

Jessica Jackson

August 12, 2009

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

Re: 2009 EJA Summer Fellowship

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I completed an eleven-week internship with Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society in Castlewood, Virginia. I worked as an intern with the same organization last summer, and my experience this summer was just as positive as that of last summer. Thank you for my Summer Fellowship—it allowed me to spend another summer working in public interest law without incurring a large amount of debt. I traveled approximately 100 miles per day for my internship, and the Summer Fellowship made transportation costs easier to handle.

This summer I spent time conducting divorce and bankruptcy intakes. This provided me with hands-on experience in interviewing clients. I also spent time investigating potential cases and researching other cases. This provided me with a more in-depth knowledge of the law, which will be beneficial as I begin my final year of law school. Additionally, I spent time drafting wills and powers of attorney. Drafting these documents was one of the most rewarding things I did this summer—the clients were so appreciative that someone was able to provide them with legal assistance that they would not have otherwise been able to afford.

I spent several hours this summer working on a spousal support case for an elderly client who was at risk of losing her placement in an assisted living facility. The client was entitled to a portion of her husband's Veterans Affairs benefits, but her husband was refusing to send the money to her. Without the money, the client could not afford to stay in the assisted living facility. The spousal support petition was a temporary measure until the client was able to get her share of the benefits apportioned from her husband's check. Unfortunately, getting paperwork from an administrative agency is a slow process, and the hearing had to be continued until the proper documentation could be received from Veterans Affairs. My internship ended before I was able to see the conclusion of the case, but it is my sincere hope that our client was able to stay in the assisted living facility where she felt comfortable and where she was adequately cared for.

I have discovered that, emotionally, public interest law is not easy. I find it very difficult to hear about the situations that some of these clients are in. At the same time, I find it rewarding to be able to help those who are in need. The most rewarding aspect of public interest law is being able to go home at the end of the day knowing that I might have been able to help

someone. I have especially enjoyed the work that I have done with elderly clients. I came to law school unsure of the field in which I wanted to practice. Because of my experience over the past two years, I plan to pursue a career in public interest law.

As a native of Southwest Virginia, a rural area, I understand the importance of organizations that are able to provide legal assistance to those who cannot otherwise afford it. I only wish that public interest organizations were able to serve more clients. Rural areas, such as the one I live in, have a tremendous need for free legal assistance in areas such as family law, housing, and public benefits, to name only a few. It is equally important that these people receive representation by attorneys who are intelligent and passionate about their work. I worked with such attorneys at Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society, and I admire what they do day in and day out.

My internship was a very rewarding experience, and it left me excited to pursue a career in public interest law. Again, I offer my sincere thanks for the Summer Fellowship.

Sincerely,

Jessica Jackson
Appalachian School of Law
Class of 2010