

## Save the Date!

The Amazing Raise, sponsored by The Community Foundation serving Richmond and Central Virginia, will kick off at 6 AM on September 17th and end at 6 PM on September 18th. Give today. Change tomorrow. Visit [www.theamazingraise.org](http://www.theamazingraise.org) to learn more.



RLS | *Because Justice Really Should Be For All*

## Save this Date, too!

The Fredericksburg Area Bar Association and UMW are teaming up to host a very special event: Jazz 4 Justice to be held at Dodd Auditorium on Saturday, November 8th. Proceeds to benefit UMW Jazz Dept. and RLS.

## Stay Tuned for...

RLS and Stage Door Productions will host performances of *Witness for the Prosecution* during the first two weekends of October in the Renwick Building. Watch Agatha Christie's plot unfold from the seats of a real courtroom.

For more specific information regarding these events, follow us on Facebook and Twitter, or check our website.

## DON'T FORGET

40 for the 40th Campaign  
Joining the Equal Justice Society is easy and rewarding; do it today! Find out how at [www.rapplelegal.com](http://www.rapplelegal.com).



## RLS Provides Gateway to Autonomy and Independence for An Immigrant Victim of Domestic Violence

On the eve of her impending marriage and move to the U.S., Carla, not her real name, was filled with joy and expectation. She met her fiancé when he traveled abroad for a holiday; they dated for some time before deciding to marry.

It was not until after Carla packed up her belongings, moved to the U.S. and married her husband that she discovered her spouse was not even remotely like the version of himself he carefully constructed during the dating phase of their relationship. Carla found herself on the receiving end of physical, emotional and sexual abuse. The shock of her violent new reality was further complicated by the fact that she was totally isolated from the love and support of family and friends.

After several years, Carla escaped and found RLS. The path to our door was a hellish one for Carla, but the details of what her American citizen spouse did to her over the course of their marriage make this story even more chilling.

Before, during and after the daily rounds of physical abuse she suffered at his hands, Carla's spouse typically followed up with a dose of emotional cruelty. He threatened to kill her constantly. As if the threat alone were not frightening enough, he told her he knew members of Los Zetas, the dangerously violent drug cartel in Mexico, and forced her to watch a video of the group decapitating women. To drive his point home, Carla's spouse told her he could arrange for this to become her fate, if she did not do exactly as she was told. In furtherance of the threats and manipulations, Carla's spouse ensured total compliance by secretly installing listening devices and cameras throughout the entire house. Carla would later learn that she was a prisoner in her own home; she was under constant surveillance with no expectation of privacy. No room was off limits to her spouse's prying.

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Her marriage included not only humiliation and psychological terrors, but physical and sexual abuse as well. Carla's spouse beat her, hit her and threw things at her; the intensity of the violence increased over time. He raped Carla repeatedly and at will. At her lowest point, Carla considered suicide because she saw it as the only means of ending the extreme brutality that had become such an ingrained part of her daily life. Fortunately, her survival instinct was even stronger than all the fear, doubt and uncertainty that Carla's spouse instilled throughout her long and painful ordeal; she ultimately decided to flee and then sought help from RLS.

Because Carla's spouse brought her to the U.S. on a fiancé visa, her conditional residency will eventually expire. Normally, a U.S. citizen would petition for permanent residency for their immigrant spouse. In cases like Carla's, however, the spouse often refuses to do so in order to gain another tool of manipulation. The Violence Against Women Act allows for an immigrant spouse to self-petition for residency when domestic violence has plagued a marriage such as in Carla's case, but the application is lengthy and involved, contains numerous requirements as well as calls for assorted forms of documentation. As a result, an experienced immigration attorney is best positioned to determine whether an individual is eligible to self-petition under VAWA, and is also best suited to assist the individual in navigating the process.

Since so much of RLS' work is focused on the prevention of domestic violence, working with immigrants who qualify for self-petition under VAWA is a logical complement to our regular caseload. With the help of Christina Martinez, RLS' bilingual paralegal and Gary Godman, RLS' bilingual staff attorney assigned to immigration cases, Carla is now in the midst of an application process which is likely to take several months before it is ready to be submitted to USCIS (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service) for review. In the meantime, she is safe and no longer suffering at the hands of an abusive spouse.



**Immigrant women face increased vulnerabilities as a result of domestic violence because of:**

- economic insecurity
- cultural difference
- social isolation
- immigration status
- language barriers
- unfamiliarity with U.S. law
- misconceptions of the legal system
- lack of social networks to provide information on where to obtain help

*Have you ever experienced a sense of powerlessness or isolation? Think of it as a window into our clients' worlds, and support the work of RLS by attending an upcoming event, responding to a letter campaign or visiting our website at [www.rapplegal.com](http://www.rapplegal.com). Thank you.*



## Enthusiasm At Work Here



Antonella Membreño, Rising Junior at Bluefield College

"I've learned a little bit of everything, from gaining a bit of knowledge of family law to working in an office and doing intake."



Erik Barbieri, Rising 2L at Rutgers School of Law

"Attending school in Camden, I have already been confronted with social issues. Sometimes, the problems that affect people of low income seem insurmountable, but working with Gloria and Tamara has shown me the wealth of good that a few dedicated people can accomplish."

Rebecca Brown, Rising 2L at Appalachian School of Law

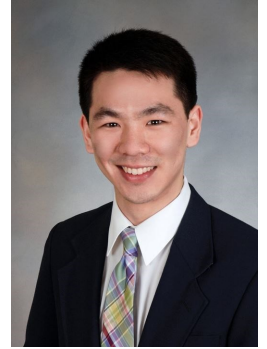
"This internship has taught me that being a lawyer isn't going to be easy; it takes a lot of time and effort."

"Working here has made me excited to finish school and pass the bar so I can start practicing law."



Michael Amrhine, Rising Sophomore at William and Mary College

"This internship has shown me how law offices organize the massive amounts of information and paperwork that are a byproduct of cases."



Byung Kim, Rising Junior at Virginia Tech

"The biggest learning experience I gathered from this summer is the large need for civil legal assistance throughout the community for those who cannot afford it."



Kelly Austin, Rising 2L at Wake Forest University School of Law

"My time at RLS took my learning from textbook and theoretical to real-life and practical. It helped cement my intentions for an area of practice in the law; specifically, family law and alternate dispute resolution."



Ashley N. Barendse, Rising 2L at Washington & Lee University School of Law

"I entered law school dead-set against ever litigating in a courtroom. Public speaking is not my forte. But by observing the attorneys preparing for court and actually trying cases in the courtroom, I realized how important litigation is and that being in court is actually nothing to be afraid of."





## On the Frontline In Tappahannock

During a recent presentation to RLS' Board of Directors, Kim Wilkins offered a witty, heartfelt and endearing depiction of her role as Intake Specialist and Pro Bono Coordinator at RLS' Tappahannock Office.



Kim's duties are varied and many but suffice to say she spends a great deal of time greeting and screening clients and prospective clients; completing administrative and paralegal tasks; conducting outreach to local private attorneys; and much more. Kim described the best parts of her job this way: working in an environment where colleagues care deeply about the clients they serve; having a client who calls during an impending storm to remind the staff to drive home safely; watching former clients learn to advocate for their neighbors; and her commute (only one traffic light and lots of scenic country roads). The worst part of her job, according to Kim, aside from her managing attorney's puns, involves turning away worthy clients because of lack of resources to assist them and having dreams about the people who cross her path, like the client who suffered brain damage while running a generator in his home because there was no heat. But those aspects of the job only serve to strengthen her resolve to be truly present every day to help protect the rights of people in the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula.

*What makes Kim's commute so great? This is the worst traffic jam she's apt to encounter on her daily travels.*



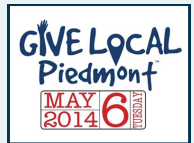
## Thank You!

*5/6/14: A Day To Remember*



...To The Community Foundation of the Rappahannock River Region and to the Northern Piedmont Community Foundation for sponsoring The Community Give and Give Local Piedmont, respectively. Your efforts to raise awareness of the work being done by local nonprofits is important, timely and greatly appreciated. Kudos for sponsoring two such spectacular events!

...To our generous donors who supported the give day events with enthusiasm, you made equal justice a real priority on May 6th! Special thanks to all those who donated anonymously; we were not able to thank you directly, but we hope you know how grateful we are for your support!



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