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After completing a rather unusual first year of law school at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas, I was determined to return home to spend the summer with my family as soon as possible. The plan since October, after my emergency surgery, was to drive back to Dallas, Texas after my last final exam in May and not return to San Antonio until the commencement of fall classes in August. Needless to say, that didn't happen. When I received an e-mail that Catholic Charities Archdiocese of San Antonio's Immigration Department was looking to fill a position for a summer internship I knew my summer plans would change. I had always been interested in immigration and I had participated in several pro-bono activities sponsored by Catholic Charities in the past, there was something about this particular internship that was worth deviating from the "plan." I submitted my resume and recommendation letter, and anxiously waited to be called for an interview.

After I was offered the position I immediately accepted and realized that I would not be spending my summer in Dallas. Instead, I stumbled upon an area of law that has always interested me and that I now have a profound passion for. My experience at Catholic Charities this summer was amazing. I found myself involved in the entire immigration process. I participated in initial client consultations, follow-up interviews, preparing evidence packets, attending court and the final submission of client petitions. This internship allowed me to fully experience the practice of immigration law, and not just one aspect of immigration law, but several. I participated in Violence Against Women Act or VAWA cases, U-Visa cases, Special Immigrant Juvenile cases, and even a couple of asylum cases. I learned how to interact with clients, in particular how to communicate with those who have been victimized. I had the opportunity to observe and participate in Immigration Court proceedings and experience first-hand how to effectively represent clients in court.

Now, after the completion of my internship I am even more thankful for the experience. I am currently participating in the St. Mary's University School of Law Immigration and Human Rights Clinic and have found that my summer internship more than prepared me for the cases I have been assigned. I am better prepared to research relevant information and statutes that pertain to my cases and feel confident that I am working on my cases to the best of my ability. Appearing in front of an Immigration Judge on behalf of my clients is not nearly as intimidating as it would be had I not been exposed to court proceedings this summer. In addition to the practical experience that I was exposed to, I also feel that I have received a tremendous amount of knowledge not only about the practice of immigration law, but also about working and interacting with clients, attorneys, and office staff in professional setting. I feel truly honored and privileged to have had the opportunity to work at Catholic Charities Archdioceses of San Antonio this summer, and have the feeling that someday I will appreciate this experience and its impact on me and my legal career even more than I do today.

### **Litigation Internship Program: A Summary**

The stipend provided by the Litigation Section of the State Bar of Texas this summer allowed me to participate in an internship with Ms. Donna Bloom at Denton County Friends of the Family. The time I spent with the agency was, without a doubt, the most beneficial and enjoyable experience I have had in my short time in the legal field. I was able to work on a wide variety of assignments under superb supervision and gain a wealth of knowledge in the area of family law. The hands-on experience made available to me by Ms. Bloom during my internship was invaluable to me as I continue to familiarize myself with the legal system and I will not soon forget the lessons passed on to me this summer.

Denton County Friends of the Family (DCFOF) is the singular provider of domestic violence and sexual assault services in Denton County. The agency has several programs that provide assistance through various services; for example, therapy, advocacy, shelter, legal, and many others. My internship was with the Legal Services Program at DCFOF which focuses on resolving legal issues in an effort to provide physical, financial, and emotional safety for the client. The Legal Services Program provides a broad range of pro-bono litigation services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault such as the resolution of family law matters (e.g. contested divorces or custody disputes), assistance with protective orders, even advocacy in Child Protective Services administrative review actions. No doubt, DCFOF clients have a variety of legal needs that the agency must struggle to satisfy despite the financial limitations inherent to institutions of this nature. In fact, the need for legal assistance is so overwhelming (and the resources so limited) that clients must have both an economic need for support from the agency, as well as imminent safety issues that can be addressed through legal intervention in order to receive services. The Legal Services Program has but one staff attorney (Ms. Bloom) to handle the cornucopia of legal issues that clients regularly present, an atmosphere which allowed me to contribute to many different ongoing projects at the agency and even work on a few individually.

During my ten weeks with Ms. Bloom in the Legal Services Program at DCFOF I was assigned such a diverse range of tasks that I was able to gain at least some experience with almost every type of legal assistance offered by the agency. In my time at the agency, I was responsible for drafting two different petitions for divorce, drafting correspondence to other attorneys, assisting with the interview and preparation of a client for mediation, several legal research projects and the presentation of that information, drafting a request for production and inspection, drafting an interrogatory, assisting with a response to a discovery request, and even the preparation of discovery materials for long-term use on a case. Furthermore, I was allowed the opportunity to participate in several mediation sessions both as a shadow to the mediator and as a

participant in a DCFOF client's mediation (with Ms. Bloom and with another attorney as well). I was also able to attend several hearings for emergency protection orders, temporary orders, and even one with Child Protective Services regarding custody. Moreover, because of the dire need for help with every aspect of the agency, I was thoroughly trained to assist with almost any service provided by DCFOF upon my arrival to the agency which allowed me to branch out and assist the counseling program with some initial intake sessions as well as shadow an actual therapy session. Needless to say, I was kept busy while working for Ms. Bloom and DCFOF and I am infinitely thankful for the fact that I wasn't kept busy simply by pushing papers around. Every day I was given the chance to experience something new and gain wisdom by working on something that actually needed to be done because a client was depending on it for their physical, financial, and/or emotional safety. This internship was life-changing.

It wasn't just the quality and number of assignments that has lead me to sing the praises of DCFOF, the compassion and leadership shown by Ms. Bloom are what truly made my time at the agency as beneficial as it was. Many of the assignments passed on to me this summer related to areas or processes of law that I was completely unfamiliar with, an obstacle that may have proved very frustrating if not for the constant availability of Ms. Bloom for questions and her endless patience in answering them. I literally had daily contact with Ms. Bloom if I needed it, weekly meetings with her and the rest of the Advocacy team, and a meeting with her every one or two weeks (as needed) to discuss my workload, her performance expectations, and my overall experience with the internship to date. The communication with Ms. Bloom was extremely important to me not only because I like to make sure that my work is up to par, but because I was also able to learn several things about family law and law in general during even our most casual discussions. Ms. Bloom made it a point to ensure that she developed a relationship with me, that I began developing other relationships with attorneys in Denton County, and that I actually gained something out of my internship. The experience would not have been the same without her.

The ten weeks I spent with Ms. Donna Bloom at Denton County Friends of the Family are weeks that I will never forget as I continue in my attempt to make a career for myself in the legal profession. The work I was assigned was completely new to me and the experience I gained from confronting the challenge will be something that serves me greatly whether I choose to continue with Family Law or practice in another area. The people I met were some of the most inspirational individuals that I have encountered in some time and, despite their busy schedules, they still consistently found time to help me develop as a professional, a showing of compassion I will always remember. Thanks to Ms. Bloom and the stipend provided by the Litigation Section, my internship experience this summer was all that anyone could have hoped for and then some. The bar is set.

Meghan Kempf

FVPS Litigation Internship: Summer 2011

My summer litigation internship with Family Violence Prevention Services, Inc.,(FVPS) was the capstone to my exposure to the demanding arena of family violence. I have worked with victims of abuse in many different capacities. The desire to do so has been the undercurrent to every position I have had since college. My previous work had been limited to observation and clerking duties, which allowed me to develop an understanding of family violence. My FVPS internship, however, uniquely allowed me to create an answer to the crises our clients were facing, and to begin to provide legal services myself. Learning how to speak to victims, how to understand the situations without a comparable experience myself, and how to effectively help them identify and obtain what they needed, have been the most difficult challenges on my path to becoming a family law attorney. However, in having developed these abilities I am now not only able to better help my clients, but also myself to become a more effective advocate for these victims.

The experience from each successive case served to enhance the lessons learned from previous ones, allowing me to continually develop my perspective and understanding of public service as it relates to domestic violence. The attorneys I worked for at FVPS, Julia Raney Rodriguez and NailyaMaryanchik, acted as mentors, not merely supervisors. By involving me in every stage of a case, from client intake to litigation in family law courts, they allowed me to develop my own set of skills and effectively created an independent advocate. The multitude of opportunities to participate in the domestic violence legal system served to familiarize me with the many facets of client representation. Most significantly, I learned to recognize that each case is separate and distinct, and that the ability to understand, and have tolerance, of the client's perspective is integral to forming an effective attorney-client relationship. The contours of client advocacy must be tailored to the unique situation. Through my internship I witnessed the benefits of alternative methods of dispute resolution, such as mediation, as well as the need at times for zealous advocacy in a courtroom.

My litigation internship with FVPS also served to greatly enhance my advocacy skills, both written and oral. From this position I have established a comprehensive understanding of how to effectively develop a case theory, and then subsequently present the case to a court in a successful manner. My confidence in my skills is fueled by a persistence and devotion to each client's case. I recognize that each case is of unique consequence, and demands an individual approach. My ability to develop, and manage, a successful case from the initial meeting through litigation is solidly established and will allow me to fulfill the demands and goals of continued work in the area of domestic violence. The amazing opportunity to work with FVPS this past summer was undoubtedly the most rewarding, and invaluable, experience I have had in becoming an attorney. Thank you very much for this opportunity!

Cardine Watson

Internship Report

Period: June through July

### **My Wonderful Internship with Legal Aid Society**

My internship with legal aid society was a great opportunity to learn and receive hands on experience with family law matters, drafting, and legal research. I received great supervision from C. Kay Caballero and Heather McDonald. They both made me feel a part of Legal Aid Society and were always there to answer any questions that I had. I really didn't deserve it, but they even gave me my own office, which made me feel more welcome.

Legal Aid Society was a great place to work, and I enjoyed my time there. Everyone went out of their way to help each other. Also, I liked the chemistry amongst the office employees and the interaction amongst the office employees.

Additionally, I really liked all the hands on experience that I received. Because of my time at Legal Aid Society, my legal skills, communication skills, and drafting skills are much improved. For example, I was already familiar with how to draft documents from previous legal jobs. However, my experience at Legal Aid Society helped me to enhance my legal and drafting skills because of Heather's and Kay's guidance I understood why I was drafting the documents and what the documents meant. I also liked how I was allowed to do everything from start to finish. I am really grateful to Kay for hiring me, and I am grateful to Heather for supervising me. My experience there gave me a glimpse of what it may feel like to be a practicing attorney, which was a great feeling.

Additionally, my communication and people skills improved because of Legal Aid Society because of my interactions with the clients. I work with clients who were victims of

domestic violence. I drafted protected orders and met with clients under the supervision of Heather McDonald. I enjoyed the interactions with the clients.

Personally, it felt great to help victims and their children get away from abusive relationships because I was making a difference and improving our clients' lives. I realize now that domestic violence is a big problem in our society. I didn't realize how big of a problem it was until I worked at Legal Aid Society. When the clients sat in my office and told me and Heather their fears and stories, it opened my eyes further to how important the work is that Legal Aid Society does. I also realized the power that attorneys have to impact and improve the lives of people in need of protection and legal assistance.

Legal Aid saves lives and protects people who otherwise wouldn't have access to legal assistants. Thus, Legal Aid Society and all other legal aids across the country do an invaluable service to the general public. The experience was more than I could have ever hoped for, and I feel like it will make me a better attorney in the future.

Blake Newton

## **Internship Report Summer 2011**

My experience at the Legal Aid Society awarded me the unique opportunity to give back to my community in a way I never thought possible. The amount of people in Lubbock and the surrounding counties that have been touched by violent relationships is appalling and I am glad that I had the opportunity to help a great number of them. During 2009, the Legal Aid Society helped 1097 clients; almost 900 of them were women. With just three to four lawyers at a time, the amount of people they are able to help is astounding.

Not only was the Legal Aid Society a benefit to the community, I also learned a great deal during my summer internship. Fresh out of my first year of law school, with zero work experience in a law firm, I expected my internship to be the typical coffee running and filling job you hear about. However, I was pleasantly surprised when my first day involved communicating to clients, through letters and frequent phone calls. In the weeks that followed they involved me in more cases than I thought I could handle, but with a couple pushes they put me on the right track and my knowledge in the law grew.

It is amazing how different law school is from the law firm and working with the Legal Aid Society allowed me to bridge that gap. For example, I had one week where I had cases from simple divorces to complex retrials on suits affecting the parent child relationship. My friendly teachers in law school would never assign the number of cases I dealt with in that week, I didn't know if I could remember a single detail that following Monday. Thankfully the simple practice of taking quick notes in each case file jogged my memory enough to have a conversation about any one of the cases. The practical knowledge I learned helped me make sense of all the black letter law I learned my first year and showed me that Civil Procedure does link with Torts and Family Law.

The opportunity to work with the wonderful people at the Legal Aid Society is one that I am extremely happy that I took. The connection that they have within the community gives them the unique opportunity to touch more lives than I ever expected to be possible. Lubbock and the surrounding counties would be much worse without the beacon of light the Legal Aid Society provides and I wish them continuing blessings in everything they do.

## Cheranda Robertson, Summer 2011 Intern, Lone Star Legal Aid State Bar of Texas Litigation Section Grant Report

My SBOT Litigation Section internship at Lone Star Legal Aid (LSLA) in the Housing and Consumer Units far exceeded my initial expectations. I not only learned an enormous amount about public interest law, real estate law, and bankruptcy law, but also learned several life lessons that cannot be taught in a classroom.

Elizabeth Lockett, my supervising attorney for the internship, told me in the beginning of the summer that law school teaches students much about the law, but it does not necessarily teach students “how to be lawyers.” She was right. There were so many things that I learned while actually working on cases, attending court, and meeting with clients face-to-face. It was during these times that I learned first-hand about interacting with attorneys, colleagues, judges, and court personnel; relating to clients in both a professional and empathetic manner; and working in a team environment to get tasks accomplished and meet important deadlines. I know these skills will prove to be extremely valuable for years to come.

Ms. Lockett, who also manages the internship program in the Housing and Consumer Units at LSLA, decided to conduct an experiment with the program this year by pairing up students to work on cases together. Although I usually prefer to work independently, collaborating with a partner taught me the value of working closely with a colleague. The benefits from this partnership included being able to take on a much heavier caseload than if I had been working on everything alone. Furthermore, we were able to bounce ideas off of each other and consult each other on various assignments. We were able to delegate tasks between each other to achieve an efficient and thorough work product while simultaneously being exposed to a higher volume of legal issues and a large variety of cases. I very much enjoyed experiencing the advantage of teamwork in this regard.

During my litigation-related internship, I had the privilege of assisting my supervising attorney in over 21 cases that mostly involved home foreclosure and bankruptcy. I became well-versed in the procedures and processes of Making Home Affordable’s Home Affordable Modification Program (HAMP), and I was able to assist clients in completing these applications in order to stop foreclosure and save their homes. In the bankruptcy cases, I helped the attorney by completing the necessary schedules to file for bankruptcy and learned much about that entire process as well. I regularly communicated with opposing counsel and adverse parties in many cases, and I gained confidence in advocating for our clients and their needs.

One of the most exciting parts of my internship with LSLA was when I attended court with Ms. Lockett on numerous occasions. I enjoyed being able to observe court proceedings and becoming more comfortable in such settings. It was also rewarding to watch Ms. Lockett present cases on which I worked and helped prepare. In particular, the feeling of winning a case (and knowing I had contributed to that) is one that is not easily matched.

My proudest moment of the summer came when I was given the task of appealing a case with the Harris County Appraisal District (HCAD). I was given very little instructions and less than one week to prepare for the formal hearing that would take place in front of HCAD's Appraisal Review Board (ARB). At the formal hearings, one must present one's case in front of a three-member panel of board members against an attorney representing HCAD. When presenting, the board only allots five minutes to each side in order to present their case. I thoroughly prepared for the hearing by creating something similar to a trial binder that included pictures of the home and surrounding neighborhood that I took myself, a Comparative Market Analysis from a licensed real estate agent, my own comparable properties that I pulled from HCAD's website, the HCAD standards for evaluating home condition and building materials, and other data that I had collected to help prove our client's case. I was delighted that upon my presentation, the attorney representing HCAD had very little to say and conceded to lower the value of the home to our requested amount without dispute—a rarity by popular consensus. The initial value of the home according to HCAD records had been nearly \$40,000; however, with my efforts, the ARB lowered the value of the home to \$18,000, resulting in a much lower tax burden for my disabled, elderly client. After this hearing, an attorney asked me to show him how I was able to obtain such a favorable decision and he asked to see my binder so that he could utilize similar strategies in his own cases. I was very pleased with the result of my appeal, and even more pleased to see our client benefit. It was a wonderful feeling indeed, and what I will fondly remember as my first legal success.

As I leave LSLA to return to law school for my second year, it is a bittersweet transition. The summer passed with an uncanny speed, yet I have learned and experienced so much it seems as though I was here for a far longer period of time. I am so grateful for the opportunity to have participated in the public interest forum (and to have received a stipend from the Litigation Section). My time at LSLA has only further fueled my passion for returning to this field and helping people (who would not otherwise be able to afford such legal representation) achieve justice and equality. Knowing that I helped Ms. Lockett save homes and change lives this summer is one of the most rewarding experiences of my life thus far, and I believe this summer was just the start to a hopefully very long road ahead that is devoted to helping people achieve justice.

### My TRLA Summer 2011 Experience

Working for Texas RioGrande Legal Aid this summer was an incredible experience. I asked to work on civil litigation this summer and was assigned to the Nixon litigation—a huge project with a dozen defendants and plaintiffs, over twenty claims, and four years of history in federal courts. The constitutional issues in the case were very interesting, but I think my favorite part was being able to work closely with the attorneys on such a complex project. My supervisor, Stephanie Welch, was always willing to listen to my questions and talk through the assignments with me. I very much appreciated that she openly discussed the case and litigation strategy with me; I learned heaps about substantive law and procedure.

Furthermore, focusing on one project allowed me to really understand the issues in this case. We spent most of the summer planning and preparing for discovery. I researched a range of topics from damages to pleadings to issues surrounding government immunity. I also sifted through thousands of documents to assess how strong our case was against each defendant and help build the merits of the case. All this preparation forced me to think about the different elements of the claims. I felt pretty attached to the case by the end of the summer and I plan to stay in touch with the attorneys. Hopefully, since I go to school in Austin, I will be able to attend some of hearings in San Antonio.

TRLA also encouraged all the clerks to explore different practice areas and gave us the freedom to leave the office and see the court system in action. Some of the highlights for me this summer were seeing: a civil docket in federal court, pretrial conferences for criminal cases in federal court, a complete jury trial in county court, and a deposition for a FMLA case.

As someone with no ties to South Texas, I really appreciated how welcoming and friendly everyone was at TRLA. The work atmosphere somehow managed to be professional, hectic, and dedicated, yet fun and relaxed at the same time. Everyone had an open door policy and would answer any questions the clerks had about issues with work or what to expect when we begin practicing law. The five clerks in the Weslaco office shared a table in the library. While cramped and a bit noisy, it turned out to be very fun, and I appreciated being able to see what everyone else was working on.

Throughout the summer, there seemed to be a never-ending string of happy hours, lunches, BBQs, and parties. The annual softball throw down between the Weslaco and

Edinburg TRLA offices was definitely a highlight, as was the after work t-shirt tie-dying party where we made our uniforms for the game. The people at TRLA were all amazing individuals and I am very glad I got to meet them this summer.

Finally, living in the Rio Grande Valley was not at all what I expected. I drove to South Texas on a Saturday, a week after finishing my first year of law schools finals. I had never been within three hundred miles of the Rio Grande Valley. When I told Austinites my plans for the summer, I either got blank stares, incredulous looks, or, if the person was from the valley, someone telling me I was crazy and should not go. The most striking feature of the valley was how everything blended together: Crop fields and pastures within a few hundred yards of newly developed strip malls and stores, housing complexes that looked like mansions a mile away from housing complexes that looked like trailers, a large Latino population surrounded by hundreds of American brand name stores, and in the heart of McAllen, a thriving arts, music, and bar scene.

TRLA encouraged us to explore all these areas of the valley. We took a tour of the colonias (low income housing areas in the valley). We drove past the more recently developed parts of the towns to the more rural areas. The Weslaco paralegals took us to see the border wall, Rio Grande River, and explained to us some of the history as well as modern day problems facing the area. We also had the opportunity to visit Willacy County, an area with a population so small the elected judge does not have to be a lawyer. We got to view the county court's first jury trial in a year, toured the county jail, and saw the old jail and gallows located on the top floor of the county courthouse.

Living in South Texas was something I never thought I would do, but I am so glad I did. Working on the Nixon project helped clarify for me that I am interested in litigation and would like to pursue a career as a litigator. This summer I got to meet wonderful people, and get hands on legal experience—I could not have asked for a better experience.