

NEWS FROM OUR HOUSE

FALL 2020

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



The Children's
LAW
Center

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CLC's New Collaborative Divorce Program

The Children's Law Center is proud to introduce the Streamlined Collaborative Family Law Project ("Project"), an Access to Justice Program designed to provide the collaborative experience to underprivileged and underserved families.

Collaborative Divorce can be costly, and while it is a much more efficient and less harmful alternative to litigation or even mediation, it is simply not accessible to families of limited or no means. Therefore, CLC has created a streamlined program to provide this essential service to help parents restructure in a way that minimizes the damage done to their families, especially the children.

Our approach utilizes collaboratively trained professionals who are paid a percentage of the fees charged, which are on a sliding scale based on ability to pay. In order for this project to be successful, we are recruiting experienced, well trained professionals who are willing to accept cases at reduced rates. Fortunately, CLC has a strong reputation in the legal and mental health communities and professionals are willing to sign on. We continue to work on expanding that base of support.

To successfully launch the program, we will be marketing it through brochures and literature about the unique nature of the streamlined collaborative process.

This project has significant potential to change the way people divorce or restructure their families in the future. We want it to be the option for everyone, not just those with means. To learn more about the Streamlined collaborative Family Law Project, visit CLC's website, www.clcct.org, or contact Margaret Bozek at (860) 232-9993 x307 or Margaret@clcct.org to discuss the program in more detail.



Greetings and Farewells at CLC

We recently bid farewell to Attorney Artila Lubonja. Artila has been with CLC for the over 7 years and will always be a valued member of the CLC family. Tila will be greatly missed and everyone at CLC is so happy for her next journey; we know she'll do incredible things!



Welcome Attorney Brendan Holt! Brendan graduated from St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia with a major in Labor Studies and a minor in Philosophy. Brendan attended Quinnipiac University School of Law, completing a concentration in Alternative Dispute Resolution and Civil Advocacy in 2006.

After six months as a community mediator in the Waterbury and Bridgeport G.A. courts, Brendan spent 7 years as a State of Connecticut Judicial Branch Family Relations Counselor in the New Haven Superior Court, where he also served as a Special Master. He then spent 4 years working in the area of insurance policy holder defense litigation and corporate risk management, before returning to his family law "roots" and opening his own firm, Holt Law LLC, which was based in Woodbridge. His private practice focused primarily on helping families navigate the complicated overlap of emotional and legal issues confronting them both during and after divorce in a less adversarial manner, via mediation, collaborative family law and parenting coordination. Brendan serves on the Boards of the Connecticut Council for Non-Adversarial Divorce (CCND), the Connecticut Mediation Association (CTMA) and is on the Executive Committee of the CBA Alternative Dispute Resolution Section. He is also a member of the International Academy of Collaborative Professionals (IACP). In his non-professional life, Brendan is a coach and the Co-Director of the Boy's Youth Lacrosse league in his

town and can be found hiking, trail running, mountain biking and generally enjoying the outdoors with his wife, two sons, and their two dogs and cat. We're happy to have you as a part of the CLC family, Brendan!

CLC: Bringing Families Together

The Children's Law Center was appointed to represent 12 year old, Ashley, whose parents had been embroiled in a strenuous custody battle for 6 years. After four years of marriage, Ashley's parents decided to separate and Ashley went to live with her father. Ashley's mother had had sporadic contact with her before and after the separation but during one of her visits with Ashley, Mom said Ashley told her that she and her father had a secret. Ashley's mom assumed it was sexual in nature and thereafter refused to allow any contact between Ashley and her father.



After numerous failed attempts to see his daughter, Dad filed in family court. Mom was ordered by the court to contact the appropriate authorities to investigate the sexual abuse allegations, which were never substantiated. When Ashley's parents divorced, the court ordered that Dad be reunified with Ashley in a therapeutic setting. Mom did not cooperate with facilitating the reunification and after many failed attempts, Dad gave up. Five years then passed before Dad tried to have contact with his daughter again.

When Ashley was 12, her father again filed in family court, at which time a CLC attorney was appointed to represent Ashley's best interests. Ashley was vehemently opposed to seeing Dad, even with supervision, yet she talked with CLC's attorney about many positive experiences with her father. Ashley also said that her dad was a deadbeat who never loved her and didn't pay child support. She said he was a liar. When CLC's attorney asked how she knew all of this after having no contact for 5 years, she said she had overheard things and read her mother's court diary. CLC's attorney recommended a psychological and custody evaluation on the family: it was concluded that Ashley's mother had severely alienated her against her father.

Because of the extent of the alienation, CLC's attorney mediated an agreement whereby Ashley would be removed from her mom's care to participate in an intensive, immersive reunification program with Dad. At CLC's recommendation, Mom entered into treatment as well, with a provider well versed in alienation cases. Everyone recognized that this was a long and difficult road, however, this was what was in Ashley's best interest in the long run. With CLC's help, Mom came to understand that her attempts to alienate Ashley against her father had a negative impact on Ashley's mental health and stability. Through hard work, Ashley and her father have rebuilt their relationship and Mom is now working to reestablish a relationship with Ashley. CLC continues to monitor this case extensively. Once Mom progresses in her individual treatment so that she understands she cannot fall back into old habits, a parenting plan incorporating both parents equally will be the next step. Now Ashley spends time with her mother and is once again forming happy memories with her dad.

Three Critical Tax Tips for 2020

1- DEDUCT UP TO \$300 IN CHARITABLE CASH GIFTS EVEN IF YOU DON'T ITEMIZE - If you do not itemize deductions, the CARES Act permits you to claim an additional \$300 ABOVE your standard federal deduction for cash gifts to charities in 2020. If you DO itemize your deductions, the CARES Act raises the Adjusted Gross Income ceiling for gifts to public charities from 60% to 100% for 2020 for federal income tax purposes.

2 - MAKE GIFTS OF APPRECIATED STOCK - With the stock market gains in 2019 and 2020, you may be fortunate enough to have enjoyed significant increases in your stock or mutual fund holdings. If you've held the stock for more than a year and you sell the stock, those great gains will be taxed (both federal and state) as capital gain income, at roughly 20% for most individuals if you live in Connecticut. BUT - you can make the gains work to your advantage. Call the charity, tell them you want to make a gift of stock and enjoy a DOUBLE WIN! You pay NO tax on the transaction, AND you may deduct full market value of the stock on your tax return if you itemize your deductions. You get a tax break, and your favorite non-profit benefits. Instructions for making a stock gift to The Children's Law Center are on our website: <http://www.clcct.org/2020-tax-tips/>

3 - MAXIMIZE THE MANDATORY IRA DISTRIBUTION - If you are 72 (or reached the age of 70 ½ before Jan. 1, 2020) you are required to take a taxable distribution (RMD or required minimum distribution) from your IRA. For 2020, the CARES Act gives you the right to waive that distribution. But the IRS announced that while the RMD is not required, you retain the right to request that distribution. For those who want a tax advantage from their charitable gifts, this is a GREAT strategy. How? Simple! Before the end of 2020, instruct your IRA advisor to make the required distribution directly to a nonprofit of your choice, and the entire amount of that distribution will NOT be subject to ANY income tax. This is an opportunity to eliminate tax obligations on the RMD. The entirety of the RMD can be directed

to a single gift or broken into multiple gifts, and *all tax consequences* on the RMD that was designated as charitable gifts (Qualified Charitable Distributions or QCD's) *are eliminated*.

EXTRA BONUS: Do you (or did you) work for an employer that has a matching gift program? You just might double your gift!

QUESTIONS? Just call Deb Shulansky, Director of Development, at 860-232-9993 or email her at Deb@clct.org.

CLC's "Celebrate-at-Home" VIRTUAL Gala

While so much in the world has changed, the Children's Law Center's mission has not. As much as we would have liked to celebrate with all of our dear friends and supporters in person, we are happy that we could still be together (while safely apart) on Gala day!

On November 13th, 2020, World Kindness Day, the Children's Law Center went virtual for the first time! With technology at our fingertips, we delivered an unforgettable event with inspirational stories, unique auction packages, plush animals for donation and purchase, plus so much more! We welcomed back radio personality, Renee DiNino of iHeart Radio as our esteemed emcee and we proudly celebrated Executive Director Justine Rakich-Kelly's 20th Anniversary at CLC.

Everyone at CLC is so grateful for the support and kindness you've shown us in such uncertain times. A special thank you to Renee DiNino for being an amazing emcee, to Max Catering & Events for some seriously mouth watering dinners and to our Gala Committee and volunteers. Thanks to all of YOU for being heroes to Connecticut's children and for helping to make our 2020 Celebrate-at-Home VIRTUAL Gala a success!

If you weren't able to tune in, our video can be found on the Children's Law Center's website:

<http://www.clct.org/events-news/gala-2/>



More from CLC

Thank you to our amazing community that has continued to show The Children's Law Center support during the COVID-19 crisis.

Meet our 2020 Gala Plush Animal, Ellie the Elephant! We still have plush animals available for purchase or donation, visit <http://www.clct.org/events-news/gala-2/> today!

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Ellie the Elephant!



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For information, contact Deb at deb@clcct.org.