

August 28, 2011

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

Dan,

I would like to thank Equal Justice America for helping me to pursue public interest work this summer. I worked in Charlottesville, Virginia with Legal Aid Justice Center's Civil Advocacy Division, primarily focusing on Housing and Employment law. The weeks spent working at Legal Aid not only gave me critical hands-on experience with clients, both in the office and the courtroom, but also solidified my desire to work in the public interest after law school.

My clients were often out of work, fighting for unemployment benefits and struggling to find new ways to provide for their families. Others were struggling to pay rent or stay in their apartments during the economic downturn. It is Legal Aid's mission to sort through which of these cases would benefit from legal representation, and in representing them, to help them keep their lives from falling apart.

The employment aspect of my work consisted of doing client intakes and interviews, conducting legal research and writing, and representing clients under supervision at administrative hearings with the Virginia Employment Commission. My supervising attorney first had me handle cases at the deputy interview level, but by the end of the summer I was also able to work on appeals. I was pleasantly surprised to find out how big of a difference I was able to make in client's lives by being there to advocate for them.

Working in housing law was also fulfilling. I represented clients who were having problems with their landlord or trouble staying in their apartment, and usually, trouble navigating the Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act. Most notably, one of my clients had been evicted from her apartment without notice. Her landlord sued her, trying to recover past unpaid rent and fees for cleaning and moving her belongings out. Legal Aid helped her to file a counterclaim for her belongings, as well as successfully getting the fees for cleaning the unit dismissed since no notice was given. Since I got my third year practice certificate, I was able to represent the client in court under attorney supervision. This experience was truly something I never thought I would be able to gain while still in law school, and I have Legal Aid Justice Center and Equal Justice America to thank for allowing me the opportunity to handle cases like this one. Thank you for all you do for students like me and for the communities we serve in our work.

Sincerely,

Aimee Fausser
University of Virginia, '12