

August 29, 2013

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
13540 East Boundary Road, Building II Suite 204
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to work with Disability Rights Texas (DRTx) in Austin, Texas this summer. DRTx focuses on providing assistance to people with disabilities in a variety of issues, including representation within the juvenile justice system, housing discrimination, guardianship issues, civil rights violations, and access to public facilities. I was able to work with knowledgeable, inspiring attorneys on almost all of these issues. This experience would not have been possible without the generosity of Equal Justice America.

I feel that two of my experiences really exemplify the time I spent with Disability Rights Texas. First, I helped a seventeen year old with disabilities struggling within the Texas Juvenile Justice Department and trying to find a placement after he “aged out” of the system. It seemed that at every turn he encountered a new roadblock that DRTx did not have previous experience with. Our client already faces daily challenges due to his disability, which was aggravated by the anxiety of pending administrative hearings and uncertainty regarding his future. I was able to research these unique issues and draft arguments for the supervising attorney to present to the administrative board on his behalf. His last administrative hearing was promising, and we hope that he will be released from the facility and able to live with the person of his choice in the community.

The second experience that really impacted me this summer was working with a team of attorneys to develop a community outreach program for female veterans with disabilities. Planning this event allowed me to reach out to the community and partner with Texans dedicated to this cause. I formed partnerships with influential community members, employees within the state and federal government, and non-profit business owners focused on a specific need within the veterans’ community. This afforded me the opportunity to work closely with a female veteran to brainstorm ideas, understand applicable legal issues, and develop effective training. My experience organizing this event helped me realize how expansive veterans’ issues are, and the lack of resources and information available to women veterans, specifically those with disabilities. I am continuing to work on this project with the organization, and will return to help host the event in November.

Working with Disability Rights Texas helped me realize how much progress has been made for people with disabilities, and how much further we still need to go. I was surprised, almost shocked really, to see how marginalized people with disabilities are within the community. Growing up, I had some exposure to this due to my mother’s hearing disability. She worked extremely hard to ensure that she was treated equally and afforded the same

opportunities. However, I never realized how hard she had to fight sometimes and how much she just wanted to fit into society. She took her circumstances in stride and never gave in. My mother passed away two summers ago, and it was comforting to work with such a dedicated organization on a cause that was so close to her heart. Thank you so much for providing me with the opportunity to work with such a talented group of attorneys on a cause that has personally touched my life. I would not have been able to do this without the generosity of Equal Justice America.

My Sincerest Thanks,

Megan Evans

South Texas College of Law, December 2013