

In This Issue

[They Were Always There When I Called](#)

[Winetasting Recap](#)

[Liz Whipple Makes Guest Appearance on "Legally Speaking"](#)

[New Housing Resource and Advocacy Center Creates Solutions](#)

[Recognizing our Volunteers](#)

Other AVLF News



o The Safe Families Office moved from Courtroom 6G to Courtroom 2P. Still in a bit of disarray, but luckily we managed to keep our doors open, and clients served, throughout the entirety of the shift. Stop in and check out the new space!

o AVLF volunteer attorney John E. Seay secured a \$1,600 settlement for his AVLF client whose security deposit was wrongfully withheld.

o On December 8th, AVLF Deputy Director, Tamara Caldas, and AVLF Director of Housing and Consumer Programs, Michael Lucas, in partnership with Troutman Sanders, LLP, conducted a training of new volunteers for AVLF's Eviction Defenses Program.

o AVLF volunteer attorney Tegra Watkins, of Watkins Legal LLC,

Helping Those Most in Need During the Holiday Season -- An Appeal for Your Financial Assistance

By: Martin Ellin, Executive Director, AVLF

I write to ask for your help for the AVLF Domestic Violence Project's Safe Families Office.

Domestic violence denies all victims, and those who depend on the victims for their emotional and physical well-being, the chance to experience healthy growth and/or positive development. Victims and their children can lose their health, their sense of well-being and safety, their self-esteem, their homes, their possessions, their employment and the other ingredients of a more fully realized life. Those who are abused learn a range of destructive lessons that interfere with achieving potential: a victim loses the ability to trust and the capacity for hope, while children raised in a home of regular abuse may hold the behaviors of the abuser and the victim as models of adult behavior.



Research has made it clear that the presence of a lawyer at the time a victim seeks a Protection Order is the single most important factor in

determining whether the victim will be able to break the violence cycle.

AVLF offers that very legal representation through The Safe Families Office, Georgia's only courthouse-based program delivering legal support and safety planning to victims of intimate partner violence and an ABA Commission on Domestic Violence-

obtained a \$3,325 settlement on behalf of an AVLF client whose security deposit was illegally withheld.

o Congrats to AVLF's Tamara McLendon-Coleman for winning the PACE (Paralegal Advanced Competency Examination) scholarship award from the Georgia Association of Paralegals (GAP), which was announced during their holiday/dinner meeting last week! Tamara was one of a number of GAP members who wrote and submitted an essay on why they should be the recipient of this award which will cover the costs associated with books, the application fee, and testing fee for her paralegal certification exam!

o AVLF provided Eviction Defense training on Thursday, Dec. 8th from 9:00am - 11:00am at Troutman Sanders.

o AVLF super-volunteers, Katie Merrell, David Wender, Patrick Coyle and Nadja Bailey, all of Alston + Bird, and Sheandra Clark from Delta, were able to secure the full approximately \$1,000 in unpaid wages for a hard-working AVLF client whose trucking company-employer wrongfully withheld wages and threatened counterclaims for damages that were not the client's responsibility. The employer also agreed to give up all claims. AVLF volunteer Chris Armor, of Armor Law, LLC, secured the dismissal of a debt-collection suit by a debt-buyer against a low-income AVLF client.

o GSU 3L Jeanette Van der Linden had her first full-blown (and tear-filled) hearing representing a mother of 6. Her 18-year old son testified that they could all move on with their lives if their mother was finally safe from her abuse. Hopefully, now she is.

o Debbie Segal of Kilpatrick Townsend won a 12-Month Protective Order for a client whose long-time abuser had most recently set her hair on fire.

designated national "Best Practices" model.

But our ability to deliver that service is compromised because grant funding is as low as any of us can remember. For the 2,000 visitors to The Safe Families Office, for the women (and men) who are promise themselves that today, finally, they will seek protection, and for the children whose welfare depends on a petition for a Protective Order being granted- for all of these victims who may not otherwise be able to access justice or safety- **will you kindly consider an end-of-the-year contribution to the Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation?**

We are short of funds for our DV Project, and hope very hard to be able to raise \$5,000 through this request. Please use the button below to make a donation. Help AVLF change our community. Help the Safe Families Office provide lawyers to victims. Help a mother find a way to keep herself and her children from further harm. Thank you for your kind support- the Staff of the Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation offers warm wishes to you and those you love for a safe holiday.

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\$10.00

\$25.00

\$50.00

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\$100.00

\$250.00

AVLF is 501(c)3 tax exempt organization; therefore, 100% of your contribution is tax deductible as allowed by IRS guidelines.

They Were Always There When I Called

By: Michael Lucas, Director of Housing and Consumer Law Programs, Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation

o On December 1st, AVLF Director of Housing and Consumer Programs, Michael Lucas, spoke about housing issues and met individually with residents at the Emmaus House's monthly neighborhood dinner; approximately 200 community members received a hot meal and information about their rights as tenants and homeowners.

o AVLF staff Dionne Hines Morse and Michael Lucas attended the Health Fair at the Villages at Carver YMCA on Monday the 14th to spread the word about AVLF's services for low income Atlantans.

o AVLF, with the generous support of Alston + Bird, conducted its fall Wills, Advance Health Care Directives, and Powers of Attorney CLE training at Alston + Bird on November 17th.

o AVLF volunteer Edwin M. Cook, an Associate at Bryan Cave LLP, secured the voluntary dismissal - with prejudice - of a suit by a finance company erroneously seeking over \$3,000 for a car loan.

o AVLF's own Marty Ellin and Michael Lucas secured a voluntary dismissal of an attempted eviction of a low-income client with disabilities related to a brain injury who would have lost the critical housing subsidy that allows him to survive on his limited disability income.

o AVLF volunteer, John Seay, secured a cash settlement of \$1,600 for his client who was the victim of an illegal eviction at the hands of her landlord.

o AVLF volunteer Matthew Simmons, of Berman Fink Van Horn P.C., quickly convinced a debt collector to drop all pursuit against his elderly client of a \$24,000 judgment stemming from her ex-husband's large credit card debt from several years ago.

o AVLF volunteer attorney Franklin Trapp, of DLA Piper - in fluent Spanish

Ms. B arrived for her appointment at the Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation's (AVLF) Saturday Lawyers Program desperate for help in getting her, her daughter, and her four year-old granddaughter out of the deplorable living conditions they had been subjected to - and felt trapped in - for several months. After hearing of the severe structural, mold and mildew conditions leading to the counters collapsing and Ms. B literally falling through a wall left brittle by moisture, the insect infestation resulting in spider bites on the four year-old, and damage to personal belongings, David Zacks, Kilpatrick Townsend Partner and seasoned litigator, Hillary Rightler, first-year associate in Atlanta's Complex Business Litigation group, and Nick Stanislo, the Firm's Manager of Civil Investigations and recent recipient of AVLF's annual "Making a Difference" award, jumped on board.



This team got to work immediately. Nick focused on unraveling a complicated ownership and management picture, and within a few days I was pulling into Ms. B's apartment complex with David, Hillary, and Nick. The situation was worse than we expected: a several building, several-hundred unit, sprawling complex that - save maybe a half-dozen occupied units - looked like a ghost town with whole buildings roped off, boarded up, and likely full of squatters. The management office looked deserted, although the landlord still managed to collect Ms. B's rent and threaten eviction. We quickly attracted the attention of the hapless "maintenance man" - apparently acting in that role in name only - who questioned our presence as Nick gathered photographic evidence for the case.

[Click here to read this article in its entirety.](#)

**Thank you Atlanta...
...for 20 Great Years!**

for his Spanish-speaking client - quickly secured a mutual rescission of the his client's lease - allowing her to safely move her children to safer, more livable housing - the waiver of unpaid rent, and an immediate return of her security deposit, which allowed her to land on her feet.

- o AVLF Director of Housing and Consumer Programs, Michael Lucas, represented and quickly secured a voluntary dismissal - on the clients birthday - of a lawsuit against an elderly client on very limited income being sued for over \$2,000 on an old rental contract.

- o AVLF volunteer attorney Jared Miller, of Parker Hudson Rainer & Dobbs, won a \$1,000 judgment and collected for a client whose security deposit was wrongfully withheld.

- o Franklin Trapp of DLA Piper, assisted by new associate Misty Johnson and paralegal Rebecca Saferstein, negotiated a consent protective order for a client who'd been beaten by his partner so badly he'd been hospitalized with broken bones. As ever - job well done!

- o Lindsey Siegel, our newest AVLF attorney, passed the bar and negotiated a protective order (including \$2700 in damages) for her client today. An auspicious start, don't you think?

- o Ginny Grigsby, 3L at John Marshall, fought hard for her client in her very first trial against skilled opposing counsel. An impressive first with an incredibly appreciative client. Hope she's ready for another... Thanks as well to the Dekalb County detective who testified on our client's behalf.

- o Not to sound like a broken record, but thank you again to Kevin Linder, solo practitioner, who won a 12-month TPO for his client, who had been held at

The Board of Directors and Staff of the Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation thank our many friends throughout Atlanta for helping to make the 20th Annual Winetasting and Silent Auction so successful. Over 900 guests joined us at King & Spalding to support and celebrate the legal community's commitment to pro bono legal work on November 3rd. Thanks to the support and generosity of each one of you, the Winetasting and Inaugural Silent Auction helped raise additional funds for our Domestic Violence Project's Safe Families Office and our housing and consumer programs. In a year when so many of our traditional funders were unable to assist the Foundation, we are especially grateful for the support of our Winetasting sponsors.

Please mark your calendars and save the date for the 21st Annual Winetasting on November 1, 2012!



knife point, thrown and bruised, and threatened - and not for the first time. She and her children will sleep easier tonight because of Kevin.

o Thank you to Lisa Liang, Atlanta Legal Aid Society for volunteering for an extremely difficult Guardian ad Litem case. No Guardian case is easy but this case was coupled with significant mental health issue. Thank you for your hard work and dedication Lisa.

o Renata Turner, law professor and former AVLFer, negotiated a consent Protective Order for a woman whose abuser had threatened the lives of herself, her children and her animals.

Missed this Year's Winetasting?

Here's an overview of the delicious brands that our guests enjoyed.

*"A Tale of Two Counties"
It was the best of vines, it was the best of wines.
Presented by
United Distributors, Inc.*

SPARKLING WINE

Iron Horse Vineyards, Classic Brut 2006

Produced exclusively from estate grown pinot noir and chardonnay grapes, then aged in the cellars for 36 months, this Green Valley, Russian River, Sonoma County property has achieved international notoriety. Founded by Barry Sterling, a San Francisco lawyer, it has been served by the White House for the past fine administrations.

<http://www.ironhorsevineyards.com/>

WHITE WINES

Twomey Cellars, Sauvignon Blanc, 2010

Produced by Ray Duncan, owner of Silver Oak, this classic sauvignon blanc is sourced from a 12 acre dry farmed vineyard in Napa Valley. After primary fermentation the wine ages sur lie for four months before it is bottled. Complex with a rich texture, it is a new world sauvignon blanc with a European personality.

<http://twomeycellars.com/>



Antica Estate, Chardonnay, 2009

This mountain estate in the Eastern Hills above the Silverado Trail, is owned by Marchese Piero Antinori. After harvest ,whole clusters were pressed and chilled in stainless steel tanks before primary fermentation in French Oak barrels and lees aged for 6 months. Only the first barrels are selected and blended to reflect the true nature of this 1420 foot above sea level vineyard estate. www.anticanapavalley.com

RED WINES

Twomey Cellars, Merlot, 2007

Grapes for this wine are sourced exclusively from Mr. Duncan's Soda Canyon Vineyard in Southeastern Napa Valley. In the mild climate and volcanic soils the merlot ripens slowly and develops rich black fruit characteristics and extra ordinary complexity. The wine is aged in French oak barrels and racked three times giving it the unusual silky texture. <http://twomeycellars.com/>

Antica Estate, Cabernet Sauvignon, 2008

The Antinori winemaking heritage spans more than 600 years and 26 generations in the Tuscan region of Italy. Very low yields from this Napa Valley mountain estate offered wine makers the opportunity to create an elegant example of the varietal. After 15 months in French oak barrels and another year aging in bottle before release, this multi layered Napa Valley Cabernet offers intensity and opulent aromas and flavors. <https://www.anticanapavalley.com/>

Etude, Carneros Estate, Pinot Noir, 2008

Etude was founded on the philosophy that winemaking begins in the vineyard. Tucked away in the northwest corner of the Carneros appellation of Napa, the Pacifics maritime influence and the well drained soils make this a fine destruction for growing pinot noir. Using Burgundy as the model and aged for 14 months in French oak barrels the complex aromatics and earth notes layered over the cherry spice fruit makes this a work of hedonistic pleasures. www.etudewines.com

Hidden Ridge Vineyard, Cabernet Sauvignon, 2007

One vineyard, one estate, one wine. Produced high above the fog line in the Mayacamas Mountains in Sonoma, the estate produces a lush and full bodied mountain



Visit our Photobucket [page](#) to view additional photos from the soiree.

AVLF's Liz Whipple Makes Guest Appearance on Online Talk Show, "Legally Speaking".

You and the Law, Inc. is a non-profit organization committed to providing citizens with valuable, easy to understand information that highlights their individual rights and responsibilities within the legal system. They do so through various mediums including, but not limited to community training seminars, monthly newsletters, updates on laws that are being considered by legislators and their online talk show "Legally Speaking". View Liz Whipple, Director of the Safe Families Office, as she discusses AVLF's programs and services on the most recent episode of "Legally Speaking".



cabernet sauvignon with a distinct personality. The 55 degree slope of the vineyard site has great drainage, sun exposure and very cool nights. Aged for 16 months in French Oak this wine rewards those who love exotic flavors, aromas and textures.

<http://hiddenridgevineyard.com/>

Notes written by: Michael A. Venezia, MA, CSW, CSS, Corporate Director of Education, United Distributors, Inc.

AVLF is extremely grateful to United Distributors and all of the wineries for their contribution to this year's Winetasting.

Please support these brands!

Thanks to our Funders!

AVLF would like to thank the following funders for their ongoing commitment and support of the Foundation:

- Fulton County Human Services
- Atlanta Foundation
- Ida Alice Ryan Charitable Trust
- Atlanta Bar Foundation (Lawyer Referral Information Services Grant)
- Georgia Bar Foundation
- Mary Allen Lindsey Branan Foundation
- Lawyers Foundation of Georgia
- Georgia Dept. of Human Services PSSF (Promoting Safe and Stable Families)

Funding of the domestic violence project and Safe Families Office

New Housing Resource and Advocacy Center Creates Solutions

By: Tamara Serwer Caldas, Deputy Director, AVLF

Exactly four years ago, AVLF staff began meeting with the State Court Administrator and Chief Clerk of the State Court of Fulton County to discuss the possibility of opening a "Self-Help Center" in Fulton County to address the needs of the thousands of individuals who come to the courthouse each year without counsel. Such Centers have developed in courthouses throughout the country and have a strong record of increasing both the public's access to and understanding of the legal system, promoting fairness and decreasing court costs. In March 2011, the Fulton County State Court opened the doors of its Self-Help Center in TG-300 of the Fulton County Courthouse. In May 2011, AVLF hired Jennifer Hubbard to provide legal advice to tenants on a walk-in basis at the Center. By the end of this year, AVLF will have given assistance to more than 300 tenant families through this clinic. Below Jennifer describes her experience in this challenging position, where she works with people who face the imminent lost of their families' shelter or other legal situations wherein the safety or economic stability of the household is at risk.

by: Jennifer Hubbard, Housing Clinic Attorney, AVLF

We all have problems. Whatever my problems may be, I'm not worried about returning home to find my life out on the street. My personal belongings, pictures, food, furniture, clothes - they will not have been carelessly thrown on the curb and picked over by God knows who, as if I, or they, don't matter. When I place my key in the lock, it will turn. I'm not worried about an illegal eviction.

I have a right to stay in the home I have been leasing for the last two years. I won't be surprised to hear that the landlord with whom I signed my lease,



provided in part by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners under the guidance of the Housing and Human Services Department's Grant Program.

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Help AVLF Continue to Provide Free Legal Assistance to Metro Atlanta Residents!

Now more than ever, AVLF depends on the in-kind and financial contributions from friends of the Foundation like you. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to help us continue to

no longer owns the property. I won't wonder whether the rental payments I have been making faithfully have been going towards the mortgage. I won't worry about my family having to vacate our home, because it's been sold at foreclosure and no one bothered to say a word to me. I know my rights under the Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act enacted by President Obama.

[Click here to read this article in its entirety.](#)

AVLF would like to thank the following volunteers for their service during the months of July and August:

Domestic Violence Project

Debbie Segal, Esq., Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton LLP
Jennifer F. Deal, Esq., Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton LLP
Scott Lange, Esq., DLA Piper LLP (US)
Rebecca Saferstein, DLA Piper LLP (US)
Steven N. Cayton, Esq., The Koval Firm
Tia Lance, Esq.
Prof. Renata Turner, Esq., Georgia State University College of Law / John Marshall Law School
Brendan Krasinski, Alston + Bird LLP
Jeanette van der Linden, Georgia State University College of Law
Mary Virginia Grigsby, John Marshall Law School
Matthew Pechous, Emory University College of Law

Saturday Lawyer Program

Brandon Dhande, Troutman Sanders
Jen Blackburn, Troutman Sanders
Katherin Chapman, Troutman Sanders
Candice Priest, Troutman Sanders
Julie Upshaw, Attorney at Law
Paula Krone, Attorney at Law
Kristen Files, Attorney at Law
Michael Fischer, Alston + Bird LLP
Bruce Sarkisian, Alston + Bird LLP
Austin Hall, Alston + Bird LLP
Andy Sumner, Alston + Bird LLP
Patricia Bernard, Attorney at Law
Tiffanie Purvis, Attorney at Law
Matt Simmons, Berman Fink Van Horn P.C.
Madelyn Suriel, Attorney at Law
Anna Fretwell, Huff, Powell & Bailey
Chuck Douglas, Wakhisi-Douglas, LLC
Stacey Carroll, Dow Lohnes
Matt Parrish, Dow Lohnes
Jason McCarter, Dow Lohnes
Franklin Trapp, DLA Piper

provide FREE legal services and programs for our community's most vulnerable residents.

Thank you!

\$15.00

\$50.00

\$100.00

\$250.00

Eviction Defense

Larry Gramlich, Troutman Sanders
Jarrod Loadholt, Troutman Sanders
Evan Pontz, Troutman Sanders
Puja Patel, Troutman Sanders
Jason R. Edgecombe, King & Spalding
Bill Withrow, Troutman Sanders
Natalie Sacha, Troutman Sanders
Eric Barton, Seyfarth Shaw

Dollars for Judgements

Zulema Green, Portfolio Recovery Associates
Jonathan Barash, Law Office of Jonathan A. Barash
Brad Wilson Law, Office of Jonathan A. Barash
Beth Rogers, Rogers Law Offices
Miye Yi, Lazega & Johanson

Saturday Paralegals

Olga Rios of Morris, Manning, & Martin
Corey Lyles, Paralegal
Eveth McPherson, Crawford & Company
Patrick Davis, Georgia Association of Paralegals

About AVLF: *The Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation (AVLF) coordinates the provision of free civil legal services for low-income greater Atlanta residents by private lawyers. In 2009, AVLF advised more than 28,500 callers and secured representation or other forms of legal information and support for more than 2,500 eligible clients through volunteer attorneys.*

Yours in service,

Monique Henderson

Development Director

Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation