

September 1, 2007

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I would like to take this time to thank you for the wonderful summer I have had as an Equal Justice America Fellowship recipient! I had a great experience working for the Cook County Office of the Public Guardian this past summer!

Throughout my summer, I was provided with a wide variety of work experiences that helped to strengthen my interest and desire to pursue a career in child advocacy. I worked in the domestic relations division of the Public Guardian's Office which meant that most of my clients were children whose parents were litigating over custody, visitation and child support. I was given the opportunity to meet most of my clients by conducting interviews with them. I also interviewed many of the parents of my clients. It was very interesting for me to meet the parties and to hear their stories. Working directly with my clients put a "face to the names" and provided extra motivation for me to zealously advocate for my clients.

In addition to client interviewing, I acquired extensive experience writing petitions, motions, parenting and visitation agreements and subpoenas for my cases. I corresponded with the opposing counsels working on the cases and learned about what it means to work together for the "best interests" of the child.

One of the most exciting elements of my job was the fact that with I presented motions, petitions and arguments to the judge by using my 711 license. I was in court on a daily basis, actively participating in my clients' cases. At the end of the summer, my supervisor allowed me to participate in a trial. I was given the opportunity to conduct a cross examination of one of the witnesses. It was quite a thrill for me to actually step up and be part of the trial! I realized, after my experience this summer that I definitely want to use my law degree to participate in litigation and trial work.

I learned a great deal from my work this past summer. Not only did I learn about domestic relations law, the court process and how to represent a clients, I learned how to work with many different types of people. I learned how to work with children at a professional level, how to deal with manipulative or distraught parents and how to work with many different lawyer personalities. Most importantly, I learned that children benefit so much from a voice in the legal system; especially when their parents are battling over custody or visitations issues.

The quality and scope of the many experiences I acquired this summer have helped me to grow as a law student. I now feel more prepared than ever to begin my career as a lawyer for children! I am so grateful for the financial assistance that you provided to me for my work at the Public Guardian's Office. It is because of wonderful organizations like Equal Justice America that law students, such as me, can remain on the path to a public interest law career! Thank you so much for providing me with an Equal Justice America Fellowship this past summer!

Sincerely,

Kelly Whalen
Kelly Whalen

Loyola University Chicago School of Law
Expected Graduation Date: May 2008