



**2014 Annual Report  
Philadelphia VIP**





## *The impact of saying yes*

Philadelphia VIP promotes equal justice for the poor by providing civil legal services not otherwise available, collaborating with other legal services organizations, and promoting a culture of volunteerism by educating and exposing attorneys and law students to issues of poverty.

Philadelphia VIP is dedicated to levelling the playing field for low income Philadelphians in our civil justice system. For more than three decades, VIP has provided civil pro bono attorneys to people who have nowhere else to turn.



The hub of pro bono legal services in Philadelphia since 1981

Dear Friends of VIP,

We are pleased to present the 2014 Annual Report, showcasing the extraordinary achievements VIP has made advancing its important mission.

Most importantly, in 2014 VIP saw a rise in the number of volunteers recruited and clients served. This is a direct result of new initiatives by VIP to ensure we are helping as many clients as possible by recruiting and retaining more volunteers.

VIP also launched several exciting new initiatives in 2014, including our Corporate Advisory Council. The Council, chaired by former TE Connectivity General Counsel Bob Scott, launched an innovative pilot project to pair in-house corporate legal departments with law firms, supported by VIP, to handle cases in selected substantive areas. We look forward to publishing a report with best practices learned from this project in 2015.

We are looking forward to continuing this and other initiatives aimed at ensuring access to justice for all Philadelphians. The year 2015 will also kick off planning **for VIP's 35th anniversary, to be celebrated with a signature event in March 2016.** More details to come!

With your help, we are changing the lives of our clients and our community for the better. Thank you for partnering with us and for all that you do for VIP.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt D. Lee".

**Matthew D. Lee**  
**2013-2014 Board President**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara L. Woods".

**Sara L. Woods**  
**Executive Director**

# Philadelphia VIP Priority Areas: 2014

## ***Supporting Family Stability***

*Adoption, Child Custody, Divorce, Guardianship, Immigration Issues, Name Change, Special Education, School Discipline*



### **Philadelphia family court finds a new home**

The new family court building opened its doors at 15th & Arch Streets on Monday, November 17th after four years and \$200 million. The court services previously occupied two buildings at 1801 Vine Street and 34 S. 11th Street.

### **Helping a loving woman adopt: *Michelle's Story***

In fall 2013, Michelle learned she could not have a child. Intent on becoming a mother, she began to consider surrogacy options. When her younger sister discovered she was pregnant and offered to allow Michelle to adopt her unborn son, she came to VIP for help with the adoption process.

VIP paired Michelle with volunteer Helen Casale, a family law attorney at Hangle, Aronchick, Segal, Pudlin & Schiller. Michelle worked with Helen and her paralegal, Kim Ferarri, to complete the adoption process. After 30 hours of legal work, the adoption was finalized.

Helen values pro bono service and considers it essential to her practice. "The legal system is set up in such a way that it is very expensive and difficult for people to have good representation. If I can take time and help somebody who wouldn't be able to afford an attorney, then that is all a part of giving back."



# Preventing Homelessness

*Deed Transfer, Landlord/Tenant Appeals, Mortgage Foreclosure, Probate, Public Housing Evictions, Tangled Title, Quiet Title*

## From tenant to homeowner: *Lorna's Story*

Lorna Laster, a single mother who was renting her home, came to VIP seeking help to avoid eviction. Lorna had been working with a housing counselor and needed an attorney's assistance to help navigate her lease arrangements and purchase the house she was renting.

VIP paired Lorna with Steven Shoumer, a partner at Blank Rome LLP and VIP volunteer since 2006. Steve helped Lorna negotiate a lease with a more suitable payment plan so that Lorna and her family could remain in their home and ultimately purchase it. After eight years of renting she had finally made all of the payments required under her agreement with the landlord, and she was now in a position to own her home. Steve assisted her in closing the transaction, including securing title insurance to protect Lorna's future in the property as a homeowner.

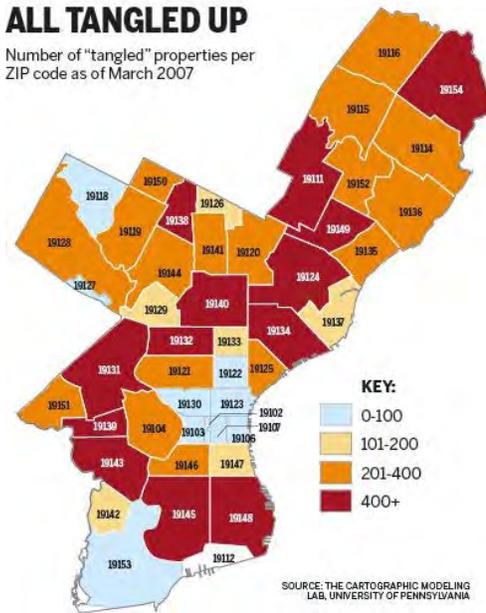
Steve says this case has been one of the most memorable he has handled, either pro bono or paid. "The day of closing was the most satisfying day of my career," Steve said.

"Just knowing that VIP is here grants hope. It means don't give up. You just have to know that there are people out there who can help get you the resources so that you can actually attain something," Lorna said.



## ALL TANGLED UP

Number of "tangled" properties per ZIP code as of March 2007



SOURCE: THE CARTOGRAPHIC MODELING LAB, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

## Philadelphia VIP featured in Daily News cover story

VIP has been on the forefront of tangled title issues for 10 years, trying to keep low-income homeowners in their homes. In October the Daily News published a Gentrification issue highlighting the problem of tangled titles, featuring a profile of VIP clients and quotes from our staff attorney Roxane Crowley.



## ***Maintaining Income***

*Auto Accident, Child Support, Consumer Debt, Disability,  
Employer/Wage Claims, Litigation, Tax Issues, Torts*



### **Action against civil forfeiture: *Jennifer's Story***

Since 1998, Jennifer Johnson has been living in her two-story row home on a small block in North Philadelphia. The Philadelphia District Attorney's Office discovered alleged drug activity occurring at Ms. Johnson's home. The DA's office sought to seize her home under civil forfeiture law. Ms. Johnson now risked losing her home and being thrown out on the street.

Matthew Lee, an attorney at Blank Rome LLP and a long-time volunteer at Philadelphia VIP, volunteered to help. Having handled 12 civil forfeiture cases and served as the President of VIP's Board of Directors, he was determined to help Ms. Johnson keep her home.

Matt determined that Ms. Johnson was an "innocent owner" under Pennsylvania's forfeiture laws. Ms. Johnson therefore had a viable defense to the forfeiture because she was unaware of any alleged illicit activity.

Matt negotiated a favorable settlement with **the District Attorney's Office that allowed** Ms. Johnson to keep her home. She pledged to ensure that her home stays free of illegal activity. Ms. Johnson was relieved to preserve her family home.

### **Defending consumer debt collection suits in Philadelphia**

Consumer debt collection actions are on the rise. Consumers often have fair and valid defenses that they cannot raise without legal representation. In October 2014, Philadelphia VIP, Community Legal Services, and the Philadelphia Trial Lawyers Association Future Leaders co-sponsored a consumer debt CLE training. Over 25 attorneys learned how to assist low-income defendants in debt collection litigation and how to help these clients protect their minimal assets from unfair collections.



# ***Promoting Community Economic Development***

*Nonprofit Organization and Small Business Assistance*

## **Incorporating a mobile produce store: *Eat Fresh For Less***

Eat Fresh For Less is a small social business dedicated to ensuring low-income Philadelphians access to fresh, nutritious and affordable food products and other basic necessities. It currently functions as a mobile food market with a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) option. Eat Fresh For Less' mobile food market affords elderly clients the opportunity to do their own food shopping and maintain a facet of their independence. The owners, Daniel Merin and David Dams, had started the business as a sole proprietorship before coming to VIP for legal assistance with incorporating the business.

VIP paired Daniel and David with Keely Stewart, an associate with Pepper Hamilton LLP. Keely advised them to form a limited liability company to operate their for-profit company and helped them prepare a certification of organization and of a LLC operating agreement.

"Keely treated us as if we were his paying clients, was always available and responding to emails and phone calls. It was very enjoyable working with someone with that level of professionalism," Daniel noted. Keely says he chose to represent Eat Fresh For Less because of their mission. "Their mission, to bring fresh foods to communities that didn't **already have access to it, was fantastic,**" Keely said.



## **VIP's Nonprofit Legal Assessment Clinic**

Philadelphia VIP's LawWorks Project hosted its first-ever Nonprofit Legal Assessment Clinic. The clinic offered nonprofits a chance to meet with an attorney and discuss issues such as corporate governance, internal controls, fundraising, lobbying activities, employment practices, risk management tools and more. Thanks to support from the team at GlaxoSmithKline, the clinic attracted nearly 25 volunteers and representatives from 22 nonprofits. VIP hopes to continue hosting this event biannually, and is grateful for its partnership with the Regional Foundation Center, the Free Library of Philadelphia and the Nonprofit Center at LaSalle University.





## Our Impact: A to Z

In 2014, VIP's pro bono attorneys and professional staff assisted in **1,449** civil cases for over **2,800** individuals and families who could not afford attorneys and who could not have been helped by other public interest organizations.

VIP's volunteers provided **13,711** hours of volunteer legal service, in substantive areas from *Adoption* to *Zoning*. If billed out at a law firm rate of \$200 per hour, these services would be valued at over **\$3,146,400**.

**13,711**  
Total Hours  
of Volunteer  
Service



48% Preventing  
Homelessness

34% Supporting  
Family Stability

9% Maintaining  
Income

9% Promoting  
Community &  
Economic  
Development

Volunteer Case Hours	13,711
Board Member Volunteer Hours (36 Members x 30 Hours)	1,080
Legal Clinic Volunteer Hours	827
Trainer Volunteer Hours	114

**Total Hours 15,732**



**\$3,146,400**

15,732 Hours x \$200/Hour



## 2014 Highlights



Philadelphia VIP hosted an **Advanced Directives Legal Clinic and CLE Training** at Saul Ewing LLP on June 12, 2014. Volunteers assisted low-income Philadelphians prepare advance planning documents, including Financial Powers of Attorney, Health Care Powers of Attorney, and Living Wills.

In 2014, Philadelphia VIP **redesigned its service model and staff structure.** Legal program staff are now better equipped to serve volunteers and clients across multiple priority areas through enhanced training and teamwork. In addition, the reorganized operations team deployed new technologies and **practices to increase VIP's capacity for pro bono service** and welcomed its first Data Analyst.



On September 16, 2014 Philadelphia VIP hosted **"A Taste for Justice" Fundraiser** at the Reading Terminal Market. Guests enjoyed a wine and cheese tasting and a chef demonstration featuring Chef Michael O'Halloran of Bistro 7. The event concluded at Molly Malloy's. Thanks to all who attended and donated, VIP was able to raise nearly \$37,000.



## 2014 Awards & Honors

VIP's volunteers and staff were recognized locally and nationally for their outstanding public service and commitment to pro bono work in 2014.



The American Bar Association's Business Law Section honored *Donald Parman* with its 2014 National Public Service Award. Don has been a longtime VIP volunteer and an exemplary member of the legal community.

*Erica Place* won the Philadelphia Association of Paralegals (PAP) 2014 Pro Bono Award for her work with VIP and the Philadelphia Residential Mortgage Foreclosure Program.

VIP Staff Attorney *Michael Viola* was recognized with the Good Shepherd Mediation Program's "Shepherd of Peace Award."

The Pennsylvania Bar Association's Commission on Women in the Profession named *Philadelphia VIP* to the 2014 Honor Roll of Legal Organizations Welcoming to Women Professionals.

Volunteer *Kim Takacs* was awarded the Philadelphia Bar Association Young Lawyer's Division Craig M. Perry Service Award.



## Philadelphia VIP's 2014 Awards Night Winners

**Justice William J. Brennan, Jr. Award**  
*Berner Klaw & Watson LLP*  
*Willig, Williams & Davidson*  
*Ballard Spahr LLP*  
*TE Connectivity*  
*Nazim Karaca, Esq.*

**Amicus Award**  
*Tanya L. Rambert*



**Juris Award**  
*Fidelity National*  
*Title Group*

**Outstanding New Volunteer**  
*Emily Pickering, Esq.*  
**Outstanding Veteran Volunteer**  
*Alfonso Madrid, Esq.*



## *2014 Volunteers of the Month*



**January**  
*Anthony B.  
Quinn, Esq.*



**February**  
*Bradley V.  
Shuttleworth, Esq.*



**March**  
*Patricia G.  
Cramer, Esq.*



**April**  
*Maria  
Corpora, Esq.*



**May**  
*Dina S.  
Ronsayro, Esq.*



**June**  
*Evan Caplan, Esq.  
& James Mulcahy*



**July**  
*Karenina  
Wolff, Esq.*



**August**  
*Kimberly  
Dolan, Esq.*



**September**  
*Deborah  
Zateeny, Esq.*

Each month, we honor a dedicated volunteer attorney who provides outstanding pro bono legal services to low-income families in Philadelphia.

We applaud our 2014 Volunteers of the Month for providing quality legal assistance to those in need.



**October**  
*Andrew H.  
Braid, Esq.*



**November**  
*Ronald  
Kovler, Esq.*



**December**  
*James A.  
Rocco, III, Esq.*



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## Fiscal Year 2014 Revenue

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IOLTA	82,574	Salaries + Taxes	739,101
Philadelphia Bar Association	100,000	Fringe Benefits	99,352
Philadelphia Bar Foundation	60,720	William Penn Technology Project	0
United Way	33,928	Consultants	7,800
Individual Campaign	50,835	Depreciation	3,058
Annual Firm Appeal	203,425	Fundraising Expenses	12,741
Fundraiser	37,553	Staff Development	4,142
Corporate Campaign	118,656	Insurance	5,802
Board Contributions	23,477	Marketing & Communications	5,388
Foundations & Other Funders	274,260	Office Expenses	49,168
Government Grants	151,679	Other Direct Program Expenses	66,251
Interest Income	634	Professional Fees	5,000
Name Change Escrow	4,535	Litigation Expenses	1,009
Signature Recruitment Events	412	Rent	113,942
Tangled Title Fund	67,836		
Miscellaneous	157		
<b>*Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$1,210,681</b>	<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$1,112,754</b>

## Say YES to VIP

Philadelphia VIP provides fair and equal access to the legal system for residents and businesses in Philadelphia. Despite the presence of direct legal service organizations in the area, the demand for civil legal aid far exceeds the total capacity of these groups. By mobilizing legal volunteers, Philadelphia VIP exponentially increases access to justice for low income Philadelphians.

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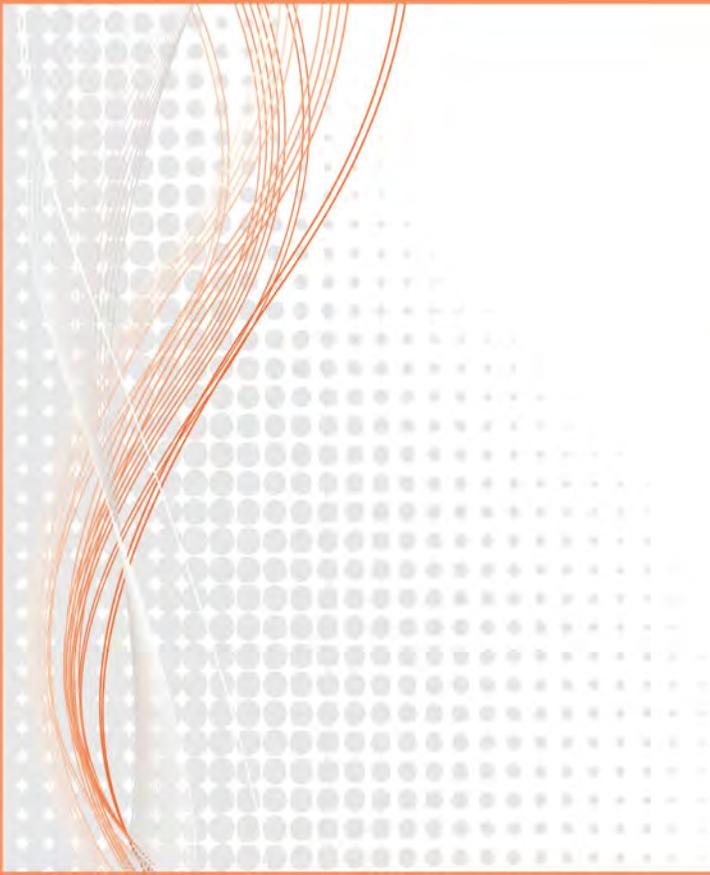
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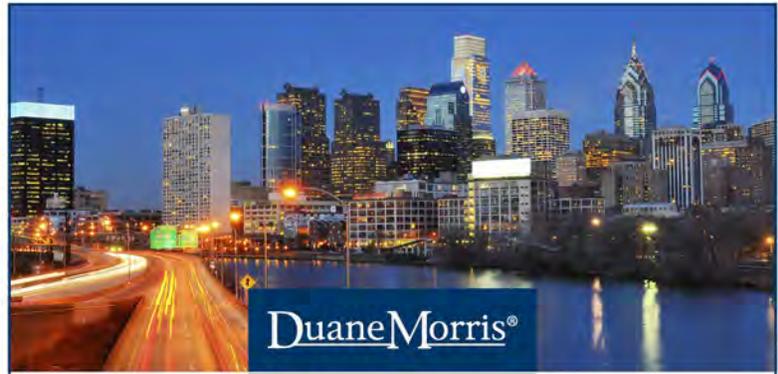
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