



Philadelphia VIP proudly recognizes **Bethany Nikitenko** for going above and beyond by *answering the call to serve.*

Thank you, Bethany!
September 2016 Volunteer of the Month

Helping others and improving her clients' lives. These are the two factors that inspire Bethany Nikitenko to volunteer for Philadelphia VIP. "For clients, it's their livelihood, it's their houses on the line, their only asset. I say YES to pro bono because there is so much at stake."

A plaintiff's attorney at McLaughlin and Lauricella P.C. since 2012, Bethany represents catastrophically-injured individuals in medical malpractice cases. She also stands up for victims of sexual abuse, auto accidents, and product liability matters. "Most of my clients have suffered a very serious injury. Maybe it's prevented them from making a living, maybe it's negatively impacted their children and they are living day to day. I work to improve their lives going forward."



Bethany was inspired to volunteer after attending a VIP event with a friend and hearing client stories. Her first case was in 2015 and she says she was captivated by the opportunity to advocate for individuals who are in the court system without an attorney. Most recently, Bethany defended a non-English speaking client in a slip and fall arbitration case. The plaintiff claimed that he had fallen on snow and ice in front of her client's house, which was not covered with liability insurance. On cross examination, the plaintiff admitted that the accident actually occurred down the block. "I'm going to remember this case for the rest of my life!" she joked. Bethany's client won the case, and Bethany was happy that she could help her client move on with her life.

Having a non-English speaking client is difficult, Bethany notes, but the VIP staff who spoke fluent Spanish made the process seamless. They also found a Temple Law Student to serve as an interpreter at her client's deposition. In fact, Bethany was so impressed with the law student that she hired her as an intern this fall. VIP's staff values Bethany's commitment and enthusiasm when handling demanding situations. "Bethany repeatedly defends clients at risk of having a judgment entered against them – a judgment that would subject their few assets, like their home or small bank account, to enforcement," says VIP Managing Attorney Kelly Gastley. "She embraces challenges in her cases, having represented a non-English speaker and many clients with tight deadlines around the corner. Because of Bethany's commitment, her VIP clients have been able to move forward with their lives without the looming fear of losing their home and modest savings."

Bethany recommends VIP because of the satisfaction and experience that pro bono work brings. "As a younger attorney, you get to hone your skills. It's your case and no one is overseeing you," she says. "You get so much out of (pro bono work) knowing that if wasn't for you, this person would not have a lawyer. I feel like I'm fighting on the side of what is right and what is good, and that is an amazing feeling."

**Bethany is a dedicated volunteer who is committed to helping her community.
We applaud her commitment to helping VIP achieve access to justice for all.**