlier this year, CLC revised its mission: To promote the best possible outcomes for children and families in transition or crisis by providing access to legal services and support they could not otherwise afford and by advancing collaborative, non-adversarial options for resolving conflicts outside the court system.

Our new mission supports an evolution of our programs, enabling us to develop services for children of parents of modest means who, while not eligible for our existing services due to their level of income, nonetheless cannot otherwise afford to access needed legal services and support. It supports our growth as an organization protecting the legal rights and needs of children by reaching more families throughout Connecticut.

25th Anniversary Gala

The Children's **LAW** Center

November 29, 2018 | 5:30 PM

Join us for our Annual Gala at Delamar West Hartford! Enjoy cocktails, culinary stations, and live and silent auctions in support of CLC's mission to protect children and strengthen families. For sponsorships & tickets, contact Danielle at danielle@clcct.org, 860.232.9993, or visit www.clcct.org/gala-2018

Spotlight

In our Annual Report "goodbyes," we neglected to mention that Attorney Kathryn Bissonnette left the Children's Law Center in 2017 for, allegedly, greener pastures. We. Feel. Horrible. Kathryn was an integral and vibrant member of the CLC staff from 2012 to 2017, covering the Rockville and Putnam courts. She was and continues to be well-regarded in the field and will always be a member of the CLC family. Nobody ever really leaves.



Greetings and Goodbyes at CLC

Earlier this year, we bid farewell to Marketing & Development Associate Abby Woodhouse, who took on a new role at The Village for Families & Children, and Professional Assistant Adelina Santiago, now with the Connecticut Legal Rights Project. We miss Abby and Addy and wish them the best. We are happy to welcome two new members to team CLC.



Danielle Murray (*on right*), Marketing & Development Associate, comes to us from Hartford Public Library, where she honed strengths in event coordination, visual communications, and public engagement. She is happy to use those skills to aid in our mission.

Tonia Tubaya (*on left*), Professional Assistant, an experienced administrative professional, is a Connecticut native who loves working to help the state's indigent children.

Welcome to Our Newest Board Member, Scott Esposito

CLC is pleased to announce that Scott Esposito has joined our Board of Directors.

Scott is a Director in PricewaterhouseCooper's Risk Assurance Practice based in Hartford, specializing in risk and control assessments. He has over fourteen years of experience providing business process and IT controls assessments to companies of all sizes, primarily within the financial services industry, working extensively with banks, investment managers, insurers, and retirement recordkeepers. His principal areas of service include performing internal risk and control assessments, third party reporting, process integration, and controls standardization.



Scott lives in Middletown with his wife and two young daughters. He enjoys golfing, cycling and hiking with his family. For the past 14 years, he has participated in the Pan-Mass Challenge—a 2 day, 192-mile bike ride to raise money for Pediatric Cancer Research through Dana Farber's Jimmy Fund—and he and his wife have raised over \$80,000 for the cause.

Scott first learned of CLC when he attended the Annual Gala in November 2017. After meeting staff and listening to the guest speaker's compelling speech regarding her relationship with her CLC guardian ad litem, he says: "as the father of 2 young girls I immediately felt compelled to get involved and help support this great organization!" Welcome, Scott!

How We Protect Children and Strengthen Families

CLC's non-adversarial approach to family court matters fosters co-parenting skills and family stability where anxiety and tension were. The case history below demonstrates the many ways this approach benefits the lives of the children we represent and their families.

Sisters Diana, 11, and Isabel, 9, are bright and vibrant. Parents Alex and Mariana have been divorced after years of turmoil but their commitment to co-parenting allowed Diana and Isabel to blossom and form loving relationships with both parents. Eventually, though, family conflict once again shook their lives.

Alex suffered an alcoholic relapse when home alone with the girls. Frightened, Mariana requested a suspension of contact between Alex and their daughters, with supervised visits once per week while he was seeking treatment. Alex was unable to afford supervision long term and eventually began only contacting his daughters remotely, devastating them.

When Alex felt his mental health stabilize, he requested that the suspension be lifted and the girls were eager to again have "sleepovers at Papa's." CLC was appointed by the court to represent the girls and determine a safe and stable course of action. Our attorney immediately identified the need for the girls to see their father and volunteered to act as an observer of visits between Alex and his daughters. She also secured a free mental health assessment to address concerns about Alex's mental health and alcoholism. When the evaluator determined that Alex posed no threat to Diana and Isabel, Mariana agreed to a gradual increase in Alex's visitation.



Our role didn't stop there, however. While our main goal is to establish a safe and stable parenting plan that benefits the children, that goal is best-served by teaching Alex and Mariana respectful ways to communicate with each other in support of their daughters. The two often email us a message they wish to communicate to the other, and we will offer suggestions to make the communications more courteous. Something as simple as phrasing a desire as a request rather than a demand has greatly improved their relationship; providing specific information early on also eases each parent's burden.

Although this case hasn't gone back to court in several months, we continue mediating, negotiating, and teaching these parents to communicate in cooperative and respectful ways in order to prevent crisis before it happens. Best yet? The girls are gradually getting back to their happy-go-lucky selves now that "Papa" is back in their lives.

A Year-Long Celebration

We are celebrating our 25th Anniversary all year long! We've enjoyed seeing everyone at our recent events—such as our BK & Co. fundraiser and our Pottery Night—and we haven't stopped planning fun new ways to get our friends, family, and supporters together.

One celebratory highlight was a stunning cake provided by Little Man Sweets for a recent fundraiser. This East Hampton baker created and donated a custom cake replicating our logo in delicious detail.



Keep an eye out for sweet treats and ways to support CLC at our upcoming events. See the back cover for details on our fall events, follow our Facebook page to receive the most up-to-date notifications, and check our website at www.clcct.org/events.

Do you have any #teamCLC moments you want to share? Tag your Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram posts with #CLC25th to be added to our 25th Anniversary Mural!

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Tonia Tubaya
Administrative Professional

More Ways to Support CLC

Amazon Smile: When you select CLC as your charity of choice and shop www.smile.amazon.com, Amazon will make a donation to us.

Matching Gifts: Many employers encourage giving by offering matching gift options. Ask your employer about this easy way to grow your donation.

Bequests: You can be a hero and impact the lives of children—consider a legacy gift to CLC. For information, contact Deb at deb@clcct.org.



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What's Happening at CLC

We hope you'll join us at our upcoming events and tag each photo #CLC25th!



East Hartford Moose Riders Bike Show

Sept. 16, 10:30-6 pm
East Hartford Moose Lodge
404 Prospect Street
East Hartford, CT



Street Car Legends Rocky Hill Food Pantry Show

Sept. 23, 10-2 pm
Michel Angelo's Plaza
825 Cromwell Avenue
Rocky Hill, CT



Firefly Hollow Brewery Trivia Night w/ Art of Yum

Sept. 30, 6-8 pm
Firefly Hollow Brewery
139 Center Street
Bristol, CT



The Children's Law Center's Annual Meeting

Oct. 16, 6 pm
The Children's Law Center
30 Arbor Street, Suite 208
Hartford, CT