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Linda Tappa's Post

November 1, 2016

An Amazing Summer: Public Interest Law in Texas

Posted by Linda Tappa on 11/01/2016 at 03:49 PM

The summer began with me as a hopeful, and somewhat energized 2L -- and ended with me hired as a staff attorney for after graduation at a top public service law organization.

How, you ask? It all began when I walked into [Veronica Paricio](#)'s office in February, panicked because I had yet to secure an internship for the summer. Together, we found an organization called [Texas RioGrande Legal Aid \("TRLA"\)](#), which, even though I knew nothing about them at the time, is the third largest legal services provider in the nation. I applied and through the unexpected coincidence of a Rhode Island connection, I was offered the internship back home in Austin, Texas!

I was hired to work with a program called [Texas C-BAR](#), which stands for Community Building with Attorney Resources. What I did was very similar to what we do in the [Business Start Up Clinic](#) at RWU



Law:

I helped low-income individuals form nonprofits, micro-enterprises or small businesses that were going to benefit low income communities.

As the only C-BAR intern, I was tasked with guiding our least business-savvy clients through a sea of corporate law that can be very daunting to say the least. This meant that I got to engage with and develop personal relationships with my clients as well as learn, grow, and develop my skills as an aspiring corporate attorney.

Over the course of my three months with TRLA, I was fortunate enough to have a well-rounded experience that included:

- Drafting corporate documents including Bylaws, Certificates of Formation, Amendments, etc.
- Creating presentations on business entities and formation

- Participating in free legal clinics
- Traveling central Texas while giving presentations on the intricacies of nonprofit laws
- Conducting intakes and client interviews
- Researching and drafting legislation favoring worker-owned cooperatives
- Advocating for and aiding in the push to deregulate the Taxi monopoly in the city of Austin
- Participating in the largest small business clinic in the state of Texas
- Researching interesting topics like the Son of Sam laws or a web browser of .com versus .org and the legal implications of those types of laws on businesses
- Having 4 nonprofit clients of my own to walk through the formation process
- Playing in the company kickball and bowling tournaments
- Meeting some of the most passionate attorneys I've been lucky enough to work with
- Making new friends from across the nation and all different schools and backgrounds
- Getting employed to implement my own project initiative; and (last but not least)
- Loving what I did

To say that I fell in love is an understatement -- because I knew that the work I was doing with TRLA was exactly what I have always wanted to do. At 7 years old I decided I was going to be an attorney, at 13 I decided I was going to be a corporate attorney, and at 15 I decided I was going to work with the UN as an International Defender of Human Rights -- so you can just imagine my excitement when I found a job that let me combine the best of all those worlds! A new corporate America, if you will, was exposed to me: one in which we combine corporate knowledge and community outreach to help our communities economically prosper.

I am blessed and proud to say that I was hired by TRLA to implement my brainchild initiative, my baby, in which I will be helping small and micro-farmers benefit from the farm-to-school program by helping them form cooperatives that will (1) pool their resources together so that they are more successful as a collective, and (2) negotiate and draft contracts with local schools on their behalf.



Although my summer was nothing short of amazing, I do need to take the time to thank a few people who were extremely instrumental in making it happen. I want to send a very heartfelt thank you to **Veronica** for patiently helping me find this wonderful organization in the first place. I want to thank **Rudy Sanchez**, the TRLA Deputy Director, for taking a shot and giving me the opportunity to work with TRLA. I want to send a

HUGE shout out and thank you to the C-BAR staff: **D'Ann Johnson, Francis Martinez, Andrea Harrington, Ileana Riojas,** and **Andrea March** for making my summer as phenomenal as it was.

And last but not least, I want to thank my mental, emotional, and physical backbone -- my momma -- for supporting and pushing me when I wanted to do nothing more than sleep; and most importantly for being the beautiful, smart, and strong independent woman that I one day hope to be.

I am a living testament to the hidden truth that the public interest and corporate worlds can happily coexist to bring about positive changes to our communities and I hope that my story can inspire many others to take this path truly less traveled.

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