

5-21-2014

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Members of Class of 2013, 2014 Land EJW Fellowships

2014 NEWS ARCHIVE

05/21/14

Newton, MA—BC Law members of the Class of 2013 and 2014 have landed Equal Justice Works (EJW) Fellowships in the same year, and both point to their experience in BC Law’s Juvenile Rights Advocacy Project (JRAP) and their mentoring relationships with Professor Francine Sherman as key reasons for their placements.

Teresita Ramos ’14 will be representing Special Education students in Lawrence, Massachusetts, providing legal services to low-income, immigrant Hispanic children with disabilities to address widespread denial of education rights, and empower parents to enforce their rights through culturally competent advocacy training. “Ever since the JRAP Clinic my second year, Fran has been a mentor to me, Ramos says. “During my clinic experience, Fran Sherman and Becky Vose were great in helping me understand my strengths as a lawyer, and how to improve upon my weaknesses. They also helped me understand the best lawyer in public service is the one that works within her community and has buy-in within that community.”

During the summer immediately following her JRAP experience, Ramos landed an internship at the Disability Law Center (DLC). Ramos told the DLC’s Executive Director, Chris Griffin (BC Law ’93), of her desire of helping Hispanic communities with children with special needs across Massachusetts, especially the lowest performing school districts—a conversation that would ultimately lead her to the EJW Fellowship Program. “Once I came back to campus in the fall, Fran was one of my biggest supporters. She provided feedback on my application [to EJW], wrote a letter of recommendation, and helped prepare me for my interviews....my EJW Fellowship illustrates the importance of Fran’s Juvenile Rights Clinic and the amazing work she does preparing us for careers in juvenile rights.”

Paul Easton ’13 will develop a medical-legal partnership with the Massachusetts General Hospital–Chelsea Healthcare Center to provide educational advocacy to children who are at risk for school exclusion or face barriers to educational access in Lynn, Massachusetts. “From my first days in law school, Fran Sherman played an essential role in helping to lay the foundation for my fellowship project,” he says. “When I stopped by her office early during my first year to discuss ways that I might get involved in pro bono opportunities involving children’s rights, she immediately connected me with Barbara Kaban (BC Law ’98), then the Deputy Director of the Children’s Law Center of Massachusetts. I met with Barbara a week later and she offered me a summer internship position at CLCM based largely on Fran’s recommendation.”

The relationships Easton developed that first summer made CLCM a natural choice when he began to think about sponsoring organizations for his project. “During my second year in JRAP and throughout the remainder of law school, Fran’s mentorship helped me learn how to be an effective advocate for court-involved youth facing educational obstacles,” he says. “No matter how many projects and deadlines she was juggling, she always kept her door open to discuss my successes and failures in the clinic and my thoughts regarding my future career. She also introduced me to many of the local agencies and individuals who will be key to the success of my project over the next two years. As I went through several iterations of my project proposal, Fran served as an incredible sounding board and cheerleader. I know that her

suggestions and letter of recommendation played a key role in convincing my project funders to believe that I could make the project a success for the children in Chelsea.

About the Juvenile Rights Advocacy Project

In BC Law's Juvenile Rights Advocacy Project, students represent, as Attorney or Guardian-ad-Litem, youth involved in the justice system on legal issues related to their dependency, status offense, delinquency, or special education cases. Case representation may include special education advocacy, school disciplinary proceedings, administrative advocacy with the state Departments of Youth Services and Children and Families, and Juvenile Court advocacy in status offense cases. In addition, students may represent youth committed to the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services through the post-disposition phase of their cases. Students have the opportunity to work on cases in-house at JRAP or to be placed in a community law setting addressing these issues.

Cases are in Suffolk and Middlesex counties (including Boston, Cambridge and Lowell). Students meet weekly as a group to discuss cases, learn relevant Massachusetts law, and develop skills needed to represent teens.

About Equal Justice Works

Each year the Equal Justice Works fellowship competition selects qualified and passionate lawyers who have developed new and innovative legal projects that can impact lives and serve communities in desperate need of legal assistance.

Depending on funding, EJW is able to provide between 45-55 two-year fellowships annually. Fellows receive a competitive salary, generous loan repayment assistance, connections to their prominent sponsors, participation in trainings, and additional support during their two-year tenure.