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# Community and Economic Development Clinic

## Community Lawyering and Social Change

By Katie Kersh

I never thought I would be able to earn credit for being part of a social movement. However, the Community and Economic Development Clinic (CEDC) does just that, by giving student attorneys the opportunity to help community organizations create change.

As a student attorney in CEDC my client, a workers' rights non-profit organization that provides job skills training to underemployed populations, was trying to open up a restaurant that would provide on-the-job training for its members. Our client's members faced many different challenges, including the inability to make a living wage in the restaurant industry, and the effect this had on promoting a cycle of poverty. It was important for me to understand the socioeconomic reality of the restaurant industry to understand why incorporating a living wage into the restaurant plan was so important to our client.

CEDC teaches students to be community lawyers, which requires an awareness of who and what really makes up an organization and the community it serves. It requires open conversations about race, socioeconomic level, gender, ethnicity, nationality and collaboration—conversations that can be rare in doctrinal classes.

One of the greatest moments for me in CEDC actually occurred after the clinic was over, when I went to a dinner at my former client's now-established restaurant. The staff was enthusiastic and hard-working, and the food was delicious! Most important, I knew that these restaurant workers were learning transferrable job skills while earning a living wage, and thus fulfilling my client's goals.

## Pediatric Advocacy Clinic

### Holistic Client Representation at the Pediatric Advocacy Clinic

By Kylee Sunderlin

Prior to entering law school I developed an interest in medical-legal partnerships, but it wasn't until I took the Pediatric Advocacy Clinic (PAC) last semester that I really understood the uniqueness and efficacy of this model.

Because medical-legal partnerships focus on the social determinants of health within vulnerable populations, the PAC provides holistic, client-centered representation to low-income families throughout Washtenaw County. Depending on the family's legal needs, students in the PAC may represent clients facing any number of issues—from family law to housing to education to public benefits—with the ultimate goal of resolving legal issues that have a detrimental effect on their health, stability, and well-being.

My experiences with the PAC's holistic approach to well-being also reaffirmed my understanding of the importance of alternatives to litigation. I had the honor of representing three clients last semester, only one of whom required traditional legal assistance.

In one case, I assisted a disabled mother with a newborn regarding a housing discrimination issue. After researching the Fair Housing Act, Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards, and statewide anti-discrimination measures, it was clear that the best and most desirable outcome for my clients was simply to find alternative housing. So while the facts of the case did not lend themselves to a successful housing discrimination claim, I was able to contact my client's local Habitat for Humanity office...
and assist her in filing an application for a new home that would accommodate her wheelchair.

In another case, I assisted a mother of several special needs children with a divorce. This client's story reinforced the ways in which the complexities of legal infrastructures inherently limit equal access to justice for marginalized communities. She had been a victim of intimate partner violence, her children had suffered at the hands of their father and had multiple learning disabilities, and she worked two jobs just to stay afloat. At first, I wondered why a divorce was so important to her since it seemed like she had more pressing needs, but after hearing my client's story, I understood that divorce was just as much a legal separation as it was a symbolic one. For her, divorce meant starting a new life with her children, a life free from the chains of her former husband and abuser, and she wept with joy the day she signed her divorce papers.

My experiences last semester highlighted the importance not just of succeeding in court, but of making a long-term difference in clients' lives as well. My work with the PAC was challenging, humbling, and deeply gratifying, and I look forward to continuing the kind of holistic, client-centered representation that PAC provides its clients in advanced clinic next semester.

**MICHIGAN INNOCENCE CLINIC**

**Practical Experience; Power Payoff**

By Christiana Schmitz and Daniel Signs

Interviewing a murderer, visiting an innocent man in prison, talking to a rape victim about her father's transgressions or to a boy who witnessed his mother's murder; these were standard parts of our experience at the Michigan Innocence Clinic. Every day, every "task" we had, every transcript we read, told an unbelievable story. But then we spoke with all of the main characters and investigated the bad guys, and connected with the hero of the story... that's when we realized how much this work actually means.

Of course, there was more to our year in the Michigan Innocence Clinic than helping people we really believed in avoid life in prison; it was not only a feel-good, work-for-what-you-believe-in-on-the-most-exciting-cases-you-can-imagine experience. Along the way we also racked up inordinate amounts of practical experience.

For example, we wrote briefs (in fact, we seemed always to be working on one) that were edited by our supervising attorneys. Because we incorporated their feedback, we learned things like where to focus the judge's attention, how to explain a complicated court rule, and which issues were most important. Then, we filed those briefs before Michigan state courts (Appellate and Supreme included) and, when the decisions addressing them were made, we interpreted and analyzed those decisions, brainstorming with supervising attorneys about a next move and how to make it.

These practical experiences were the foundation for the best part of the Michigan Innocence Clinic. This past June, the combined efforts of student attorneys of several years and supervising attorneys, David Moran and Bridget McCormack, once again culminated in a client's freedom. David Gavitt served 26 years for murder by arson of his wife and children, a murder that the Innocence Clinic eventually proved never happened when they unearthed evidence that the arson science behind the case was flawed and faulty. In fact, there was no evidence that the fire was intentional. After reviewing the evidence and expert testimony, even the prosecution agreed.

Clinic experience pays off when you can talk about how you have already filed motions and briefs, written closing arguments, formed a relationship with opposing counsel, and examined a witness before a judge. It pays off when you are writing your first brief outside of law school, and you're not scared because you've done this before. It pays off when you can go to court knowing you have already made the rookie mistakes. But imagine the payoff when your work helps save an innocent man from spending the rest of his life in prison—not just any innocent man, but one who you have come to believe in and respect. That's the payoff that most sets the Michigan Innocence Clinic apart.

**LOW INCOME TAXPAYER CLINIC**

**Using Tax Law to Help Clients and Find Inspiration**

By Anna Walker

I joined the Low Income Taxpayer Clinic (LITC) in my 2L Fall semester. Two months later, I tried my first case in Federal court. My client, a recently divorced mother of two, had just escaped an abusive relationship. But an outstanding tax obligation with her ex-husband threatened her family's safety. Many factors led to my client's tax liability, none of which was directly her fault. My client was dead, and a tax preparer had not understood her request to file separately from her then-husband. Now, however, she needed to sever this joint liability. She needed equitable relief, and I needed to tell the judge why. After taking testimony and presenting my client's case, the judge ruled in her favor!
For my client, this case freed her and her children from an unhealthy relationship. For me, the case was inspirational. My understanding of what it meant to be a lawyer had faded a little during 1L year. Somewhere between the definitions of a fee simple and a fee tail, I had started to doubt whether I was becoming the advocate that I had hoped to be. Come 2L year, I was reluctant to return to law school. Thankfully, my time with LITC eased my concerns. The clinic reminded me why I wanted to be an attorney. It let me be an advocate for others.

As my year with LITC continued, my responsibilities increased. My supervisor assigned me five to eight cases at a time. I opened, resolved, and closed each one. I led negotiations and disputed facts. I did transactional and litigation work. Many cases required only a couple phone calls with clients and the IRS. Others involved writing court briefs and letters to IRS counsel. For one case, I researched and wrote a memo that explained why a 1931 state statute that prohibits “lewd and lascivious” cohabitation between unmarried couples is unconstitutional. Local IRS counsel had cited this statute in arguments to block a client from claiming his “lewdly and lasciviously cohabitating” girlfriend as a dependent! Shortly after receiving our memorandum, however, the IRS dropped this claim. In addition to representing clients, I helped coordinate outreach campaigns for LITC and, ultimately, certified with the IRS as a low-income tax preparer.

I am grateful for the confidence and the opportunities that LITC gave me to pursue the type of legal career that I wanted. Now entering 3L year, I am excited to return to school, and I am thrilled about my career that lies ahead.

ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CLINIC

Learning to Be an Environmental Lawyer

By Emerson Hilton

I took the Environmental Law Clinic in my last semester at UMLS, and it served as a capstone for my environmental work in law school. I would certainly recommend the clinic to any student interested in environmental law, and at any stage of law school. By the time I took the clinic, my prior exposure to environmental law gave me a level of knowledge and confidence that, I think, improved my overall experience. I learned quite a bit of substantive law during the semester and I felt that my clinic experience was that of a real contributor to the overall process of shaping the National Wildlife Federation’s (NWF) direction, strategy, and approach to the cases I worked on. I now work at a small private firm that represents non-profits, local governments, and community groups in environmental cases—and so far I have put my clinic experience to work every day.

My experience in the clinic exposed me to two important facets of environmental practice. The first is that environmental law often involves a collaborative process with multiple stakeholders. Because the “client” in environmental law cases is fundamentally some aspect of the environment itself—Lake Erie, for example—environmental groups like NWF often approach a given case or issue by building or joining a coalition of other groups and interested parties. Another important aspect of practicing environmental law is the regular process of researching and analyzing certain issues to decide whether a claim can or should be made. Environmental advocates are constantly on the lookout for potential threats to natural resources and public health, and often have to spend a significant amount of time investigating the science, politics, and legal aspects of those issues in order to find a workable approach and strategy before bringing a case.

I spent a significant amount of my time in the clinic researching a particular issue involving invasive species in the Great Lakes. During the course of my research, which involved phone conversations with state officials and a visit to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality in Lansing, I had numerous one-on-one meetings with my supervisor, Neil Kagan, in the clinic. In those meetings, we discussed potential new directions and potential claims, and we spent quite a bit of time bouncing ideas and concerns off of one another. Ultimately, we concluded that pursuing this particular case was not in NWF’s—or the Great Lakes’—best interest at the time. Although that might initially sound like a disappointment, I found the process of researching and discussing possible claims and potential strategies for pursuing those claims to be very rewarding. An important skill for environmental lawyers, as for all lawyers, is discerning when a case is worth pursuing and when it is not. This is an important aspect of practicing environmental law, and the experience I gained in weighing the potential costs and benefits of a particular claim or strategy will serve me well in the future.

INTERNATIONAL TRANSACTIONS CLINIC

On the Road to Being a Transactional Attorney in an Interconnected World

By Nancy Zhao

When I was selected as a student clinician for the International Transactions Clinic (ITC), I was absolutely thrilled. I had entered law school already knowing that I wanted to do transactional work, but did not have many opportunities to pursue it during my 1L year. Through the ITC, I finally got the opportunity to work with clients on transactional matters and I was not disappointed.

Over the course of two semesters in the ITC, we transformed from law students with varying levels of business knowledge to student attorneys assisting clients from different parts of the world. In the fall semester, we underwent “boot camp” training, where we learned about financial basics and developed skills that would serve us as international transactional attorneys. Our boot camp sessions covered everything from covenants in debt and equity transactions to cross-cultural considerations...
and attorney-client relationships with cross-border clients. As we learned about various financial and legal aspects of international transactions, we were assigned to work with clients under the guidance of supervising ITC attorneys.

My first client was a non-profit corporation that made loans to clean energy entrepreneurs all over the world. Some of the loans had defaulted and our client asked that we analyze the loan agreements to determine what constituted events of default and what the enforceability provisions were. As my clinic partner and I navigated through loan agreements with borrowers from Uganda, Ghana, and South Africa, I was humbled to learn that our analysis of the loan agreements would directly help our client determine their next steps for dealing with the defaulted loans.

With the collaboration of the ITC and Center for Entrepreneurship, I helped a group of student entrepreneurs from the University of Michigan form a legal entity to market and sell in India a diagnostic medical device that they invented.

Through the ITC, I learned what it was like to be a real attorney with actual deadlines. One of my clients, a nonprofit social investment fund, was in the process of creating a for-profit subsidiary and needed an immediate analysis of potential issues stemming from the loan agreements with their current investors. After conducting an in-depth analysis of the loan agreements, we promptly delivered our analysis to the client, earning praise from a very appreciative client who commented that the ITC was worth its weight in gold. The ITC has taught me what it will be like to be an actual transactional attorney. It has been an incredible experience that will truly allow me to transition smoothly from being a law student to a transactional attorney in the real world.

CHILD ADVOCACY LAW CLINIC

Learning to Litigate and Reflect in CALC

By Joe Reiter

My work in the Child Advocacy Law Clinic (CALC) was the most rewarding, challenging, and fun experience I have had in law school. CALC provides a unique opportunity to counsel real clients and advocate on their behalf with respect to some of life’s most interesting and controversial issues. My clinic partner and I were wholly responsible for three cases involving seven clients. We represented both children and parents in the child welfare system and handled diverse issues that ranged from advocating for the termination of parental rights and the placement of children in foster homes to working with our client and the state of Michigan to develop a successful substance abuse rehabilitation program and to provide additional educational opportunities and support for our clients.

The skills and lessons I learned in CALC will benefit me throughout my legal career. I learned how to manage all aspects of a case from beginning to end and to prioritize my time accordingly. The type of cases that CALC handles require significant client interaction and provide the opportunity to develop fundamental skills like client interviewing, counseling, and relationship building. I frequently visited and interviewed my clients at their homes, at state offices, and even in jail. I became deeply involved in my clients’ lives and worked with them to identify and achieve their goals.

The most exciting aspect of CALC is the frequency with which we appear in court. I learned how to develop a case theory and make arguments that would sway a judge to rule in my clients’ favor. I handled multiple hearings and argued several motions over the course of the semester. The arguments I made had the power to change a client’s life.

Ultimately, the most important skill that CALC teaches is self-reflection. CALC students are given shocking amounts of responsibility and control over their cases. My supervisors asked pointed questions and provided advice when necessary. However, the issues were for me to resolve and the decisions were always mine to make. I developed as an attorney by analyzing my successes and mistakes. In doing so, I learned about myself, explored my strengths and weaknesses as a lawyer, and identified the type of legal work that I enjoy most.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP CLINIC

Creativity and Inspiration in the Entrepreneurship Clinic

By Andrew Kurland

One clear outcome of the uncertain economic landscape is that students, no longer able to rely on large corporations to land their first job, are increasingly turning to themselves for economic opportunity. In Ann Arbor especially, there is a burgeoning entrepreneurial spirit, where creativity and action trumps comfort and security. And it makes sense. The University of Michigan - home to top ranked Business, Engineering, Medical schools, and more - is a natural hub for entrepreneurship. And with Michigan Law's Entrepreneurship Clinic now in the neighborhood, students are more equipped now than ever to pursue their dreams.

I came to the University of Michigan Law School with a background in the performing arts. In fact, in my year before I started my 1L year, I had performed with the Washington National Opera, performed in a local production of RENT as "Roger," and recorded a studio pop album. Needless to say, it was not an easy transition to traditional law school classes, and as a result, the big firm jobs were not in the cards.

With that door closed, I had to ask myself the hard questions to discover what I really cared about and what value I thought I could offer the legal community. With my roots in creativity, I was excited to learn about
the new Entrepreneurship Clinic being offered at the law school. There, I was able to meet and represent individuals who were not worried about landing a big corporate job, but were instead interested in self-actualization through creativity—just like myself. For instance, the founders of my two clients worked at, or had been offered, well-paying jobs at large corporations (i.e. GM, Yahoo!, and Intel), but would eventually turn down those opportunities to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams. Every interaction with my clients left me feeling inspired and reassured that my heart was in the right place.

Different from your typical law school course, the Entrepreneurship Clinic facilitates student immersion into the front lines of the entrepreneurial community, not only within Ann Arbor and Detroit, but also throughout the country—bringing in highly respected attorneys and venture capitalists from Silicon Valley and Boulder to speak to Clinic participants.

The Entrepreneurship Clinic is also not about one’s ability to defend their own ego amongst 100 terrified classmates. Rather it entrusts students to advocate for someone else who has their own dreams and desires. And students (with the guidance of careful advisors) will gain exceptional experience advising student entrepreneurs on the most critical early stage decisions, such as entity selection, capital structure, and matters relating to employment and intellectual property. Students interested in such things will also have an opportunity to build some of the most positive relationships the law school experience can offer.

The realization that I wanted to spend my career representing creative individuals and organizations led me to the Entrepreneurship Clinic and beyond even, as I landed a summer associate position at a New York City firm for which I otherwise had no business being considered. Once there, I took the initiative to help develop the firm’s Broadway business—a task that no summer associate had ever done or thought about doing. And as the firm supported my interests, it became ever more apparent to me that it was my time around risk-taking individuals at the Entrepreneurship Clinic that both taught me how to see opportunity and inspired me to take action. I am excited to bring these experiences back to the Entrepreneurship Clinic and greater law school community in my third and final year at Michigan Law.

MICHIGAN CLINICAL LAW PROGRAM

Joy and Relief in the General Clinic

By Joseph Regalia and Julie Milligan

“Mr. B” was days away from being deported to the Philippines when he first became a General Clinic client in 2002. Ten years later—after endless immigration hearings and appeals, two habeas actions, and three trips to the Sixth Circuit—he won a waiver of deportation. But when we were assigned to his case in 2012, he still remained at risk of deportation due to his mental and emotional issues: all it would take would be one more run-in with the law, and there would be nothing we could do to avert his removal.

Our task was to help Mr. B. get U.S. citizenship. But several obstacles stood in the way. In order to become a naturalized citizen, he had to pass a test on American history and government. How can a mentally challenged person (for whom English is a second language) learn the answers to 100 arcane civics questions? How can a “Nervous Nelly” like Mr. B answer any ten questions correctly?

For six months, clinic students met with Mr. B weekly, giving him creative homework assignments and drilling him with flashcards. (We all became civics experts.) On the day of the test, Mr. B’s anxiety was overwhelming. He missed the first question, and we thought he was doomed. But he quickly rallied, answering all of the remaining questions correctly.

For several months after Mr. B’s test and citizenship interview, we heard nothing back. Most applicants get approved right after their interview. We presumed that the delay was due to Mr. B’s status as a registered sex offender. The incident leading to his registration had occurred more than 10 years ago, and it was for a minor crime that was much more the result of his social awkwardness than any criminal intent. We went to circuit court and were able to get Mr. B removed from the registry. But still there was no word from the USCIS.

We finally (1) drafted a brief to file in federal district court asking the Court to order USCIS to make a decision, (2) notified USCIS that we would file the brief, (3) contacted a USCIS lawyer who had been helpful in other cases, and (4) filed a formal administrative request for a decision. A few days later we got unexpected news: Mr. B had been approved! We hung up the phone and immediately called him. The conversation that followed—telling someone who had lived half his life in fear of deportation that he could never be deported—was one of the best experiences we have ever had.

Attending the oath ceremony several weeks later was the highlight of the semester. We were the only people there to support our client. The oath ceremony represented the culmination of thousands of hours worked by more than 50 clinic students, faculty, and staff. It was also the result of Mr. B’s (and the clinic’s) refusal to let obstacles stand in the way. Mr. B was a polite, grateful, and hardworking man, and it was incredibly rewarding to see him so happy on this day.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING CLINIC

Advocacy and Unity at the Human Trafficking Clinic

By Matt Boucher and Katie Poulos

Direct and constant client interaction, a positive team-oriented atmosphere, and a fast-paced culture makes the Human Trafficking Clinic a wonderfully unique experience. From the very first day, student attorneys learn that the Human Trafficking Clinic is neither a litigation nor a transactional clinic: it’s an advocacy clinic. Student attorneys are expected
— from the moment they begin — to provide whatever type of assistance their clients might need. Over the course of our time with the Human Trafficking Clinic, we’ve done everything from securing T visas to teaching a client how to parallel park. We’ve negotiated with foreign diplomats and U.S. district attorneys, navigated college admissions and financial aid systems, and helped clients secure state identification cards. No matter what hat we are asked to wear, working with the Human Trafficking Clinic has provided us with the chance to make a real and meaningful impact in people’s lives.

The Clinic’s structure provides student attorneys with a real-life legal experience. After years of sitting in classrooms and talking about helping others, the Human Trafficking Clinic provides the opportunity to actually apply those skills on a daily basis. This type of responsibility creates a learn-by-doing environment, and the Clinic’s supervising attorneys are great at fostering this role. Student attorneys are in constant contact with their clients, often acting as the client’s sole representation in various dealings. Navigating through webs of complicated immigration procedures, social service providers, K-12 and higher education administrators, and government agencies together creates a strong bond between student attorneys and clients over the course of the semester and in the clinic as a whole. This bond, in turn, translates to everything the Clinic does; a setback for one student attorney is a challenge embraced by the entirety of the Human Trafficking Clinic, while a victory for one client is a success shared by all. Our experience at the Clinic has been unparalleled, and has been by far the most rewarding, creative, and practical part of our law school careers.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CLINIC

Answering the Question: “How Do I Get From Point X to Point Y?”

By John Lister

After spending my 1L summer in a law firm I realized that my first year of courses hadn’t quite prepared me for what was required. The attorneys I worked for didn’t ask me about hypotheticals. They simply gave me a portion of a problem that a client brought to them and said, “they are at point X, but want to get to point Y, how do they get there?”

This is where the Community and Economic Development Clinic (CEDC) came in for me. I was given the opportunity to answer that question countless times over the course of my semester in the CEDC. I helped clients settle employment issues, make corporate governance decisions, and choose an entity structure. I helped them move from point X to point Y, and to do so in the way that best suited their specific needs. I spent my time serving actual clients rather than answering hypotheticals. I worked on being able to answer questions in areas of law that I had no experience in with the thoughtful supervision of an expert in the field. It also gave me opportunities to counsel clients and have ownership over their issues — opportunities that I may not have for years in my own career, but that I now feel prepared for.

Working in the CEDC allowed me to develop as a student, an attorney, and as a person. It gave me confidence in my own legal ability and helped me to develop my own process for answering questions that I hadn’t been prepared for.

MEDIATION CLINIC

Surprises and Satisfaction in the Mediation Clinic

By Chris Baldwin

I have spent two semesters in the Mediation Clinic and it has been an excellent experience. The Mediation Clinic allows students to be very hands-on with actual work quite early in the semester. After the mediation training and one or two sessions being partnered with a more experienced mediator, students get their own cases to handle. This allows a great amount of freedom in figuring out what kind of mediator you want to be and what styles actually fit the best for each personality. No lecture style class can help you truly understand what it is like to be in the room with two separate parties trying to reach a resolution after weeks, months, or more of conflict and feud between them.

The variety of cases that students are exposed to in the Mediation Clinic is also extremely beneficial, especially for those who might not know exactly what kind of law they want to practice. While the cases are primarily civil cases, they vary from small claims cases involving landlord-tenant disputes to litigation about where hundreds of thousands of dollars should be distributed following a death in a family. To be frank, you never know what is going to happen. I have dealt with people yelling at each other, yelling at me, and even taking the time to explain the conspiracy theory behind the entire court system. However, my favorite case involved a taxi company being listed as one of the parties. While I accurately guessed it would be a case regarding an unsatisfied customer, there was no way in the world I would have predicted that five minutes into the mediation I would be six inches from a pair of taxi medics staring me in the eye with their owner grabbing my hand requesting that I pet them to feel how “lifelike the one was.” This was one point in the semester I was very glad one of the skills the Mediation Clinic focuses on is quick thinking.

While all clinics will provide the opportunity to use the law in practical ways, the Mediation Clinic goes one step further by handing over control of
JUVENILE JUSTICE CLINIC

Building Trust--The Key to Practicing Law

By Jessica Taub

It is called the practice of law for a reason. Being an attorney requires practice and, while law school can teach many of the analytical skills that a lawyer needs, it is not until you start applying those skills to real-world cases that you start practicing law. A critical aspect of practicing law involves the development and maintenance of a trusting and open relationship between an attorney and his or her client. Without that trust, there can be no effective attorney-client communication. And without that communication, the attorney has no real chance of effectively advocating for the client. The skills needed to build trust with a client cannot be readily taught in a classroom. Fortunately, the Juvenile Justice Clinic (JJC) picks up where the classroom leaves off and gives students the opportunity not only to apply their analytical skills in the real-world, but also, and most importantly, to start learning how to build that critical trusting relationship with clients.

My first interaction with a JJC client occurred just three days after the beginning of the fall semester. Because we had a status hearing scheduled for the following Monday, there was no time to meet my client (a 14-year-old boy) face-to-face, so I first spoke to him over the phone. It did not go well. Instead of trying to build a rapport with this young man, I jumped straight into the legal details of what was going to happen at the status hearing, what the potential outcomes were, and the consequences associated with those outcomes. While everything I was conveying to him was legally accurate, I behaved like a law student taking an issue-spotter exam. My failure to gain the client’s trust was confirmed when he hung up on me.

Thankfully, over the course of the semester, my clinic partner and I were able to build a more solid relationship with this client. I attribute that partly to our repeated interactions with him, but mostly to the clinic simulations where we learned how to both obtain information from, and impart information to, a client. In short, we learned how to interact with a client, not just as a lawyer, but also as another person—which makes the lawyer part that much easier and more effective.

I came into the JJC with the goal of gaining litigation experience, but came out with so much more. Winning a case is rewarding, but it is far more gratifying to have that break-through with a client when he or she starts opening up to you and placing his or her trust in your hands. My experience in the JJC showed me that the practice of law is not just about legal doctrine but it is a profession that places people at the center of it. The ability to connect with my clients will help me with whatever type of law I may practice in the future.

Trust me, once you’ve learned how to get through to a 14-year-old boy, you’re well on your way to communicating with anyone!

MICHIGAN CLINICAL LAW PROGRAM

The General Clinic’s Guide to Real-Life Lawyering

By Anne Cunningham

I knew I wanted to participate in a clinic during my time at Michigan Law and I decided to apply to the General Clinic for my final term. Participating in that clinic was far and away the most practical and rewarding experience that I had at Michigan.

The General Clinic was a wonderful learning tool for three reasons:

First, the professors. Each of them is incredibly knowledgeable about the law, as well as genuinely passionate for providing a top-notch learning experience to students. Second, the in-class exercises. Each week we simulated various parts of a trial, culminating in a criminal mock trial. I couldn’t have asked for a better way to learn the basics of trial practice and to overcome my fear of public speaking. Finally, the diversity of cases.

During the semester, my partner and I worked on a landlord/tenant housing discrimination case, a criminal case, and an asylum case. Each provided different learning opportunities, however, the asylum case was the most rewarding. Our clients, a mother and son from Mexico, were political activists for women in their community who were regularly kidnapped, raped, mutilated, and left for dead in the desert. Our clients spoke out against the perpetrators of this violence as well as the local government for its complicity in it. As a result, they repeatedly received death threats and finally fled to the United States after a close relative was murdered.

Over the course of the semester, I became personally invested in those clients, and I cannot remember a greater feeling than when I learned that their application for political asylum had been approved. That experience undoubtedly motivated my current career path. I now work for a non-profit in Washington, D.C. that advocates for Latina survivors of domestic violence. I am so grateful to have spent a semester in the General Clinic. Not only was the work incredibly rewarding, but it prepared me better than any law class for real-life legal practice.
IN THE NEWS!!!

“The judge will be required to consider not only the chronological age, but all the things that go along with that age, impulsivity, the influence of others, all the things the court spoke of.”

—Prof. Kimberly Thomas, in MLive.com, on petitioning to resentence juvenile lifers after a U.S. Supreme Court decision struck down life imprisonment without the possibility of parole for juveniles.

“The clinic will give law students a great opportunity to connect with business, engineering or other students and begin to make those connections with future clients or colleagues and to do it while you're in school and everybody's kind of in that learning stage is a great opportunity for them.”

—Prof. Dana Thompson, in a Michigan Radio story about the new Entrepreneurship Clinic.

“We know what to do with criminals at 2 a.m. on a Friday night if we pick them up for selling sex. We have places to put them.... But what do you do at 2 a.m. if they are not a criminal? Where do you house them? How do you keep them safe? This is not easy stuff.”

—Prof. Bridgette Carr, in a New York Times story on applying sex trafficking laws to organized prostitution.

“We connect with the patient families through their health care providers, where they get physical, emotional, psychological—and, now, legal-assistance.”

—Prof. Anne Schroth, discussing the Pediatric Advocacy Clinic, in an Oakland County Legal News profile.

“The foster care system exists to protect children from being abused by their parents. Yet, every day, children are separated from their families and placed in the system for no better reason than their parents' low income.”

—Prof. Vivek Sankaran, in a Detroit Free Press op-ed.

“There was no fraud in the commutation process,” Reingold said. “No one has alleged any misstatement or misrepresentation in the petition, in the supporting documents or in the public hearing. The allotted time for the prosecution's and the family's objections to be heard was long past, and there is no claim that any of the statutory procedures were not properly followed.”

—Prof. Paul Reingold, after MCLP took on the case of a Michigan prisoner whose sentence commutation was rescinded shortly after being issued by then-Governor Jennifer Granholm, in the Detroit Free Press.

“[David Lee] Gavitt, from Ionia, was convicted in 1986 of first-degree felony murder for the deaths of his wife and two young daughters in a house fire. He was sentenced to life in prison. His conviction was overturned and he was released [June 6, 2012] after spending 26 years in prison. His first stop, the grave sites of his wife and daughters. 'It was a very emotional scene,' said David Moran, a law professor and co-founder of the Innocence Clinic at the University of Michigan Law School, which fought for the release of 54-year-old David Lee Gavitt.”

—Prof. David Moran in a Michigan Radio story about the release of David Gavitt, a client of the Michigan Innocence Clinic.

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