



## Forced Out of a Home; Living in a Car

By Jason Tarricone, Senior Attorney

Ms. A was in shock when a falling tree crushed the ceiling of her apartment and entered her bedroom. She wasn't immediately concerned with finding new housing—she was just thankful that she hadn't been seriously injured. But it soon became apparent that she would not be able to stay in the apartment she had rented for over five years. The Red Cross provided her with emergency housing, but after a few weeks she found herself homeless and living out of her car.

In situations like this, landlords are required by California law to provide their tenants with two months of rent at the fair market value to enable them to secure housing after their rental unit becomes uninhabitable. But the landlord refused to provide Ms. A with assistance.

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## Community Coming Together: Immigration Clinics



By Terra Judge, Immigration Law Fellow

Twice a month, the community comes together to serve East Palo Alto by helping us to provide consultations to local residents in need of immigration help. Through community outreach, word of mouth, and partnerships with referring organizations, East Palo Alto residents with immigration questions come to us for answers. At our biweekly clinics, we schedule community members for individual intake appointments, including students, families, crime victims, domestic violence survivors, and refugees, among others.

Around 4:30 p.m., a crowd gathers at the offices where the clinic is held. Two volunteer high school students, both of whom speak Spanish, are eager to lend a hand at the busy clinic and assist with welcoming clients and checking them in for their appointments.

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# Elderly Couple Keeps Their Home

By Rebecca Pinger,  
Anti-Predatory Lending Staff Attorney

Mr. Martell came to CLSEPA for help with his mortgage. He was working two jobs, and his wife was receiving disability assistance. He understands some English but primarily communicates in Spanish.

He had already applied for mortgage assistance with his servicer, and he needed help keeping his home. We determined that Mr. Martell was an excellent candidate for a loan modification.

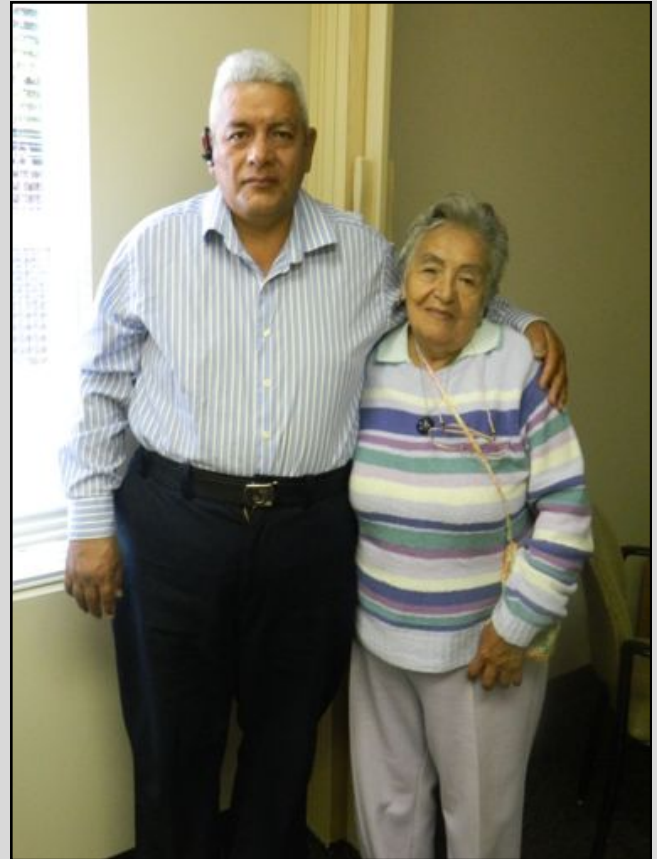
Despite several months of correspondence, Mr. Martell had initially been denied a modification under the federal Home Affordable Modification Program (HAMP) when the servicer mishan-

*“With the help of CLSEPA, we were able to save our home, for which we are eternally grateful.”*

*- Mr. Martell*

dled documents and provided misinformation about the status of his review. Instead of a HAMP modification, he was offered a modification with less favorable terms.

We reviewed his financial information and submitted updated documents, along with a new application to the loan servicer. In June 2013, the servicer offered Mr. Martell a trial plan under the federal HAMP program. Beginning in July, Mr. Martell will make three monthly payments at a new



Mr. Martell pictured here with his mother.

modified mortgage amount. If he makes the three payments on time, his trial plan should be converted to a permanent modification, and he will save approximately \$1000 a month. In addition, he will receive a principal reduction of over \$235,000 on his loan if he continues to make his mortgage payments.

Mr. Martell is a reminder of the barriers faced by distressed homeowners who are at risk of losing their homes or being taken advantage if they do not have legal counsel. We are determined to continue helping families fight off foreclosure and keep their homes.



## Community Coming Together

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We partner with Stanford Law School's Immigration Pro Bono Project to staff the clinics. At the beginning of the school year, we meet with a group of first-year law students who have expressed interest in immigration law and train them to meet with clients, assess their needs, and create a summary of their immigration history to present to supervising attorneys. At the clinics, students put this training into action, holding individual intake meetings with incoming community members.

Volunteer attorneys, many of whom have their own immigration practices, and attorneys from nearby law firms also generously donate their time. Spanish-language interpreters from the community are also on hand to provide much-needed language services. Mariam Kelly, a Spanish-speaking immigration attorney, volunteers regularly at the clinic: "The clinic allows people in the community to get reliable advice from practitioners whom they can trust. During intakes, I'm able to get an insight on the challenges and adversity indi-

viduals have faced, both in their home countries and in the U.S. Discovering that a client has a viable path to permanency in this country is an extraordinary feeling."

Our attorneys Ilyce Shugall and Kaitlin Kalna Darwal check in with volunteers to review cases and provide substantive feedback. Law students gain valuable experience in direct client interaction, and volunteer attorneys receive targeted feedback about the im-

*"You can sense the immediate relief the client feels knowing that the case will be in good hands."*

*- Volunteer attorney*

migration issues that we deal with on a daily basis. In this way, clinics give community members an easy path to getting immediate answers. Many are given follow-up appointments with our staff, or are referred to organiza-

tions that can help them. Others are connected with private attorneys or are given the advice they need to proceed with their own self-advocacy. We also incorporate Know Your Rights information so clients leave better informed about how to protect themselves. None of this would be possible without the help of the community coming together.

## Volunteer Spotlight: Allie Leeper

By Katrina Logan, Managing VAP Attorney

In addition to employing the great contributions of our volunteer law firms and *pro bono* attorneys, we also employ Stanford law students to help with our consumer clinics. Our Stanford law student volunteers are an impassioned, energizing group that brings a fresh perspective to every client intake. We appreciate all that they do, and we also understand that in a couple years, our former law student volunteers will be the attorneys who continue to give their time to assist our clients who are in need of legal representation.

Our 2013 volunteer spotlight highlights Allie Leeper, a JD/PhD student at Stanford University. This past year, Allie served as the Student Leader for our Volunteer Attorney Program (VAP). On top of her



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We contacted the landlord's insurance company, and negotiated a settlement that would allow Ms. A to replace some of the belongings that were destroyed. The insurance company also agreed to reimburse Ms. A for a tree inspection that she paid for out of pocket, to pay for two months rent, and to provide some money for the emotional distress caused by the tree and being displaced from her home.

But like many of our clients who are displaced from their homes, finding a new apartment to rent has proven incredibly difficult. The rental market in the Bay Area is tight, with low inventory and high demand causing rental prices to skyrocket. The average *studio apartment* in San Mateo County now rents for about \$1,435 per month. Some landlords are requiring deposits just to submit an application.

East Palo Alto has long been a source of affordable housing, but now it too is seeing sharp increases in rental prices. Three months after the tree fell, Ms. A still has not found a place to live. She has a Section 8 voucher that she can bring with her to a

new apartment, but most available apartments in the county remain unaffordable or refuse to accept her voucher. She is still looking for a place to call home.

Now more than ever, families in East Palo Alto need help staying in their homes. Many are in danger of becoming homeless or forced to move to the outer fringes of the Bay Area - hours away from their jobs, schools, and support networks.

*"You don't know how many people I have met living in their cars".*

*- Displaced resident living in a van*

This fall, CLSEPA will be joined by a Skadden Fellow, Daniel Saver, who will help East Palo Alto and local residents at risk of displacement and advocate for more affordable housing in the region. But,

we continue to need the support of volunteers—attorneys, law students, and interpreters — to help us avert a crisis that is already underway. To volunteer, please contact us at [volunteer@clsepa.org](mailto:volunteer@clsepa.org).

By working to keep families in their homes and advocating for the preservation and development of affordable housing, we can help ensure that Ms. A and many others will have a place to call home.

## Volunteer Spotlight

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studies, Allie coordinated the volunteer schedule and stepped in when needed to help with client intakes. Allie has been around the Stanford area for eight years, and began volunteering with VAP because she wanted to be involved in a program where she had the opportunity to interact directly with clients. She also had previous experience in consumer finance that she would have the opportunity to use in the VAP consumer clinics.

Talking with clients and hearing their stories is what keeps Allie coming back to the VAP program. She said, "[VAP] helps me break out of the 'Stanford bubble' and makes me feel more like I'm

part of the broader community. And of course it's great when we're able to help clients out. It's a really rewarding experience to be able to answer someone's question or point them in the right direction."

Allie also recognized that VAP has helped her appreciate the importance of listening. Despite being drawn to the debate-like aspects of the legal profession, and being a self-proclaimed 'talker,' Allie's experience with VAP has helped her learn when and how to listen. She recognized that, "Every client's situation is unique, even if their legal issue is one I have seen before, and learning to listen for and appreciate that has been a privilege."

We thank Allie for all the great work she has done for community members in need of legal assistance!





## With CLSEPA Expansion, a Focus on Art and Community Space

By Rico Altman-Merino  
 Development Manager

This February was the culmination of our three-year saga to expand our presence in East Palo Alto beyond the small unit we occupied on University Avenue for nearly a decade. The University Avenue space now houses our immigration staff while our housing, anti-predatory lending, and consumer protection programs, along with administrative and development personnel, have relocated to 1861 Bay Road.

The move was organized by our staff and Board. We set out to infuse the office with warmth, transforming it from a lifeless modular structure to a welcoming space that would serve as a place of inclusiveness and belonging for residents of East Palo Alto and beyond.

In April, the agency held an officewarming reception and invited community members, East Palo Alto leaders, nonprofit partners and key supporters to join the staff and board at the new office to celebrate its opening. We were joined by San Mateo County Supervisor Warren Slocum and East Palo Alto Mayor Ruben Abrica. Guests dined on flautas and tacos from



Community members enjoying the Bay Road office backyard at the April open house.



The Boys & Girls Club mural displayed at the University Avenue office.

corner of Bay Road and Clarke Avenue, a favorite lunch spot in the area.

Led by immigration paralegal Laura Tovar, we reached out to the Boys & Girls Club and College Track to design murals for each of the offices. In May, the immigration office held its own open house, displaying murals created for the University Avenue office by the Boys & Girls Club. The Club also displayed paintings from youth at the event, showcasing their talents with themes drawn from nature and social justice symbolism.

Staff member Maricela Castillo and Board member Carolyn Tucher worked with local photographer Federica Armstrong to select photographs to display in the new office at Bay Road. Armstrong's wide-ranging portfolio captures the East Palo Alto community in all its cultural diversity and geographic beauty, and we are grateful to her for allowing us to display her magnificent work.



# Welcoming Our New Staff



**Kaitlin Kalna Darwal**  
*Staff Attorney,*  
*Immigration Program*

Kaitlin joined our staff in May 2013. Previously, she was a deportation defense attorney at Van Der Hout, Brigagliano & Nightingale, LLP. She also worked as a Protection Associate at the United Nations High Com-

missioner for Refugees. During her time in law school at the University of California, Hastings College of the Law, Kaitlin was a law clerk at the Center for Gender and Refugee Studies, East Bay Sanctuary Covenant, and the Law Office of Robert B. Jobe. She was also actively involved with the Hastings-to-Haiti Partnership. Kaitlin received her undergraduate degree from Boston University, and she is proficient in Spanish and French.

**Jason Tarricone**  
*Senior Attorney,*  
*Housing & Anti-Predatory*  
*Lending Programs*

Before joining us in April 2013, Jason worked as an attorney at Goldstein, Borgen, Dardarian & Ho, where he represented plaintiffs in class action lawsuits in the areas of employment law, disability

rights, and consumer protection. He was also a fellow at the Impact Fund, where he litigated civil rights class actions. Jason clerked for Judge Thomas of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals and Judge Illston of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California. As a law student at Stanford Law School, Jason volunteered with CLSEPA's housing and anti-predatory lending programs. He received his undergraduate degree from Brown University.



## Help Us Raise \$25,000

### *Sobrato Family Foundation Challenge Grant*

Thanks to the generous support of the Sobrato Family Foundation, your donation can be **doubled!**

The Sobrato Family Foundation will match up to \$25,000 in donations to CLSEPA from non-governmental sources, including individuals, corporations, and foundations. Gifts will be matched 100% from first-time donors and lapsed donors. In addition, a gift from a current donor will be matched 100% by the increased portion of the donor's most recent gift.

- > Your **\$100** donation can help a family get their water or power turned back on by their landlord.
- > Your **\$250** donation can help a brother and sister gain legal status in the U.S. and go to college.
- > Your **\$500** donation can help an elderly couple that has fallen behind on their mortgage keep their home by getting a loan modification.

Please help us receive these matching funds by sending in a donation or contributing on-line at [www.clsepa.org](http://www.clsepa.org).





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