



Philadelphia VIP proudly recognizes **Reed Smith's Tangled Title Practice Group** for going above and beyond by *answering the call to serve*.

**Thank you Reed Smith!  
April 2017 Volunteer of the Month**

The benefits of pro bono are endless: it is a great way to stretch your skills, to perform work you are passionate about, and to feel good about giving back. According to a study from the UnitedHealth Group, 94% of people say volunteering improves their mood. Volunteer attorneys may know these benefits, but the specific question that comes to mind when taking a pro bono case is how one obtains support in an unfamiliar legal area. Fortunately, Reed Smith LLP and Philly VIP have an answer.



Eleven years ago, attorneys at Reed Smith partnered with Philadelphia VIP to tackle issues facing homeowners in our city. With about 14,000 homes whose residents lack clear title to their houses, "tangled titles" prevent homeowners from paying off delinquent property taxes, selling a house or borrowing money for repairs. By focusing on homeownership cases, Reed Smith attorneys have prevented homelessness for countless Philly residents.

To aid attorneys in their pro bono endeavors, Reed Smith advocates joined forces with Philly VIP to develop a Tangled Title Practice Group. Each attorney in the Practice Group takes a homeownership case with VIP and the team meets once per month to provide support for one another's cases. Dana Janquitto, an associate at Reed Smith and head of the Tangled Title team, explains how the group encourages and assists attorneys throughout their cases. "At these meetings, attorneys ask for help to navigate a specific challenge," she says. "Within these cases, there can be occasional twists and turns. It's good to have a group of people to count on and to hold you accountable."

With about twenty-five to thirty attorneys on the team, there is a large focus on group collaboration. "We have a very strong commitment to pro bono at Reed Smith," says Dana. "The firm champions our efforts, and attorneys work together with the opportunity to really follow your passion." The Tangled Title team also partners with attorneys from PNC through Philly VIP's Corporate Counsel Collaborative project. Within the program, Reed Smith attorneys are joined by a PNC attorney to take on a VIP case, which provides opportunities for law firm and corporate attorneys to work-together and bring diverse skill-sets to the table.

The Practice Group also offers a chance for young associates to hone their abilities. For many, VIP cases are the first prospects associates have to work with low-income clients. Many also have their first trial with a VIP case, and the case gives them drafting and probate experience. "We do a lot of international pro bono work, but VIP is very invested in our community. It's such a good opportunity for attorneys to have that special community connection," says Dana. The Tangled Title team values VIP's support in providing learning materials and pre-screening cases. "They make it as easy as possible for you to take a case, which allows you to jump right in; it's very effective," she explains.

Reed Smith is a leader in pro bono and has developed a unique structure for other pro bono advocates to pursue. Dana highlights, "If folks ever need support, they should consider forming their own group at their firm or company. It's a great way to grow professionally, form relationships with colleagues, and work together to confront and handle a particular legal crisis facing our city."

**Reed Smith is committed to helping the community and we applaud the Firm's partnership in helping VIP achieve access to justice for all.**