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Veronica Paricio

Roger Williams University School of Law

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Veronica Paricio's Post

What We Did Last Summer...

Posted by Veronica Paricio on 09/08/2015 at 10:06 AM

At Roger Williams University School of Law, we have a vigorous public interest program. This summer, 27 students were awarded summer stipends to enable them to work in unpaid public interest jobs, literally all over the world. What follows are some of the observations they shared from the field ...



MARC PERLMAN

Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, Boston, MA

"I am working at the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) this summer as an investigator for the Housing Unit. I investigate housing discrimination claims and draft dispositions. In these dispositions, I come to a final determination as to whether I believe there is probable cause or a lack of probable cause for discrimination. On a daily basis, I communicate with complainants, respondents, and their attorneys. I request documents and information from the parties so I can fully complete my investigation. I am thoroughly enjoying my experience at MCAD. It has been a very rewarding experience. I have the pleasure of working with dedicated men and women who seek to end discrimination. I have met a lot of other nice interns from all over the country. I have also been able to apply the knowledge and skills that I learned in my 1L year to this internship. I read and analyze numerous documents and identify the pertinent legal claims being made. I examine the strengths and weaknesses of claims and look for areas where I as an investigator need to garner more information. I cannot wait to share my experience with my classmates in the fall."



CAMERON MILLER

Rhode Island Center for Justice, Providence, RI

"I am enjoying my summer at Rhode Island Center for Justice. I have been working hard on the Center's Lifeline Project, which focuses on increasing justice to low-income Rhode Islanders who have fallen behind on their utilities bills. For many of the Center's clients, who suffer from serious illnesses and/or disabilities, this can literally mean the difference between life and death. I assist the Center by screening individuals facing utility termination and advocate for the restoration of services. I also support in gathering information for staff attorneys to use during representation of clients at the Public Utility Division's informal and formal reviews."



BRETT BEAUBIEN

Navy JAG Corps, Sigonella, Sicily

"This is my fourth week working in the Navy JAG office out here and it is everything I hoped it would be! I've learned to draft wills, assisted a service member working through a landlord/tenant dispute, helped a sailor solve a child custody issue, and most notably, I've even had an opportunity to give a Command briefing and recommendation as to whether a case should be brought to Court-Martial.

"I'm having a great summer living like a Sicilian, I'm learning a ton about military life and its challenges, and most importantly, I feel like I'm making a difference."



NICOLE LaCICERO

Catholic Social Services, Immigration Law Education and Advocacy Project, Fall River, MA

"I have been learning a lot about immigration law, particularly asylum. I am assisting the legal director with two asylum claims, which includes meeting and talking with clients (I met with one client to review and revise his declaration), writing memorandums of law for both, and researching issues, such as the status of illegitimate children in Latin American countries in the hopes of establishing a new particular social group. I have also assisted in writing letters, follow-up calls to clients regarding green cards and work permit cards, and filling out the proper immigration forms for clients."



ALISON HOFFMAN

NOAA General Counsel's Office, Silver Spring, MD

"So far this summer has been amazing! Working at NOAA's Office of General Counsel for the Ocean and Coasts section has been extremely interesting and rewarding so far. I have been able to work on a variety of projects including: Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act violation appeals, Marine Sanctuary permit appeals, and two ongoing litigations involving Administrative Procedure Act compliance. Additionally, I have researched several topics such as agency guidance, international vessel compliance, and sovereign immunity. This opportunity has been particularly fascinating because it has exposed me to the intricate and often complicated world of ocean and coastal management and has given me a greater understanding of what my future in this field holds."



ZACHARY LYONS

Rhode Island Legal Services, Providence, RI

"Rhode Island Legal Services provides legal aid to low-income individuals with civil legal problems. At RI Legal Services I work in the Responsible Parenting Project, which represents clients who are facing incarceration as a result of their failure to pay child support. Although at first glance, this project seems to help the deadbeat dads, the truth is that many parents would like to keep up with their child support payments, but because of economic or health issues, find themselves unable to do so. While working in this unit, I was in court almost every day and was able to observe the high paced world of child support proceedings. I also performed client interviews and intakes, reviewed judicial orders, and assisted the lawyers in their work. Importantly, I learned about advocating for clients regardless of their situation. Some clients truly wanted to pay child support, but could not, while others simply refused to, but as clients, they deserved the same quality of legal advocacy. I also learned about how to interact in the courtroom with different judges, clients, sheriffs, clerks, and opposing parties and counsel. My experience with RI Legal Services was incredibly valuable in that it I was not only able to observe the day to day work in the courthouse, but I also saw the power and importance of providing effective legal service for indigent clients who were often in difficult situations. I am very grateful for the opportunity I had with RI Legal Services."



CASANDRA FOLEY *Legal Aid Society, Rochester, NY* I have been doing a lot of research for people in the office and observing court. I had the opportunity last week to represent two clients in court, pursuant to

a practice order under the supervision of my supervising attorney, who were seeking order of protections. I was able to settle both cases with the help of my supervising attorney!"



KYLA M. PECCHIA

Rhode Island House Policy Office, Rhode Island Statehouse, Providence, RI

"While working in House Policy, I have had the valuable opportunity to work on issues that are of critical importance to Rhode Islanders, such as the Affordable Care Act, Intellectual and Developmental Disability implementation and Medicare. Through this top-down approach to the legal process, I have learned what is working for Rhode Island, what may not be working, and how our legislators work to grow and change our state so as to benefit all Rhode Islanders. To say that I have merely enjoyed my time in the state's capitol is an understatement. Each day I leave work inspired and emboldened towards the future, and using my law degree to incite more positive change for the state of Rhode Island."



CLARE HARMON

Rhode Island Office of the Court Appointed Special Advocate, Warwick, RI

"This summer I am interning for the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). CASA is a program that serves to advocate for children who had been abused and/or neglected, and who, through no fault of their own, found themselves involved with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) and the Family Court. In the past couple of weeks I have assisted my supervising attorney, Jennifer Kelly, in a

variety of tasks to help further CASA's mission. Some of these tasks include visiting with the children, attending meetings to discuss the child's progress, and develop and implement their case plans with the child's clinicians, DCYF social workers, and educational advocates. I have researched and assisted with writing and filing of court motions. I also manage several of my own cases. One of my favorite activities is to observe court. I attend family court every Thursday. Justice Sandra Lanni and Magistrate Edward Newman facilitate the proceedings. Judge Lanni inspires me. She is admirably fierce; she holds everyone in the courtroom accountable, and she is not afraid to step on toes to do what is needed of her. Initially, I thought Judge Lanni as well as the CASA employees would be jaded by the horrific stories each case carries with it. Thankfully, I was wrong. Each day is approached one child at a time. Whenever I am in court, Judge Lanni explains everything she does, so thoroughly that I feel like I am a part of the conversation. My supervisor will answer any of my questions. She is overly accommodating and allows me to be involved as much as she can permit. I enjoy attending court the most as it is the one-day of the week where I am guaranteed to be among a group of the hardest working advocates that I have ever met. Although I am just an intern, I am not made to feel that way. And while each case is a reminder of how cruel the world can be, it is nevertheless bittersweet to witness the relentless efforts made by those I work with, as well as witness the rare, but invaluable smiles return to the faces of those who have had too much taken from them."



LAURA RODRIGUEZ

Legal Services of New York, Bronx, NY

"I am an intern in the general practice unit. As a Bronx native, I am very proud to be contributing to members of my community. The general practice unit handles consumer law, employment law, elder law, and governmental benefits. The most innovative project I am working on at the moment is a disability discrimination case against a condominium complex that refuses to accommodate multiple disabled tenants. Interestingly, my mother currently lives in this very condominium complex!"

LESLIE BARBER

Rhode Island Legal Services, Providence, RI

"I am spending my summer at Rhode Island Legal Services (RILS). I am an Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps JD student working in a fairly new unit called the Employment Opportunity Legal Corps. The program's mission is to assist economically disadvantaged individuals to improve their standard of living by removing legal barriers to employment. Poor credit, criminal convictions and loss of license are the common legal barriers to employment that we are specifically addressing. I have been assisting in expungement/sealing of criminal convictions, reinstatement of driver's licenses, filing disputes with credit reporting agencies, and reinstatement of occupational licenses. My experience thus far has been rewarding and further confirms my interest in public interest law."

ALEXANDER NICHOLS

Franklin County Public Defender's Office, Malone, NY

"I have been working in a Public Defender's office in a rural county in Northern New York. Most of the time no one has heard of Franklin County, but this summer has been quite eventful. The county has been in the national spotlight because the two escaped prisoners from Clinton Correctional Facility were spotted here. The law enforcement presence is overwhelming and several local attorneys have been on national news networks. We have a heavy case load, which keeps the three attorneys in the office very busy. Even the everyday work here is exciting and rewarding; all said, it's been an exciting educational and eventful summer."

REBECCA COOPER

Mecklenburg County Public Defender's Office, Charlotte, North Carolina

"I work with a public defender that specializes in Felony cases; I spent my first official work day with my supervising attorney watching the closing argument and jury verdict of a murder trial, so to say it's been interesting would be an understatement! I spend most of my working days going to the jail and speaking with clients, dealing with matters in the courtroom, and compiling discovery material."

BRENDAN SULLIVAN

Rhode Island Public Defender, Providence, RI

"I am working in 6th Division District Court for the Public Defender. I am in court all the time, my supervisors are all great, and it has been really fun and I have learned so much from the experience already."