

Philadelphia VIP Volunteer of the Month

Whether on stage performing in a club or in her office preparing a deed for a VIP client, you could call Lisa Zolna a rock star. During the workday, she's a tax-and-estate paralegal at White and Williams LLP with over three decades of experience. Outside of work, she's a songwriter, and she's also the lead vocalist in the Levittown-based cover band Witzend. It is Lisa's legal expertise and connection to VIP's mission that make her a trusted resource and a stellar volunteer.

Lisa took her first legal job while still in high school. She worked in various practice areas before realizing her affinity for estate law. "Each estate is like a puzzle," she says. "I like the challenge." She joined White and Williams' Tax and Estate Practice Group in 1997, and has been on the team there ever since.

Her cases are more than just puzzles to be solved, though. Both for White and Williams' private practice clients and its VIP clients, Lisa appreciates the chance to clear up red tape for grieving families and help people prepare for the future. When she first volunteered with VIP six years ago, she saw the tremendous impact her work could have on Philadelphia's low-income homeowners.

"As estate professionals, we're in a unique position to help people secure title to their ancestors' homes and pass that wealth along to their children," she says. "Since I live and work in the city, I feel a responsibility to do so."

VIP's robust support enabled Lisa to fulfill that responsibility. She recalls a pro bono client she was assisting in a probate matter.



The client called Lisa to report that PECO had shut off his utilities, and he didn't know where to go. Neither did Lisa. "I can probate an estate. I can draft a deed. But I don't know how to turn someone's lights back on," she says.

Lisa took the issue to Lindsay Schoonmaker, a Supervising Attorney at VIP, who connected the client to a number of helpful resources. "The client was thrilled, and so was I," she says of this experience. "VIP makes it so easy to help people!"

Thanks to the ease of working with VIP, Lisa doesn't plan to slow down. Even during tax season, she not only works on her own clients' cases, she also reviews documents for other White and Williams volunteers. She's a model volunteer, and she hopes more tax-and-estate paralegals will get involved: "Just take one case. It may not seem like much, but you've just made a difference for an entire family," she says. "It makes you want to keep coming back."

April