

9-1-2008

Pro Bono Collaborative E-Newsletter (No. 1) (September 2008)

Roger Williams University School of Law

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Recommended Citation

Roger Williams University School of Law, "Pro Bono Collaborative E-Newsletter (No. 1) (September 2008)" (2008). *Pro Bono Collaborative Newsletter*. Paper 5.

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Welcome to the initial issue of the Pro Bono Collaborative newsletter highlighting one of the many important and innovative public service initiatives of RWU Law.

-Dean David A. Logan,
Dean School of Law and Professor of Law

Dear Friend of the PBC:

Welcome to our first Pro Bono Collaborative e-newsletter. Each issue of the PBC e-newsletter will include:

- news,
- project updates,
- projects needing pro bono attorneys,
- PBC statistics,
- relevant articles re: pro bono, and
- a variety of other interesting tidbits.

In addition to launching our first e-newsletter, we have had a very busy summer hiring a Project Coordinator, welcoming the law firm of Taylor Duane Barton & Gilman and developing three new pro bono projects. These new developments are outlined in greater detail in this issue of the PBC e-newsletter.

We look forward to keeping you updated on the great work of the PBC through our e-newsletter throughout the year. Thank you for your continued support of the PBC.

Sincerely,

Eliza Vorenberg, J.D.
Director, Pro Bono Collaborative

Suzanne Harrington-Steppen, J.D.
Project Coordinator, Pro Bono Collaborative



News

The PBC Adds a Project Coordinator, Suzanne Harrington-Steppen, Esq.

In June, Suzanne Harrington-Steppen, J.D., joined the Pro Bono Collaborative staff as our Project Coordinator. Suzanne will be assisting Eliza Vorenberg with project development and coordination, among other things.

Suzanne, aka Suzy, received her BA from Boston College in 1999 and her J.D. from City University of New York School of Law in 2005. After graduating from law school Suzy clerked for the Honorable Kevin Nathaniel Fox, United States District Court, SDNY for two years. Prior to law school, Suzanne worked as a policy analyst for the California Food Policy Advocates and as a community organizer for the Los Angeles Coalition to End Hunger and Homelessness. She is admitted to practice in Rhode Island and New York.

Taylor Duane Barton & Gilman LLP joins the PBC

In May, the law firm of Taylor Duane Barton & Gilman LLP joined the PBC and took on the new Guardianship Project in partnership with the RI Medical Legal Partnership for Children and two RWU Law Student.

Joseph Whelan, Esq., of Hinckley Allen Snyder, LLP Donates to the PBC

In May, the PBC received its first individual donation. Attorney Joseph Whelan of Hinckley Allen Snyder, LLP, who is also an adjunct professor at RWU School of Law, made a generous gift to support the work of the PBC. Thank you Joe!



Joseph Whelan, Esq., speaking at our October PBC event

Efforts to solicit additional individual donations are underway. Please consider making one today. Checks can be made out to the RWU School of Law and sent to the PBC at the address below. Thank you!

Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge makes a contribution to the PBC

In August, the PBC received a generous donation from the law firm of Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge. We are grateful to the firm for its participation in the PBC and its financial support.

New PBC Projects

In June, the PBC launched three new projects:

Guardianship Project

The firm of **Taylor Duane Barton & Gilman, LLP** is working with the RI Medical Legal Partnership for Children and RWU law students to provide legal services to parents petitioning the court to become the legal guardians of their severely and profoundly disabled children, who are about to turn 18 years of age. RWU School of Law Alum Matt Plain, Esq. was instrumental in the firm's decision to join the PBC. Thank you Matt!

Asylum Project

Hinckley Allen Snyder LLP is working with the International Institute and RWU law students to obtain political asylum for RI immigrants.

Dream Center Project

Hinckley Allen Snyder LLP is helping a local church-based group establish an organization to serve the daytime needs of Providence's homeless population.

Ongoing PBC Projects

Adler Pollock & Sheehan P.C. is working with Rhode Island Legal Services, Inc. to help make the R.I. tax code consistent with the federal tax code, thereby providing relief to the poor and elderly. In addition, the firm is doing the legal work necessary to establish the Ecuadorian Association of RI and the Friends of the RI Commission on Women as 501(c)(3) organizations. Professor Anthony Santoro is the project's faculty advisor.

Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge LLP is providing rights education and direct legal assistance to low-income urban parents served by Children's Friend & Service R.I.

Hinckley Allen Snyder LLP is working on three ongoing PBC projects: incorporating the Mariposa Center as a non-profit organization and providing ongoing legal support; providing rights education and direct representation to clients of the Women's Center of Rhode Island with advise from RWU Law Professor Emily Sack; and providing rights education to the Institute for the Study & Practice of Nonviolence with advise from RWU Law Professor Andrew Horwitz.

Motley Rice LLC has been working with students and the George Wiley Center staff to research, draft, and advocate for utility shut-off legislation. Professor Carl Bogus is the project's faculty advisor.

Partridge Snow & Hahn LLP is providing rights education and direct legal assistance to parents of at-risk children with special education needs, through Casey Family Services and Meeting Street School.

Get Involved: Projects Needing Pro Bono Attorneys

1. Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Project

This project would partner the International Institute with a law firm and RWU law students in assisting undocumented immigrant survivors of domestic violence in their petitions to get legal residency.

The law involved is relatively straightforward and the Institute has had a good success rate. These matters would involve the collection of evidence and the drafting of affidavits. RWU law students could assist with evidence gathering and affidavit preparation.

Carl Krueger, an attorney at the Institute, will provide training for this project and make referrals.

2. Writ of Mandamus Project

This project would partner the International Institute with a law firm and RWU law students in bringing a writ of mandamus opposing the current USCIS practice of farming out citizenship applications to private firms for "name checks" during the adjudication of these applications.

3. Expungement Project

This project would partner The Family Life Center with a law firm and RWU law students in assisting the Center's clients in efforts to have their criminal records expunged. The Family Life Center would screen out the clients who don't meet the eligibility criteria and would remain involved with the client pending the expungement matter. The Center estimates two to four cases per month.

4. Street Sights Project

This project would partner The RI Coalition for the Homeless with a law firm to draft a column for the *Street Sights* newspaper responding to homeless Rhode Islanders' questions concerning the law. *Street Sights* "serves as a forum for advocates, homeless individuals, students, state officials, and the general public to share accurate and honest information about issues relating to homelessness."

If any of these projects interest you or your law firm, please contact Suzanne Harrington-Steppen at 401.254.4559.

PBC Statistics:

As of 8/15/08

Projects: 15

Law Firms: 8

RI Attorneys engaged in PBC work: 33

RWU Law Students: 36

Community Based Organizations: 17



At right: EAPD attorney and RWU law student present a legal rights workshop at CFSRI.



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