

Dear Dan Ruben,

I am greatly saddened that my second summer at Legal Aid of Western Michigan has come to a close. During these ten weeks, I have been fortunate to work with a group of highly skilled attorneys willing to patiently teach me the practical skills of representing our clients, I've become more skilled at working with individual clients, and I've researched a specific project on how Legal Aid can do more to improve our community.

Because this was my second summer at Legal Aid, I was able to quickly begin meaningful projects. One of the attorneys who is well known in the community for his commitment to Legal Aid and his excellent representation of clients, wanted to be sure I saw a case in its entirety as much as possible. He had me doing the client interviews, contacting the opposing counsel, and drafting pleadings starting my first week. Rick oversaw everything I did, but he created an environment where I had control over the case and learned what it was like to handle a case (almost) alone while also having the safety of his expertise. I learned a great deal about how different it is to see a case as an ongoing process rather than a single appearance or pleading. This case was a success not necessarily because it was my first court appearance or because our client got custody. It was a success because through communicating with our client and the opposing counsel we were able to help two parents continue to parent together in a positive way – rather than turning mean and bitter – even during the divorce.

In another case I worked on with Rick, a landlord was trying to evict a family from a house they had lived in for two decades. The family came to Legal Aid with little idea how to counter the claims the landlord was making. Without Legal Aid, the hearing for the eviction surely would have resulted in the family being homeless.

The project that has meant the most to me this summer has been the Medical Legal Partnership for Children. I am hoping to return to Legal Aid after graduation and would love to be part of the implementation of such a partnership. During the summer I researched existing partnerships and how one could work in Kalamazoo. I reached out to members of the medical community and presented the idea of collaboration to them. The medical community is receptive and I am hoping to begin the actual partnership next year. This would be a tremendous way to have a large impact on improving the community of Kalamazoo.

Thank you for supporting my summer spent at Legal Aid. It has confirmed what I already suspected – that Legal Aid is where I want to use my legal skills after graduation.

Sincerely,

Anna Moss  
University of Illinois College of Law  
May 2009