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**THE CHILDREN'S LAW  
CENTER OF CONNECTICUT**

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## Taking Two for the Team!

A highlight of our annual Gala celebration is always the live auction. Evening emcee and guest auctioneer Renee DiNino, Director of Community Affairs & Programming for iHeartMedia, is a master of persuasion in getting our guests to outbid one another in pursuit of the unique and luxurious experiences donated by our generous supporters.

One of the most popular items every year is tickets for two to attend the Heisman Dinner Gala, this year being held on December 10 at the New York Marriott Marquis. It's a football fanatic's fantasy, as former winners celebrating anniversaries are honored along with the annual winners of the Heisman Trophy and the Humanitarian Award, announced live and broadcast worldwide on ESPN.

Bidding for the Heisman item is always hotly contested. However, this year, Renee brought the competitive spirit to next-level, as two family lawyers/football lovers went toe-to-toe (or should we say hand-to-hand?) in combat to reach the end zone.

As the clock wound down, Sandi Girolamo of Flaherty Legal Group and James Ruel of Ruel, Ruel, Burns & Britt gritted it out like two gladiators seeking gridiron greatness!

And then came the sneak play, when a representative of the Heisman Dinner donors, Dolan Divorce Lawyers, PLLC, ascended to the stage and surprisingly announced they would double-down and award each of the battling bidders two tickets to attend. What an amazing finish, as the Gala audience erupted in applause.

Sandi and Jim are long-time teammates in giving their utmost support to CLC and our work. Here's what they had to say in our post-gala interview.

***Are you both attending the Heisman Dinner personally?***

**Sandi:** "My son elected that my husband gets to go with him. So, we're still fighting over it in my house as to which one of us is going to win that battle but it looks like it'll be the boys."

**Jim:** "I'm going to bring my 14-year-old son, Lincoln."

***So what piqued your interest in this particular item?***

**Jim:** "I donate more at this event than at other events I go to because of the background, with my mother Deb Ruel being one of the founders of CLC, and it's just a good cause, of course. Justine gets you every time with her speeches about the good work

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# Taking Two for the Team!

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that they do. So, I was intending to try to purchase something when this arose and I said to myself, "Wow, this would be a great event to go to."

**Sandi:** "My son is a die-hard football kid, 24-7-365. He's been playing football since he was five and now plays in high school. My son is going to be 16 in January, so I thought this would make a great surprise gift that he would really remember and it would mean something to him. And, like with Jim, the Children's LAW Center is near and dear to our hearts."

**Tell us about your connection with CLC.**

**Jim:** "CLC is meant to be an advocate for children who are involved in a very difficult situation where their parents aren't getting along. Sometimes there might even be some fear of violence or substance abuse. My firm usually represents the parents in such disputes, on a basis where the parents

have some economic means and, therefore, they would pay for the guardian ad litem. In the case of CLC, they serve people that are not economically well off. It's a huge benefit to those children to have CLC attorneys working on their behalf, when the family otherwise couldn't afford it."

**Sandi:** "When my law partner Pam Magnano and I were looking for some different ways to develop our practice and get more involved in the family law community, we both thought that CLC was an amazing organization. So, we started volunteering for them on the Gala committee and with the Families in Transition program as mediators. Pam also serves as Vice President of the Board of Directors. We've always looked to support CLC, whether it's with volunteer hours or helping them out financially."

*There are a lot of great community organizations that are supported by the law community and firms such as yours. So, what makes CLC different?*

**Jim:** "The point of our donations to CLC is that it's child-specific, and we see in our daily work lives what happens to children in these difficult family situations."

**Sandi:** "Pam and I both also volunteer for the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Along with CLC, these two organizations are probably closest to our hearts, and these are the ones that we see having the greatest impact in the area of law that we practice."

*Thank you, Sandi and Jim, for making our Gala evening even more memorable and for all the extra points you score for CLC and the children we serve. ♥*

## Running Together

There is a proverb that states, "When you run alone, you run fast but when you run together, you run far." The Children's LAW Center is honored by the continued support of the Petit Family Foundation for our Legal Representation Program. This support enables us to continue to serve the state's neediest children in complicated divorce and custody cases. Dr. William A. Petit, Jr., MD, President of the Petit Family Foundation, presented a check to Justine Rakich-Kelly, Executive Director of CLC, on June 6. On July 10, CLC staff competed in the 15th annual Petit Family Foundation 5K in Plainville. With funds raised from the run, the Foundation has to-date awarded over \$4.5 million in grants to programs and projects all over Connecticut and across the United States. ♥



## Staff News

### CONGRATULATIONS

**JUSTINE RAKICH-KELLY**  
Executive Director,  
celebrated her 22nd  
work anniversary  
on October 22nd!



### GOODBYE TO:

**MONIQUE RYAN**  
Staff Attorney



**DEB SHULANSKY**  
Director of Development



# On the Road to Reunification



Our first introduction to Amy was at Perspectives Center for Care, an agency she started in 2005 for those with mental health and substance

abuse challenges. Perspectives was taking on some cases that required children to be reunified or supervised with a parent.

When the demand for reunification and supervised visitation services increased, rather than dilute the original mission of Perspectives, Amy started Pathways LLC. Pathways focuses on a constellation of parenting services, including therapeutic reunification, supervised visitation and co-parenting counseling. Once she focused on this area of practice, it started to become clear that services statewide were limited

and often overflowing with referrals. "I got a call from Nikki, the CLC staff social worker, wondering if I knew of any reunification services in Norwich. I didn't but I made an off-hand comment that it was too bad I didn't have a mobile office and then I could do it," Amy recalls. "The more I thought about it, the more I thought 'Why can't I?'" That's when I started to shop for an RV."

Eight months later, in October 2021, Amy found her RV in Charleston, SC and drove it up to CT. Amy's mobile office has made these services, which are so critical to so many families, more accessible.

"It's been fantastic for reaching people with the program who may not otherwise have similar services in their area or may have been shut out because of waiting lists," Amy stated.

Families participating in services through Pathways will likely cross paths with Amy's dogs Kuda, Cosie, and Acie. While Cosie and Acie will stay in their crates, Kuda is a therapy dog. He is not included in sessions

without the family's permission but can be a comfort to children (and parents!) who may be nervous about attending sessions.

Amy said, "A week ago, I had a 9 year old ask if Kuda could sit next to him during the visit with his mom. His mom agreed and Kuda sat by the child and put his head on his knee. The child petted Kuda the whole time and the visit went well. It was heartwarming."

To learn more about Amy's qualifications, the services offered through Pathways or about having her appointed as guardian ad litem in a case, call (203) 212-8842. ❤️

## Thank you for making our 2022 Gala a success!

Thanks to you, our sponsors, bidders, supporters, and volunteers, The Children's LAW Center Gala held on October 13 was a heart-warming success! Through your generous contributions, we are able to help create safer, more stable environments for children whose parents are in chronic conflict. You make it possible! ❤️



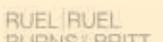
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# The Children's LAW Line: A Call to Action



Did you know that, last year, CLC helped more at-risk children through our Law Line (977 kids) than we did through our Legal Representation services (750 kids)? There is no doubt that the pandemic greatly affected the shift toward remote communications for us all. However,

services like our Law Line were already desperately needed, and remain so, by those who have severe budgetary constraints and find themselves at the mercy of a complex legal system. The labyrinth of agencies, courts, and laws can often be overwhelming and unmanageable for parents who are without representation. Fortunately, our Law Line (860-232-9993) is available and provides a free, easily accessible legal resource to assist callers on a variety of issues.

## The Children's LAW Line provides these benefits for callers:

- All calls are handled by attorneys trained in family law.
- There is no income screening to access the service.
- There is no limit to how many times a person may call.

## FAQs from LAW Line callers:

### Who can call the Children's Law Line?

Children, parents, grandparents, other relatives, foster parents, and professionals with a question about legal issues affecting children may call the Law Line. CLC does not discuss a specific case with a third party without the permission of the person with the legal issue.

### What is the process like?

When you call the Law Line, you will leave a message on the dedicated law line voicemail. All calls are forwarded to one of our staff attorneys, who will make a best effort to return your call the same day. Our staff attorney will answer your question with as much detail and guidance as possible. If we cannot answer your question or feel another resource would be able to provide you with additional information, we will give you the appropriate contact information for a referral.

### What can The Children's Law Line help me with?

The Law Line helps callers understand the legal processes that involve children, such as custody, visitation, guardianship, and abuse and neglect. CLC can provide information regarding DCF and their process of investigations, ongoing services, or if they file a petition in Court. CLC can also refer callers to other agencies or resources for help with finding an attorney, special education advocacy, and school law.

### Are calls confidential?

Yes, nothing regarding your call to the Law Line will be disclosed to a third party without your written consent.

### Can I call anonymously?

If you are calling for general information and referrals, such as the address of a court or agency to call, we can give that to you without taking your personal information. However, if you are calling with specific questions regarding an ongoing dispute, we will need to take your name and the names of other parties involved. This information is confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone else.

### Is there a cost to use the Children's Law Line?

There is no cost to call the Law Line. It is a free, statewide service.

## The LAW Line is making a positive impact!

- 86% of callers found our advice helpful or very helpful.
- 61% said their situation improved after calling us.
- Comments received from Law Line callers:  
"The advice I was given was spot on."  
"You guys called me back quickly and gave me great advice."  
"Because of your advice, I was able to see my child every weekend."  
"The service you provide is amazing."

To learn more about the Children's LAW Line and other CLC services please visit our website at [www.clcct.org](http://www.clcct.org) or call us at (860) 232-9993. ❤️

## Save the Date for our Annual Gala! Thursday, November 16, 2023

Please join us as we celebrate and honor the supporters of The Children's LAW Center. Enjoy cocktails, culinary delights, entertainment, a live and silent auction, and good cheer!

### Farmington Gardens

999 Farmington Avenue (Rte. 4),

Farmington, CT

5:30PM - 8:30PM

## STAY TUNED:

- Look for more information on our website, [www.clcct.org](http://www.clcct.org), or follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter!  
[@childrenslawct](https://www.facebook.com/childrenslawct) #childrenslawct
- For sponsorship opportunities and auction item donations, please email [Gala@clcct.org](mailto:Gala@clcct.org) or call 860-232-9993.



## Other Ways to Support CLC

**Families**  
GROWING STRONGER

### AMAZON SMILE

Simply select CLC as your nonprofit of choice and shop [www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com)

### MATCHING GIFTS

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

### BEQUESTS

Consider a legacy gift. For information, contact Justine at [justine@clcct.org](mailto:justine@clcct.org)