

August 5, 2011

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

My experience at the Children's Law Center in Washington DC was everything I had hoped for and more. Before beginning as a summer law clerk I had worked with children in my experience as a Peace Corps volunteer. However, I had never had the opportunity to help impoverished children in the United States and was eager for the opportunity to learn about the plight of the abused and neglected children of Washington, DC and assist in any way I could.

The client that I will remember most from this experience was a teenage boy who had been beaten by his mother. The guardian ad litem (GAL) that I was shadowing allowed me to come to every step of the neglect proceedings and assist the child however I could. At the beginning of the case I did not think that I would have much of a role other than observing and providing a sounding board for the GAL. However, it became clear after the first time I met the teen that I would have an important role in his case this summer, I would be his friend.

He was a shy teenage boy that stood 6'3" tall. At the family team meeting the boy became very emotional and then shut down. Though there were 15 adults in the room, the GAL and I had the feeling that no one was actually paying any attention to the boy who was at the heart of the case. At the end of the meeting, while the GAL went to speak with the social worker, I decided I would see if he would open up to me at all. I tried the usual small talk. I failed miserably. I then remembered something my husband told me: all teenage boys love video games. Seeing as my husband is himself a video game addict, I am quite well versed for a non-player. I decided to give it a shot and asked if he was an XBOX or PS3 player, to which his eyes lit up and he proudly responded "definitely PS3." That was the beginning of our friendship. When I went to visit him at the group home that he had been placed at he showed me his favorite game and talked about the bullies at school who were mean to him and the teacher who wouldn't let him sign the attendance sheet. This information ended up helping him get valuable services that he otherwise would not have gotten.

A couple of days ago I went to his disposition hearing. When I arrived at the court room I found him pacing. When he had arrived at the court building, he was lost and asked for help finding the court room. The court employee, assuming this very tall African American teen was there for a criminal charge, treated him terribly. The GAL asked me to go see if I could settle him down. I took him aside, calmed him down and then proceeded to talk about Planet of the Apes until the hearing started. When we were leaving the court I told him that sadly I was returning to Boston. He smiled at me, shook my hand and told me that he didn't know what he would have done without me.

Though there were many other wonderful, awful and just plain weird experiences I had while working at CLC, his case will forever remind me of why I want to work in public interest law. I would be happy to discuss my summer fellowship more at any time.

I cannot thank you enough for the opportunity of being an Equal Justice America Fellow this summer.

Sincerely,

Beth Zilberman
Boston College

August 5, 2011

Rebecca Brink
Senior Policy Attorney
Children's Law Center
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Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
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Dear Mr. Ruben,

I supervised Beth Zilberman at the Children's Law Center (CLC) this summer. Beth's work while at CLC showed her deep commitment to serving underprivileged populations and her compassion and diligence made her an excellent law clerk. I believe Beth's work while at CLC was directly in line with the goals that Equal Justice America promotes.

While at CLC, Beth participated in many aspects of our work. She assisted in direct client representation through her work with our guardian ad litem program and also worked with our policy department in our advocacy efforts. Beth was active in finding appropriate services for clients, performed research on issues affecting our clients and generally acted as a support for the child clients. She performed research on disability services, citizenship for foster children, and wrote an in depth legal memo on collateral estoppel as it relates to an impact litigation case. She also performed know-your-rights sessions with parents of students with learning disabilities, attended neglect hearings, family team meetings and assisted in home visits.

In all of her projects, Beth was enthusiastic, professional and hard working. She was willing to put in as much time as necessary to complete an assignment. She was interested in improving her skills and eager to learn about the role of a child welfare advocate. Beth was also friendly and very enjoyable to work with.

I would be happy to discuss Beth's work quality at greater length if you so desire. Thank you for supporting Beth's work at CLC this summer. She was an excellent Equal Justice America Fellow.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Brink