

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Please find below a summary of my experience at ArchCity Defenders this past summer. I want to begin by thanking you and Equal Justice America for helping fund my work at ArchCity. As ArchCity's staff stressed to me and my fellow interns many times this summer, ArchCity's ability to make an impact in the St. Louis community is dramatically increased because of the interns and the support we provide.

My experiences this summer providing legal services to indigent clients was incredibly diverse. This is in large part because of ArchCity's advocacy model. ArchCity provides holistic criminal defense and civil legal services to its clients. This means that if ArchCity takes on a client for being jailed for an inability to pay traffic tickets, for example, they will also help that client resolve any housing, medical care, custody issues, etc. they may have.

I found it truly inspiring and rewarding to practice this type of legal advocacy because it allowed me to support my clients across the range of complex issues they were facing. I have worked in many legal offices and it was always frustrating for me when I could assist a client with one issue, but was unable to offer any assistance with other pressing matters such as a pending eviction or an immigration hearing. There certainly are limits to what ArchCity can do, but the holistic legal services model did at least allow us to support our clients in a more comprehensive manner, and also fostered a culture where staff thought about clients comprehensively, and would go to great lengths to address all of their needs.

A particular series of client interactions from this summer stands out in my mind as being emblematic of ArchCity's holistic legal services model, its commitment to its indigent clients, its flexibility in responding to clients' needs, and the type of assistance I provided indigent clients. During the summer, a homeless client of ours was in the office for an interview when she let us know that the electricity of the woman she was staying with had been cut off for more than two years. While an attorney was helping our homeless client resolve pending traffic tickets and get her children enrolled in school (the school district was refusing to admit them when she tried on her own), another intern and I began working with our homeless client's friend to help her get her electricity turned back on. After numerous conversations with the electricity company regarding a payment plan and acceptable forms of payment, and even more conversations with a local cash checking service, we were eventually able to get our new client's electricity turned back on for the first time in years.

I also helped serve a number of our homeless clients this summer due to ArchCity's outreach, and its willingness to help walk-ins. ArchCity is located in an area of St. Louis where the majority of the local homeless population lives. One of my responsibilities was going around to the local churches, homeless shelters, and parks in the area and speaking with homeless individuals to learn more about their experiences and how ArchCity might be able to help them. These interactions were important in many regards. They allowed us to get a better idea of how we could allocate our resources to support the local homeless population, but it also helped us foster

relationships with our downtown neighbors. Although many of these interviews were only exploratory, throughout the summer many of our referrals ended up coming through people we spoke with and formed relationships with earlier in the summer.

In addition to this type of purposeful outreach, I also ended up helping clients who came to us in less conventional ways. One afternoon, for instance, I was walking back to the office from a meeting with two of my colleagues when we were approached by a homeless man who was trying to get money for a bus ticket so he could leave town. We spoke with him as we walked, and learned that the challenges he was facing in St. Louis and the lack of services he was receiving were at the root of his desire to leave. When we got back to the office we called a number of our local partners who serve homeless individuals and connected him so that they could support him with his housing and mental health needs.

I highlight these stories because I believe they demonstrate the unique power behind ArchCity's holistic legal services model. First, to me it highlights the community-oriented nature of the holistic legal services model, in particular how client relationships can emerge from pre-existing relationships or a general investment in the community. I found this holistic approach allowed us to form deep relationships with our clients, and also encouraged us to think outside of the box, using both the law and non-traditional approaches to help our clients get back on their feet. I also highlight these stories because I think it demonstrates the flexibility of the holistic model. Although ArchCity was purposeful about outreach and inevitably had to turn some potential clients away, I believe the holistic model encouraged a culture of compassion within the office that inspired everyone to dig deeper and do as much as we could for our clients, whether they came through traditional channels, they were referred by a friend, or they approached us on the street.

The remainder of my civil legal services experience this summer came in the form of assisting ArchCity's direct-service attorneys with their current clients. I conducted legal research for a number of clients who were being evicted or denied housing and helped develop arguments that would allow them to keep or acquire housing. I also researched public housing policy and worked with the St. Louis Housing Authority to help clients get on the waitlist for public housing. Finally, I drafted mitigation letters on behalf of one client who is residing and undergoing treatment at a drug treatment center for women with addiction. This client had arrest warrants related to her inability to pay fines for civil traffic and ordinance violations, and my letters were used to argue for why she should be shown leniency and be allowed to stay at the treatment center where she was thriving in her drug treatment program and experiencing the first semblance of stability in years.

I hope this gives you an idea of some of what I was able to accomplish this past summer at ArchCity Defenders in part because of the support of Equal Justice America. I am deeply grateful for your support and what it has meant for my evolution as an aspiring public interest attorney.

Sincerely,  
John Bonacorsi  
Stanford Law School, expected graduation 2018

**Thomas B. Harvey**  
Executive Director

**Michael-John Voss**  
Director of Finance

mail@archcitydefenders.org



1210 Locust Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
St. Louis, MO 63103

Main Phone: 855-724-2489  
Fax: 314-925-1307

www.archcitydefenders.org

**501(c)(3) Nonprofit**  
**Holistic Legal Services**

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Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America  
13540 East Boundary Road  
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Midlothian, VA 23112

**RE: ArchCity Defenders intern John Bonacorsi**

Dear Mr. Ruben:

It is my pleasure to write this letter on behalf of Mr. John Bonacorsi. Over the course of the summer, John proved to be a valuable asset to the ArchCity Defenders. He assisted our civil litigation department by meeting with clients, performing research, and participating in our out-reach program. One of our organizations summer highlights was a class-action suit that we filed against 13 municipalities located in St. Louis County. John's hard work researching pertinent issues and meeting with clients ensured that we had accurate information and the necessary documentation that provided the foundation for the suit.

Additionally, John assisted our direct-services attorneys represent clients with their various needs. Our firm employs a holistic approach to representation, providing clients with legal and non-legal support in order to help them exit homelessness. This required John to meet with clients, assess their needs, draft memoranda and motions, and perform legal and non-legal research. Not only did John excel, but he actively engaged in the community and exemplified the mission of the ArchCity Defenders.

Sincerely,

Ryan McGinty  
ArchCity Defenders, Inc.

