THEY'RE SO WONDERFUL [AT CVLC] AND SO HELPFUL. I'M REALLY LUCKY THAT I FOUND THESE PEOPLE AND THEY ARE WILLING TO HELP ME.

- MORGAN GRAY
Thank You! We are grateful for the hundreds of donors, volunteers, and partners who are passionate about justice for veterans. Thank you for sharing our vision of ensuring that all veterans live with adequate means, safe and secure housing, and affordable healthcare.

**Foundations and Nonprofit Agencies**

- Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut
- Amazon Smile Foundation
- American Bar Endowment
- American College of Bankruptcy Foundation
- America’s Best Local Charities
- Benevity Community Impact Fund
- Bob Woodruff Foundation
- Community Foundation of Greater New Haven
- Community Foundation of Middlesex County
- Community Health Charities of New England
- Connecticut Bar Association
- Connecticut Bar Foundation
- Dime Bank Foundation
- Ensworth Charitable Foundation
- Fairfield County Community Foundation
- George W Crawford Bar Association
- Jana Foundation
- NBC Universal
- New Haven County Bar Association
- NewAlliance Foundation
- People’s United Community Foundation
- Quinnipiac University School of Law
- Red Sox Foundation
- Sikorsky, A Lockheed Martin Company
- Skadden Foundation
- State of Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs
- Veterans Support Foundation
- Wells Fargo Foundation
- Yale University

**Corporations**

- American Eagle Credit Union
- Berkowitz Hanna BMO Capital Markets
- Brenner, Saltzman & Wallman
- Citigroup Global Markets
- CNG/SCG/UI Part of the Avangrid Family
- Cowen Services Company
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- Raymond James
- Reid & Riege PC
- Robinson & Cole
- SunTrust Robinson Humphrey, Inc.
- Susquehanna International Group
- Walden Macht & Haran
- Wells Fargo Securities
- Wiggin and Dana
- Williams Trading

**Individuals $500+**

- Michael Boland
- Daniel and Lisette Borne
- Perry Boyle and Lisa Ryan-Boyle
- John Bozzi
- Francis and Mary Brady
- Peggy Britt and Louis King
- Christopher and Janet Brogan
- Anthony Collura
- Sherry and David Cordan
- Rosemary Durkin
- Ira Friedman
- Michael and Lois Friedman
- David Gary
- Brian and Ramon Gumbel Walls
- Brian Hughes and Andrew Drabkin
- Richard and Anita Inz
- Ken and Phyllis Jacobs
- Jeffrey Jeng
- Cindy Johnson and Pablo Bianco Lascaray
- Judith and Ronald Johnson
- John Kelley
- Paul Kim
- Harold Koh and Mary-Christy Fisher
- Carolyn Massoni
- Brian Mogck
- Edward O’Hanlan and Chase Rogers
- William and Jean Pieper
- Brian and Debbie Pierre
- Stephen Rowland
- Christina and Jordan Schoonmaker
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- Bart Schwartz
- John Shay
- Michael and Andrea Towey
- Jeffrey and Lucy Udell
- Judith Udell
- Emma Vadhehra
- Alison Weir
- Michael Wishnie
- Leslie Wyrtenz
- Nathaniel Yordon

*Donors who gave $500+ from July 2019- June 2020. If we missed listing your donation, please let us know.*
CVLC started its second decade in ways no one could have expected. As COVID-19 spread throughout the country and world, our veteran clients found themselves facing unforeseen problems and new barriers to accessing care. From dealing with closed offices to virtual VA hearings, CVLC remained a partner in the fight for justice for Connecticut’s low-income veterans.

At first glance, it is not always apparent how important legal aid is to front line efforts during this health crisis. However, there has never been a greater need for veterans to have access to healthcare, adequate income, and stable housing. These social determinants of health are now clearly life or death for so many of CVLC’s clients.

"SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH ARE NOW CLEARLY LIFE OR DEATH FOR SO MANY OF CVLC’S CLIENTS."

This past year, we have seen the strength of CVLC’s medical-legal partnership rise to the challenges created by the pandemic. As a paperless office born in a broom-closet, we were able to quickly restructure how we receive referrals and conduct intakes. Our passionate and dedicated staff created training materials and led outreach efforts to ensure that our medical partners were kept up to date on evolving policy issues. Our pro bono partners stepped up to take urgent cases for veterans. And CVLC advocated at the state and federal level to guarantee that veterans stay housed and have broad access to the VA.

CVLC’s medical-legal partnership also includes you. As an independent non-profit, we could not do this work without the grants, donations, and volunteer time so many give each year. Thank you for your support in 2020 and we look forward to partnering with you again in 2021.

Liam Brennan, Executive Director

CVLC STAFF

Ashleigh Backman  
Liam Brennan  
Chelsea Donaldson  
Sharon Falkovich  
Mary-Christy Fisher  

Cindy Johnson  
Nicola Kelsey  
Margaret Kuzma  
Alden Pinkham

Darren Pruslow  
Kharl Reynado  
Jessica Subocz  
Millie VandenBroek
I felt like I had an army behind me. Instead of being alone, I had a team of people working with me... without legal aid, I don’t know where I’d be today. I just don’t know where my family would be. [CVLC and my pro bono attorneys were] fighting for our family and our home during a really critical time... I feel so very blessed.

-Debra Denhart, Air Force Combat Veteran
Air Force Veteran Debra Denhart, a single mother of two school aged children, fell behind on her rental payments because a recent heart transplant surgery made it impossible for her to work. Her doctors, afraid that her recovery would suffer due to the stress of mounting bills and the threat of eviction, referred her to CVLC. While CVLC connected her with a pro bono attorney who negotiated repayment and lease renewal with her landlord, VA social workers connected her to funding to assist in reducing the back debt. Without the legal barriers to housing and income, Ms. Denhart could now focus on her own recovery and care for herself and her family.

Veteran faces a legal issue that threatens to destabilize their housing, income, or access to healthcare.

VA clinicians connect the veteran to CVLC attorneys. Other community partners send CVLC a referral and we connect to the veteran where they receive services.

Lawyers work with the veteran and their mental health and medical team to solve immediate problems such as pending evictions and address root causes such as a lack of disability benefits.

Without legal barriers, the veteran can focus on taking care of health, family, and career.

MLP in Action

Air Force Veteran Debra Denhart, a single mother of two school aged children, fell behind on her rental payments because a recent heart transplant surgery made it impossible for her to work. Her doctors, afraid that her recovery would suffer due to the stress of mounting bills and the threat of eviction, referred her to CVLC. While CVLC connected her with a pro bono attorney who negotiated repayment and lease renewal with her landlord, VA social workers connected her to funding to assist in reducing the back debt. Without the legal barriers to housing and income, Ms. Denhart could now focus on her own recovery and care for herself and her family.

“I was able to recover from my [heart] transplant. I’m healthy and because of that I’m alive. I had amazing lawyers working with me… they were on my side fighting for me 110%.”

Veterans make up 7% of the general population, but veterans are 12% of homeless Americans. Black and Hispanic veterans are 3 times more likely to be homeless as veterans in general.
580 Veterans Served
736 Legal Issues Addressed

CVLC is the only legal aid organization in Connecticut to provide direct representation in VA benefits claims and applications for discharge upgrades from the Department of Defense. CVLC’s representation also includes traditional legal aid related to family law, housing, criminal record expungement, bankruptcy, debt, Social Security, employment, and estate planning issues.

Life-Changing Impacts

- VA Benefits appeal moved a disabled veteran from poverty to sustainable income.
- Negotiating debt repayment and accessing VA healthcare enabled a veteran to move to independent living.
- Legal representation in housing court ensured that an unexpected car bill did not lead to eviction.
- Return of security deposit plus housing support from the VA ensured housing continuity for a veteran and his children.
- Overturning a bad paper discharge gave access to life-saving medical care for service-related illnesses.
CVLC is proud to be a national leader in fighting unjust denials of veterans benefits. In 2020, CVLC launched the Veterans Inclusion Project—a national initiative to confront systemic barriers that keep veterans from accessing healthcare and other veteran benefits.

Discharge Upgrade Manual: Drawing on CVLC’s record of success in fighting for recharacterization of discharge, discharge upgrades, and appealing denials of VA benefits, CVLC, along with our partners at the Bob Woodruff Foundation and the Legal Services Center at Harvard Law School, created a legal practice manual. The manual will allow practitioners around the country to provide life-changing legal assistance to veterans in need.

VA Eligibility: After numerous CVLC clients were unlawfully turned away from care by the VA, CVLC engaged in a public awareness campaign about the VA’s practices. Timed to coincide with a complementary report from the Legal Services Center at Harvard Law School, the campaign resulted in significant media coverage and drew congressional attention. CVLC also successfully brought a Freedom of Information Act action against the VA for the release of documents related to the illegal turn-aways.

VA Rulemaking: Over the summer, the VA proposed a new regulation governing veteran access to healthcare. CVLC partnered with the Jerome N. Frank Legal Services Organization at Yale Law School and the National Veterans Council for Legal Redress to submit a brief arguing for to expand access to healthcare for veterans.

Veterans outside the VA healthcare system have a 30% higher rate of suicide. Veterans with bad paper discharges are twice as likely to commit suicide.
CVLC’s fabulous staff cares deeply for their clients and truly values a deep relationship with their pro bono partners.  
- Moy Ogilvie, McCarter & English

Connecticut Veterans Legal Center remains grateful to each and every one of our pro bono partners whose dedication, time, and problem-solving skills have increased each disabled veteran’s access to healthcare, income, and stable housing. CVLC’s deep pro bono partnerships are exemplified by McCarter & English, which has been a CVLC pro bono and funding partner since 2011. As Michelle Movahed, Pro Bono Partner, explains, “Service is part of the McCarter DNA. We have a deep, authentic culture of service. As a law firm that means everyone is encouraged to give back and help equalize access to justice for everyone.” McCarter & English attorneys have defended veterans facing eviction, challenged unjust military discharge statuses, and appealed VA decisions that denied disabled veterans benefits for their mental health diagnoses, such as PTSD. “As lawyers, we have an obligation to use our abilities to help others,” adds Joe Cherico, Managing Partner at the Stamford Office. "A couple veterans I’ve worked with on housing matters still stand out in my mind. To be able to develop a personal connection and help them – it is a true honor and privilege.”
Pro bono partnerships are an integral part of CVLC’s culture and legal services delivery. Pro bono attorneys are force multipliers, allowing CVLC to expand our caseload by 27%. Our network of law firms and dedicated pro bono attorneys invest their time, talent, and resources to represent disabled veterans in local housing and small claims courts, and in veteran’s disability claims. CVLC is proud to work with volunteer attorneys from more than 70 law firms, law schools, and corporations, as well as retired and solo practitioners.

Axinn, Veltrop and Harkride
Berkowitz and Hanna
Coan Lewendon Gulliver and Miltenberger
Burt Cohen
Consumer Law Group
Conway, Londregan, Sheehan & Monaco
Day Pitney
Finn Dixon and Herling
Francis Brady
Christopher Brogan
Garcia and Milas
Gesmonde Pietrosimone and Sgrignari
Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani
Grubaugh Law
Halloran & Sage
Hinckley, Allen and Snyder
Jacobi Case and Speranzini
Jezeck & Barbi
Kahan, Kerenisky & Capossela
Kirschbaum Law Group
Law Office of Christopher J. Mutchler
Law Office of Jennifer DeCastro Tunnard
Law Office of Mark A. Healey
Law Office of Mark R. Myers
Law Offices of Abram Heisler
Law Offices of Anthony Ameche
Law Offices of Attorney Jacobson
Law Offices of Cotter, Greenfield, Manfredi and Lenes
Law Offices of Gregory Allen
Law Offices of John J. Carangelo
Law Offices of Joseph D'Agostino
Law Offices of Michael Boardman
Law Offices of Michael Speight
MassMutual
McCarter and English
McElroy, Deutsch, Mulvaney & Carpenter
MedConnectVA
Morgan Lewis and Bockius
Ndidi Moses
Murtha Cullina
Odierna Law
Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak & Stewart
Point72
Pullman and Comley
Purdue Pharma
Quinnipiac University Law School
Reid and Riege
Robert Rezendes
Robinson and Cole
SB Nickse Law Offices
Christina Schoonmaker
Serrantino Law
Shipman and Goodwin
Sidley Austin
Sikorsky, A Lockheed Martin Company
Suisman Shapiro
Sullivan, Heiser and Sweeney
Tavano McCuin Bonanno and Collins
Traveler’s Insurance Corp.
Verrill Dana
Vulcan Macht and Haran
Webster Investments - David Nastri
Alison Weir
Wesleyan University
Wiggin and Dana
Wilkinson Law Firm
Williams and Connelly
Withersworldwide
Janice Wolf
Yale Law School

Volunteers who donated time from July 2019 - October 2020. If we missed listing your firm, please let us know.
Justice is Our Day Job! CVLC Staff prior to working remotely. L-R: Millie VandenBroek, Ashleigh Backman, Kharl Reynado, Darren Pruslow, Nikki Kelsey, Liam Brennan, Chelsea Donaldson, Cindy Johnson, Christy Fisher, Sharon Fialkovich. Missing: Margaret Kuzma, Alden Pinkham, Jessica Subocz

“AT CVLC, EVERY DOLLAR GOES A LONG WAY. IT’S A SMALL ORGANIZATION WITH A HIGH IMPACT AND HIGH RETURN ON INVESTMENT. IT’S AN AMAZING CAUSE — SUPPORTING OUR VETERANS. VETERANS ARE OUR HEROES AND EVERYONE WHO WORKS AT CVLC IS A HERO TOO. I VIEW CVLC AS HEROES HELPING HEROES.

- MICHAEL TOWEY
Managing Director at Point 72 Asset Management, L.P.

INSPIRING CLIENTS

Toney A.
Navy Combat Veteran

Patty Ann R.
Army Veteran

Robert M.
Marine Veteran

Joe J.
Army Combat Veteran

Brian W.
Navy Combat Veteran

2020 AWARDS

CT Law Tribune Unsung Hero Award

Cullen Guilmartin, Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani, CVLC Pro Bono Volunteer

Ashleigh Backman, CVLC Pro Bono Manager

Connecticut Bar Association Honorable Anthony V. DeMayo Pro Bono Award

Kristi Kelly, Suisman Shapiro, Pro Bono Volunteer

Mark Healey, Law Office of Mark A. Healey, Pro Bono Volunteer

Anthony M. Fitzgerald Award for Excellence

Awarded to CVLC by the CT Bar Foundation Fellows
CVLC is proud to be a leader in representing veterans in discharge upgrades and recharacterization of discharge cases. With the help of the Legal Services Center at Harvard Law School and the support of the Bob Woodruff Foundation, CVLC's Director of Discharge Upgrades, Margaret Kuzma, authored a manual on discharge upgrade practices. This groundbreaking work sets the stage for expanding CVLC's impact on veterans, bringing the legal tools that can change a veteran's life to practitioners throughout the country.

For every $1 invested in CVLC, approximately $20 of tangible benefits are created for veterans.

### CVLC CLIENTS:

- **45%** Experienced Homelessness
- **80%** One or More Disability
- **73%** Very Low Income

### 1:20 Return on Investment

For every $1 invested in CVLC, approximately $20 of tangible benefits are created for veterans.

### $2.25 Million

Lump Sum or Retroactive Awards

Disabled veterans are more likely to live in poverty. Renegotiating debt, filing for retroactive payment of benefits, and ensuring return of security deposits are a few ways CVLC helps veterans secure a brighter future.

### $19.5 Million

Lifetime Income

CVLC is the only legal aid organization in CT helping veterans assert their rights to the Veterans Administration. An average annual income award of $15,473 helped move more than 53 veterans from poverty to sustainability.

### $16.5 Million

Healthcare Benefits

VA eligibility is a complex process with a growing number of veterans turned away unnecessarily. CVLC's clients enjoyed a 92% success rate when represented by CVLC attorneys in VA and DoD appeals.

### FUNDRAISING

- **Foundations**: $569,255
- **Corporate**: $259,409
- **Government**: $70,113
- **Individuals**: $109,614
- **Other**: $16,564

### EXPENSES

- **Removing Legal Barriers**: 58%
- **Veterans Inclusion Project**: 23%
- **Admin/General**: 19%
Morgan Gray began active duty service in the United States Marine Corps in 2007. Shortly after enlistment, it became clear that she was a leader. She exceeded performance expectations throughout boot camp and graduated first in her class from her Military Occupational Specialities (MOS).

During training for deployment, an 80 lb. metal pole struck Ms. Gray in the jaw. For two weeks, she could not eat or speak. After deployment to combat in Iraq, she developed an addiction to her prescription painkillers to cope with the undiagnosed PTSD she was experiencing. She courageously asked her commander for help, but she was denied any support. Instead, she was discharged under Other than Honorable conditions.

After her discharge, Ms. Gray struggled to cope with her drug addiction and the symptoms of PTSD from combat, leading to run-ins with law enforcement. Without support or guidance, she turned to the VA for help, but was turned away and denied care due to her discharge status.

During the eight years she was locked out of VA care, Ms. Gray struggled to get help and suffered bouts of homelessness without the support of the physical and mental health services she needed to heal from her service-connected injuries. Despite her faithful and meritorious service, she was denied the benefits entitled to a veteran.

With CVLC’s assistance, the VA reviewed Ms. Gray’s discharge status and determined it to be honorable for VA purposes, granting her full access to VA services including healthcare. While she pursues a discharge upgrade to change her discharge paperwork, Ms. Gray is studying to become a veterinarian to fulfill her passion of working with animals. Today, with access to healthcare and disability benefits, she can focus on herself and her recovery.

“From Day One, I was so nervous. You go in thinking no one is going to help you because you’ve been shot down so many times. But as soon as I walked in the door... [CVLC] just wanted to help.”