



**CONNECTICUT  
VETERANS  
LEGAL  
CENTER**



**2022-23  
IMPACT  
REPORT**

US Army Veteran and CVLC Client Theresa.

# A WORD FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear friend,

This has been a tremendous year of growth and renewal for Connecticut Veterans Legal Center.

We are proud to be among the inaugural grantees for the VA's Legal Services for Homeless Veterans program. We are encouraged that the VA acknowledges *and is funding* the important work of legal services in improving the lives of veterans.

With this support and the support of other funders, we have been able to bring on more staff to meet the ever-growing need of veterans across the state. We now have more than a dozen attorneys on our staff who work every day to represent and provide legal services to low-income veterans, including a more-robust screening and intake team.

We are continuing to nurture longtime partnerships and build new relationships so that every veteran in Connecticut knows about our services and has access to high-quality legal advice.

Our Board of Directors has also been reenergized under the leadership of Board Chair Kevin Lenehan. We have welcomed new board members and are continuing to work together as we plan for the future, including a new strategic plan that will launch in 2024.

I want to finish by thanking the staff of Connecticut Veterans Legal Center. It sounds cliché, but I am inspired every day by the team's hard work, diligence, kindness, and expertise. This is difficult work, and I could not do it beside a better team of people.

Respectfully,



**ALISON WEIR**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

LT. COL., US AIR FORCE (RET.)

## OUR MISSION

Our mission is to provide free legal assistance to veterans who are in recovery from homelessness, mental illness, and substance abuse to help them overcome legal barriers to housing, healthcare, and income.

## OUR VISION

Our vision is for all military veterans in Connecticut to live with adequate means, safe and secure housing, and affordable health care.

Learn more about our work at  
[CTVeteransLegal.org](https://CTVeteransLegal.org)

Photo of Alison Weir by Studio DUDA.

COVER PHOTO: CVLC Client Theresa outside the VA Community Resource and Referral Center. Photo by David Apuzzo.

# THE MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIP MODEL

## HUMAN-CENTERED CARE THAT IMPROVES LEGAL OUTCOMES

We are proud to have been the first legal aid organization to create a Medical-Legal Partnership with the VA Healthcare System, setting the standard for holistic, human-centered care.

Relationships with clinicians help us ensure that the veterans we serve receive the support they need as they pursue legal cases that can be complicated and traumatic, resulting in better care and better legal outcomes.

This year, our attorneys provided on-site care at four VA Health Clinics across the state: West Haven, Orange, Newington, and Rocky Hill.

Learn more about our services at [CTVeteransLegal.org/Veterans](https://CTVeteransLegal.org/Veterans)

### HOW CVLC HELPS VETERANS



#### CIVIL LEGAL ISSUES

Housing defense, debt relief, child support, wills and estates, federal and state taxes, public benefits, bias and discrimination



#### VA ADMINISTRATION

Discharge upgrades, Character of Discharge claims, VA benefit applications, VA benefit appeals, and VA rating increases



#### VETERAN ADVOCACY

Through the Veterans Inclusion Project, we advocate on behalf of veterans at all levels of government and within the VA system

## BUILDING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

Connecticut Veterans Legal Center is able to expand its impact through strategic partnerships. In addition to our close partnership with the VA, we are proud to partner with social service organizations and government agencies around the state to reach veterans who are disconnected from the VA and need our support.

During 2022-23, we were proud to work with:

- APK Charities
- Columbus House
- Community Renewal Team
- Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs
- Connecticut Fair Housing Center
- Homes for the Brave
- National Veterans Council for Legal Redress
- The WorkPlace
- Vet Centers

Interested in partnering? Email Executive Director **Alison Weir** at [aweir@ctveteranslegal.org](mailto:aweir@ctveteranslegal.org).



“CVLC is more than just a referral agency—they are an irreplaceable part of our team as we work to ensure all veterans have safe and stable housing.”

- **Margaret Middleton**, CEO,  
Columbus House

# OUR IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

Connecticut Veterans Legal Center was proud to help **more than 1,500 veterans** in every county in Connecticut during the 2022-23 year, providing full representation, pro bono partnership referral, advice & counsel, high-quality referrals, and non-legal guidance and social service referrals.

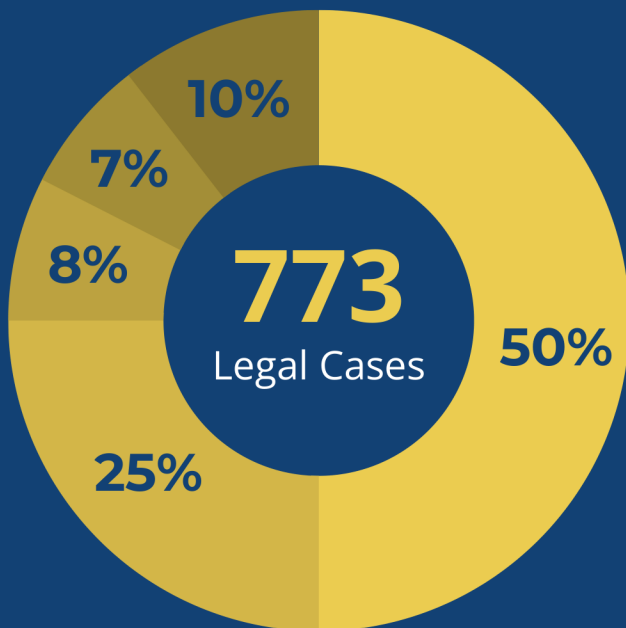
*We faithfully track and analyze information about our clients and outcomes to ensure we are on track to meet our goals with the support of **Shannon Carter**, Data Analyst.*



The gold stars represent the number of veterans served by county.

## CVLC SERVED MORE THAN 1,500 VETERANS IN THE LAST YEAR

### LEGAL CASE BY TYPE



50% VA Benefits

25% Housing

10% Other Civil Legal

8% Discharge Upgrades

7% Probate, Taxes, Financial

### OUR CLIENTS

**37.7%**

experienced homelessness

**43.2%**

live with a disability

### FINANCIAL AWARDS FOR OUR CLIENTS

**\$2MM**

In lump sum awards to veterans and their families

**\$23MM**

In anticipated lifetime income from VA income benefits

# RIGHT TO COUNSEL & HOUSING

## ADDRESSING VETERANS HOMELESSNESS



*“The current problem in Connecticut is not necessarily the availability of housing vouchers; it’s actually finding housing to put people in. We do not have enough quality-priced housing to fit the needs.”*

- **Darren Pruslow**, CVLC Supervising Attorney

Closed **90% of our housing cases with positive mission** outcomes, helping **190 veterans** and their families improve their housing stability

Despite ongoing efforts, veteran homelessness and housing insecurity remains a persistent challenge in Connecticut—more than 37% of the veterans we helped last year overall have experienced homelessness.

We are proud to be among the four legal services providers in our state participating in the Right to Counsel program, administered by the CT Bar Foundation, to ensure that people have legal representation when facing eviction and other legal threats to their housing.

Read more at [CTVeteransLegal.org/Veterans](https://CTVeteransLegal.org/Veterans).

## MEET WWII VETERAN JOHN “STEW” LAHEY

“First of all, I’m not a hero. The heroes are the ones who didn’t come back.” This is how John Stewart “Stew” Lahey introduces himself. As a World War II veteran, he saw and experienced the many effects of war. He now lives in Bridgeport, CT as a loving father, grandfather, and husband who cares for family most of all.

Stew enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in 1944, he was just 18 years old. During WWII, he was transported around the Pacific to Guam, China, and Japan.

Stew is now 97 years old. As someone who always cares deeply about the safety and wellbeing of his family, he is still recovering from PTSD-induced anxiety and depression. He found a safety net in the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center, where we continue to fight for to get him the full compensation for which he is eligible.

Read more about Stew at [CTVeteransLegal.org/Stew](https://CTVeteransLegal.org/Stew)



“[CVLC] has been super to me—above and beyond. I’m so thankful for the fact that you guys are there.”

- **John “Stew” Lahey**, Client

Photo of Darren Pruslow by Desirea Stott-Rodgers.

WWII Marine Corps Veteran and CVLC Client John “Stew” Lahey meeting with Intake Specialist Juliet Taylor. Photo by David Apuzzo.

# PRO BONO PARTNERSHIPS

## LEVERAGING LEGAL EXCELLENCE TO SERVE VETERANS



*"Volunteering as an attorney for the CVLC is incredibly rewarding... While not overly time-consuming, the work was life-changing for those we helped."*

- **Regen O'Malley**, Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani LLP

In many ways, pro bono attorneys are the lifeblood of our work—allowing us to serve 100s of additional veterans through legal representation in partnership with our staff.

This year, pro bono attorneys represented veterans in **247 legal cases**, representing **\$618,735 worth of free legal aid** to people who otherwise would not be able to afford a lawyer.

Join our network of pro bono attorneys by contacting our new Director of Pro Bono Legal Services **Don Tutson** at **dtutson@ctveteranslegal.org** or **(203) 208-9221**.

You can also learn more at **CTVeteransLegal.org/Probono**.

### PRO BONO COUNCIL MEMBERS

**William "Liam" Bohannon**  
*Robinson & Cole*

**Sarah E. Dlugoszewski**  
*Shipman & Goodman LLP*

**Lawton C Leung**  
*Withers Worldwide*

**Anthony Loney**  
*Zeichner Ellman & Krause LLP*

**Justyn Stokely**  
*McCarter & English*

Photo of Regen O'Malley provided by Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani LLP.

US Marine Corps Veteran and Client Joe and wife Kathy outside the VA Community Resource and Referral Center. Photo by David Apuzzo.

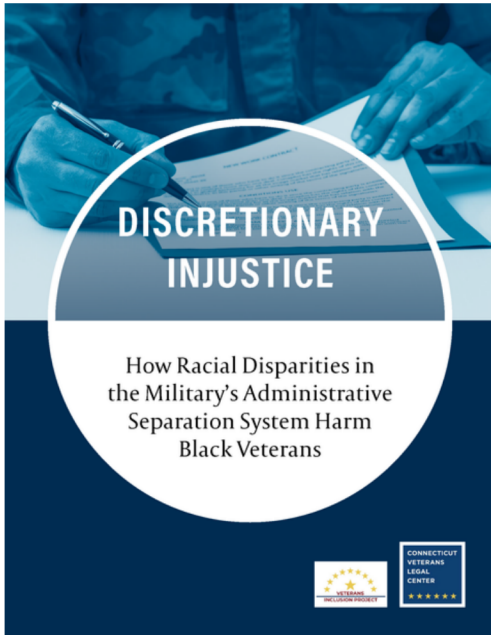
“ [CVLC and our pro bono attorney] really made it happen. I don't know where we would have ended up without your help. ”

- **Joe and Kathy**, Clients



# THE VETERANS INCLUSION PROJECT

## RESEARCH AND STUDIES LEADING CHANGE FOR VETERANS



In November 2022, Connecticut Veterans Legal Center—in partnership with **Black Veterans Project**—released *Discretionary Injustice: How Racial Disparities in the Military's Administrative Separation System Harm Black Veterans*. Comprising over one million individual separations, *Discretionary Injustice* draws on data from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines, detailing years of **persistent racial disparities in military administrative separations**.

This powerful report is part of a growing national effort to correct this injustice—through federal acknowledgement, demand for proactive correction of records, and call for reparations to Black veterans who have been unjustly denied the benefits of their service.

Read the full *Discretionary Injustice* report online at [CTVeteransLegal.org/Reports](https://CTVeteransLegal.org/Reports)

## WHAT'S NEXT

CVLC is forging ahead with our racial justice work by building on our **2022 *Discretionary Injustice* report** with a qualitative study on Black veterans' experiences with racism in service.

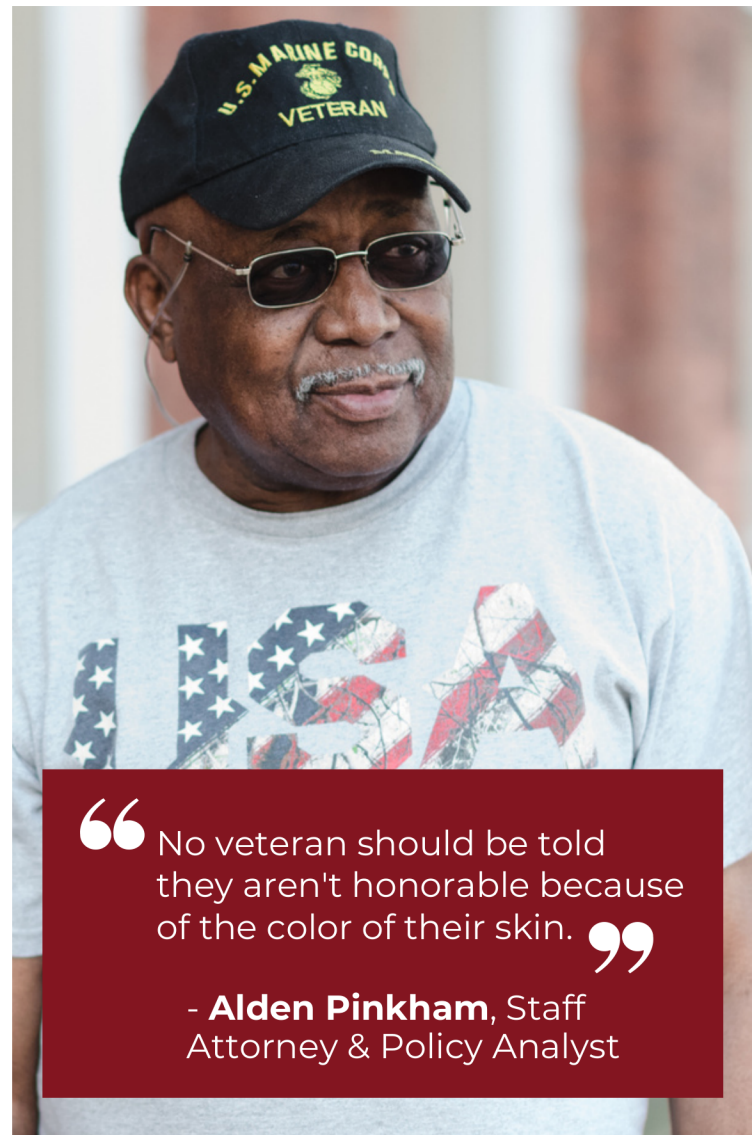
Black service members receive a statistically higher rate of "less than honorable" discharges, which translates into disqualification from veterans' benefits. This study will fortify discharge upgrade claims for our own clients and for veterans across the country, helping Black veterans successfully gain access to critical VA benefits they earned in service.

Read more about this work at [CTVeteransLegal.org/Reports](https://CTVeteransLegal.org/Reports)



Through the **Veterans Inclusion Project**, CVLC is proud to be a national leader in policy research working to understand and dismantle inequity within the DOD and DVA.

CVLC Client Jasper. Photo by Desirea Stott-Rodgers.

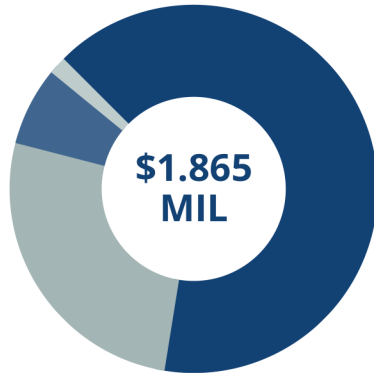


“No veteran should be told they aren't honorable because of the color of their skin.”

- **Aldén Pinkham**, Staff Attorney & Policy Analyst

# BUDGET & FINANCIAL REPORT

## EXPENSES BY TYPE 2022-23 FISCAL YEAR



**\$1.865  
MIL**

- 66% Programming
- 25% Administrative
- 7% Fundraising
- 2% Marketing

## INCOME BY TYPE 2022-23 FISCAL YEAR



**\$1.877  
MIL**

- 54% Government Grants
- 30% Foundation Grants
- 7% Corporate Support
- 4% Individual Giving
- 4% Special Event
- 1% Earned Income

Connecticut Veterans Legal Center is in excellent financial standing, thanks to strong financial management and the support of diverse funders. In addition to our annual operating income, this year we have had the opportunity to reserve capital funds equivalent to approximately 4 months of standard operating expenses. These funds ensure stability and normalize cash flow for Connecticut Veterans Legal Center, in alignment with industry best-practices.

We conduct an annual audit each year under the oversight of the Board of Directors. Connecticut Veterans Legal Center's independent auditor is **London & Company, LLC** for the 2022-23 fiscal year. Audited financial statements are available to view online at [CTVeteransLegal.org/OurImpact](https://CTVeteransLegal.org/OurImpact).

CVLC Senior Counsel Christy Fisher (center) meeting with Staff Attorney Eva Puoro (left) and Law Student Intern Hillary Browning (right). Photo by David Apuzzo.





# THANK YOU!

## TO OUR SUPPORTERS WHO UNDERWRITE OUR WORK AND SUPPORT OUR MISSION

### INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

Spencer Alstodt^  
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Andrea and Ron Neuman#  
Daniel Noble#  
Diane O'Connor^  
Anne Olcott  
Alison O'Shea  
Margaret Otzel and Vincent Chiaraluce

## CAPTAIN CELINE A. FINN LEGACY SOCIETY

### SECURING THE FUTURE OF CONNECTICUT VETERANS LEGAL CENTER

Planned giving is a way to make the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center a part of your lasting legacy.

In 2022, we were humbled to establish our Legacy Society with the receipt of our first planned gift from the estate of **US Navy Captain Celine A. Finn**. She was a member of the Navy Nurse Corps for 28 years, serving with devotion and great skill. She was well loved by family, friends, and her fellow sailors. When she passed, we were honored to be among the beneficiaries of her estate and thankful for her family's support.

**Want to talk to CVLC about your legacy gift?** Contact Shannon Mykins at [smykins@ctveteranslegal.org](mailto:smykins@ctveteranslegal.org).

Martin and Rhoda Payson  
Susan Petersen^  
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Shannon Petruzello^  
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Christina Schoonmaker  
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Cathy Wong and Daniel Libby  
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Robert Zambrano^  
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Lore Zarba^

## **GIFTS IN HONOR AND MEMORY**

### ***In memory of Peter Antioho***

Amy Antioho and Mark Antioho

### ***In honor of the Aspire Leadership Program Connecticut Bankers Association***

Lucinda Donaldson

### ***In honor of Richard Bauer***

Anonymous

### ***In honor of Hallie and James Campbell***

Chelsea Shaffer  
Marc Weiss

### ***In honor of CVS/Aetna Legal Department***

Joe Laska

### ***In honor of James Davo***

Dyann Vissicchio

### ***In memory of Delta 1/12 First Cav 1967- 1968 Viet Nam***

Dick Wilkos

### ***In memory of Suzanna Doczi***

Anonymous

### ***In honor of Chelsea Donaldson***

Aaron Cipollina

### ***In memory of William Fisher***

Mary-Christy Fisher and Harold Koh

### ***In honor of Col Christopher Graves, USMC***

Michael Cobos

### ***In honor of Morgan Gray***

Louise Manzi-Gray

### ***In honor of Ronald Haglund***

Benjamin Haglund

### ***In honor of Robert Hoover***

Meghan Maughan

### ***In memory of Robert Klages***

Lane Watson

### ***In honor of Tina Lindstrom***

Shannon Mykins

### ***In honor of Louis Loban***

Rebekah Browder

### ***In memory of MSgt Brian McAnulty, USMC***

Rosendo Garza and Juliana Garcia-Urbe

### ***In memory of James V. Minor III***

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William Byrd  
Charles Carignan  
Carmody, Torrance, Sandak,  
Hennessey, LLP

### ***In memory of James V. Minor III continued***

Augustine and Romily Cofrancesco  
Michael J Desmond  
Geoffrey Greene  
Alice Knapp  
Bill and Ellen Laffey  
Sisters of St. Francis of the Martyr  
St. George  
James Minor  
Marybeth Petersen  
Richard Splittorf

### ***In memory of Robert Nastri, Sr.***

John Lenehan

### ***In honor of Ashley Petermeyer***

Jared Petermeyer

### ***In honor of Alden Pinkham***

Frankie and Rusty Purdy

### ***In honor of Peter Polisse, Sr.***

Michael Byrne

### ***In honor of Juliet Taylor***

Ashleigh Backman

### ***In memory of SSG Nate Turner***

Marcia Turner

### ***In memory of Robert Tutson***

Valerie Tutson

### ***In memory of Howard Udell***

Richard and Alisa Altabef  
Ira Friedman  
Kenneth Jacobs  
Paulette Peterson  
Berton Taffet  
Judith Udell

### ***In honor of Jeffrey Udell***

Abby Mendelsohn  
Elias Roochvarg  
Howard L and Linda Strauss

### ***In honor of Veterans Day***

Colin Milne

### ***In honor of Alison Weir***

Tom Codella  
Stacey Cowap  
Mary Engebretth  
Lynn Leopold  
Andy Sosa  
Stacy Yike

### ***In honor of Lt Carolyn Williams***

Glenn and Carolyn Kaas

^ Run.Walk.Ride. 2023 Supporter  
# Saluting Service 2022 Supporter  
+ Makes a monthly contribution

Listed in alphabetical order.

This list is reflective of CVLC's FY22-23 fiscal year, July 2022 - June 2023.

## GRANTS AND CONTRACTS

Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut  
Columbus House New Haven  
Community Renewal Team, Inc.  
Connecticut Bar Foundation  
Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs  
Connecticut Fair Housing Center  
The WorkPlace  
AARP Foundation  
Bob Woodruff Foundation  
Bodenwein Public Benevolent Foundation  
Chelsea Groton Foundation  
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Ensworth Charitable Foundation  
Frank Loomis Palmer Fund  
Jana Foundation Inc.#  
Pfizer Inc.  
Reid & Reige Foundation  
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Town Fair Tire Foundation#  
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*Corporate and business continued*

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\* Provided a Gift Match  
^ Run.Walk.Ride. 2023 Sponsor  
# Saluting Service 2022 Sponsor

*This list is reflective of CVLC's FY22-23 fiscal year, July 2022 - June 2023.*



## RUN.WALK.RIDE. BACK IN PERSON

June 2023 marked an important moment for CVLC, the return of one of our largest annual gatherings, Run.Walk.Ride. (formerly The Ride), back to in-person activity after going virtual in 2020.

This annual event, which **has raised more than \$1,000,000 over the past 11 years**, invites the community to run, walk, or ride to raise money to support CVLC's mission of serving Connecticut Veterans.

**CVLC Staff and Run.Walk.Ride. Participants walking together on the Norwalk Town Green. Photo by Polly Korbel.**



“Our clients are survivors of war, of trauma, of injury and it is my privilege to work to make their financial situation or medical access better.”

- **Janice Wolf**, Staff Attorney

CVLC Client Theresa with Staff Attorney Janice Wolf in the lobby of VA Community Resource and Referral Center. Photo by David Apuzzo.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Board Leadership

Kevin Lenehan, *Board Chair*  
Kathleen Tourjee, *Board Secretary*  
Brian Pierne, *Board Treasurer*

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Kevin P. Brown  
Laurie Harkness  
Professor Michael Wishnie

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Komla Godwill Matrevi  
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Jeffrey Udell

## LEADERSHIP AND STAFF

### Staff Leadership

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Shannon Mykins  
Alden Pinkham  
Darren Pruslow

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Tucker McWeeny  
Cyd Oppenheimer  
Eva Puoro  
Cesar Rivera  
Don Tutson  
Juliet Taylor  
Ali Walker  
Janice Wolf

During 2022-23 fiscal year, in addition to the staff and board listed above, our staff included Cindy Johnson, Ashleigh Backman, Nikki Kelsey, Peter Katona, and Millie Vandenbroek, and board included Stephen Rice, Aza Mosley, and Rosendo Garza, Jr. While they are no longer directly affiliated, their contributions during the 2022-23 fiscal year were tremendous.

### Connecticut Veterans Legal Center

114 Boston Post Road, Ground Floor  
West Haven, Connecticut 06516

Phone: (203) 794-4291

Fax: (203) 889-0111

[ctveteranslegal.org](http://ctveteranslegal.org)



@ctveteranslegal