

Julia Bizer

July 29, 2011

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I received an EJA Stipend to fund a Fellowship working with Central Virginia Legal Aid Society in Petersburg, Virginia. This experience further strengthened my belief that the law provides a gateway for disenfranchised people to ameliorate their circumstances. Applying my knowledge of the law at the Central Virginia Legal Aid Society was a positive experience empowering others to ultimately create social change.

At CVLAS I received training in multiple areas of the law focusing on Family Law, Public Benefits, Bankruptcy and Housing Law. I also attended a training hosted by the Virginia Poverty Law Center where they spoke of recent developments in poverty law. I benefited greatly from all the knowledge I learned, which was extremely practical and applicable to my work this summer.

Of course, some of the most emotional cases I was able to assist with were for Family Abuse Protective Orders. These cases demonstrate the importance in providing a safe place for victims of domestic violence, who have had their feelings of trust and security taken from them. I was also able to provide Spanish and English translations for three of our clients who were in various stages of seeking Protective Orders. Helping provide a service for clients who had very limited options without specialized assistance helped me really feel like I could make a difference.

Many of the cases I assisted with were regarding unemployment benefits. Some of my first client interviews were people seeking unemployment benefits. Additionally, I was able to not only submit a brief but also participate in oral arguments in front of the Special Examiner of the VEC. It was a positive experience, which proved to me that I can not only provide client counseling but also provide oral advocacy on behalf of clients.

I was also able to help clients who were being wrongfully evicted or who were having issues with their landlords. In one case I assisted with, our clients had to deal with a bug infestation, broken windows and blinds, and even had unsafe locks on their doors causing

multiple break-ins. After settlement fell through we went to trial, and after two hours, our clients were able to terminate their lease, keep the last month's rent and get back their full security deposit. They were able to move their family of seven to a safer, healthier house.

My experiences with CVLAS instilled in me a greater drive to use the law for social justice. The ten weeks I spent in Petersburg have opened my eyes to how the law can provide a pathway to justice but also where it fails.

Thank you for funding this opportunity, the positive repercussions of which will continue to reverberate through all I accomplish in my legal career.

Sincerely,

Julia Bizer

University of Richmond School of Law, 2012

EJA Fellow, Summer 2011

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September 16, 2011

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

Re: Julia Bizer, EJA Fellowship Recipient Evaluation

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Thank you for providing a fellowship for law student intern Julia Bizer. It was our pleasure to have Julia work with us for ten weeks this summer.

From her first day at CVLAS, Julia showed that she was dedicated to serving our clients and learning as much about being a lawyer as possible. She was extremely hard working and put a remarkable amount of effort into each assigned task.

When she started her internship, she indicated that she was interested in learning about a variety of areas of law. She worked on family law, housing, social security, consumer, and unemployment compensation cases. She eagerly did whatever was necessary. She gave telephone advice, interviewed clients in our office, wrote briefs, drafted motions, and composed client letters. She also helped us by conducting initial intakes of clients.

Julia expressed an interest in arguing cases. In late June, she argued an administrative appeal before a Special Examiner of the Virginia Employment Commission under my supervision. Before the hearing, she researched and drafted a brief in support of her argument. The brief was well written and I made only minimal changes to it. She was also well prepared for the arguments. At the hearing, she was poised and answered the Special Examiner's questions appropriately.

Julia also prepared to argue a Protective Order hearing in Circuit Court. On the day of the trial, the adverse party asked for a continuance and Julia was not able to try the case. Although she did not get to practice her advocacy skills, she worked tirelessly in prepping the client, witnesses, and herself for the trial. I have no doubt that she would have done well in the hearing.

Julia split her time between working with me and working with the other staff attorney,



Sara Blöse. Sara reports that Julia conducted client interviews, drafted memos, and calculated spousal support. Julia also helped her by researching and outlining several presentations. Sara found Julia's work to be invaluable.

Julia also has excellent Spanish language skills. She drafted several letters to clients in Spanish. She also served as a translator and conducted initial intakes for Spanish speaking clients. This was beneficial because no one in our office speaks the language.

Although the majority of Julia's work was law related, she was also very helpful in other capacities. We recently experienced a layoff in our office and we no longer have a receptionist. Julia was willing to answer the doors and serve as the initial point of contact for our clients. She was very personable, but also professional.

Julia increased the performance level in our office. Several members of our staff commented that they wished she could stay during the school year and beyond. Our clients were certainly better served because we had her around.

Thank you for the opportunity to have this Equal Justice America fellowship recipient work in our office. We truly appreciate the fellowships that your agency offers. It is sometimes difficult to get students to come work in the Petersburg office because few law students live in the area. This opportunity for funding helps encourage students to come. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jessica W. Thompson
Staff Attorney