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Dear Alumni and Friends,

Welcome to the inaugural edition of our Alumni Magazine. With national elections around the corner, it's easy to focus exclusively on candidate debates and sweeping policy changes. Yet, often, the soaring policy discussions seem out of touch with reality: we know that so many of our neighbors, in every community across the country, are routinely denied the access to justice that is their right.

That's why I am so pleased to profile the accomplishments of our wonderful alumni in this first issue. I want you to glimpse what I get to see each day: the work of our graduates enhancing the lives of thousands, not just in Washington, D.C., as highlighted here, but all across the country.

Our local impact has been powerful and it continues to build. Our graduates permeate all the Metropolitan Washington area government and public interest sectors. And the hundreds of our “lo bono” private attorneys— a virtual private legal services army— represent additional thousands of low-income people each year. Their work will be the subject of a future issue.

Our impact has been national as well. Today virtually all American law schools now have clinical programs - thanks in large part to the vision of Jean and Edgar Cahn and generations of Antioch Law students and teachers who implemented it. Yet while elective clinics are ubiquitous, UDC-DCSL remains unique in its mandatory clinical requirement, grounding all graduates in the realities of how the legal system really works— and doesn't work - for low-income people and the public interest. That kind of experience must be the bedrock upon which any national policy debate about justice is grounded.

Now, as then, our hard work in the clinics and as graduates is more than merely cumulative; the examples our alumni set for today's law students are like ripples in a pond. Their energy flows outward in time, giving birth to hope and empowering action. I have seen this process first hand over the decades; I know how tangible and real it is.

I am incredibly proud of their work. I know you will be, too.

Shelley Broderick
Dean and Professor of Law
University of the District of Columbia
David A. Clarke School of Law
a lifelong commitment to public interest law:

JONATHAN SMITH
When he started law school, Jonathan Smith never thought he would stay in Washington, D.C. He had planned to go back to Maine, where he grew up and went to college, and where, as an undergraduate, he had helped organize knitting machine workers—now a part of the ILGWU. That experience had cemented his desire to work in public interest law, specifically on labor rights. His search for a progressive law school brought him to the then-named Antioch School of Law in Washington, D.C.

The School's policy of having new students begin their education by living with a client family made a huge impression on this young man from a rural and monochromatically white environment. Living in a poor neighborhood on North Capitol Street marked his first exposure to both urban problems and civil rights law. "My Antioch experience was transforming," says Jonathan. "I fell in love with the idea that you could make a difference with the law."

"Antioch had an inspiring faculty. Everyone had come to the school with a remarkable background and commitment. Edgar and Jean Cahn—heroes in the equal justice movement—created a diverse, energetic, often chaotic, but genuinely wonderful community."

His law school experience and a series of challenging cases and positions kept him here. Today, he is Executive Director of the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia, where he is surrounded by, as he puts it, "incredible and hardworking people who create a real opportunity to do good."

Beatrice Clephane, who later became President of the Women's Bar Association, founded the Legal Aid Society during the Bonus March. The goals she outlined in its articles of incorporation 75 years ago remain the goals of the organization today: to ensure that the laws are just and that the laws are applied fairly.

Under Jonathan's leadership, the number of full-time legal aid lawyers on staff has doubled, from 13 to 26.

"All are extraordinary legal aid lawyers any top law firm would hire," Jonathan says, pointing this out not to tout his organization or his own recruiting skills, but to illustrate a very important point about the impact providing quality legal service has on people's lives.

"In our society, budgets are an expression of value. Because of under-funding most low-income people in civil court cases have no representation, yet they deserve dignity and justice, too," he says. "By treating our clients' cases as the real cases they are, it forces the court to view them that way as well."

While the Legal Aid Society is doing sterling work, there remains a crisis in legal services. Each year, 130,000 civil cases are filed in the District—45,000 in landlord tenant, many of the rest in small claims and family court. "There's a huge gap between resources and need," says Jonathan. "In an area with tens of thousands of lawyers, 110,000 people who can't afford it are in need of representation. There are only about 150 legal services lawyers working for low-income people.

"We know that half the poor live at 50% of the poverty level. Were we really helping those most in need?" Jonathan says. "We studied our client data and discovered we were not adequately serving the very, very poor."

It wasn't hard to understand why—the poorer clients who were seeking help were on direct bus routes to the downtown D.C. office. But what about those who couldn't get to the office? Legal Aid needed to be where people needed them, when they needed them. They made a commitment to partner with community-based organizations to be more visible in
neighborhoods—to be where the need was, and to be part of an integrated system of support. For example, Legal Aid now has a presence at the Domestic Violence Center at Greater Southeast Hospital, along with the other health or counseling services a victim might need that day. A battered woman can arrive at the center and find representation, have an order drafted by the clerk there and made official by a judge via video; have the protective order served, and know that her children will be picked up from school and safe in protective custody during this crisis. There are volunteers for safety assistance and planning next steps, even drug counseling if needed. It’s a recognition that there are barriers to even getting to court that must be overcome.

Legal Aid has similar alliances with The Children’s Health Project in far Southeast Washington and with Advocates for Justice in Education in Anacostia (led by another alum, Kim Jones). Legal Aid also partners with Bread for the City and the Neighborhood Legal Services Program to run an office in the Landlord and Tenant Court. In the District of Columbia, eviction can be a speedy process—you don’t have to be personally served and a landlord can get a hearing in as few as five days. With 200 to 300 cases on the docket every day, there is great pressure to resolve cases fast. “The idea is to be where the people are so they can get some representation the day they need it.”

Such client work makes up 75% of what the Legal Aid Society does. The client experience serves as a guidepost to help identify needed reform. “Direct work helps you to recognize structural and systemic issues that need addressing. You solve those, you broaden justice,” says Jonathan. “One of the great things about being an Antioch grad is the community of alumni. All across town and across the country I work with Antioch and D.C. School of Law lawyers who had the same training in cause lawyering, and who share a commitment to justice in form, and more importantly, in substance.”

Jonathan’s many years of public interest lawyering experience prepared him to serve as Executive Director. After law school, the late Professor Herb Semmel recommended Jonathan to Victor Glasberg, a sole practitioner in Northern Virginia. The firm did a lot of civil rights law and prison conditions work. Jonathan considers both Semmel and Glasberg as mentors. Together with Glasberg, Jonathan represented the teenagers at the roller rink (a case that was settled). They also won a suit brought under the Voting Rights Act against the At-Large Statute for Warrenton, Virginia in Fauquier County. While 40% of the county was African-American, all of the elected representative positions were at-large; not one African-American had been elected. The suit resulted in representation by wards rather than all at-large seats.

But it was the prisoner rights work that was most intense, as civil rights, race and poverty all intersected under the criminal justice system. After five years at Victor M. Glasberg & Associates, Jonathan moved on to become a staff attorney at, and ultimately Executive Director of, the D.C. Prisoner’s Legal Services Project. It was a trying and transformational time. The Project brought suits against Lorton Prison for exposing prisoners to violence and for failing to provide health care, particularly access to retrovirals for HIV treatment.

As the Project was trying to improve conditions at Lorton, the prison system was becoming an industry. When Lorton
was closed, prisoners were scattered all across the country. Corrections Corporation of America contracted with D.C. to move Lorton maximum-security prisoners to a medium security facility in Youngstown, Ohio. Suddenly, inmates who had visitors, keeping them at least marginally in touch with their community, lost even that connection. And with its open dormitory style, few staffers and low security, it was not a place for violent prisoners.

“What people forget is that where there are violent prisoners, there are other prisoners who becomes victims of that violence,” Jonathan says. “Just because you’re in prison doesn’t mean you should be a victim of violence.”

For profit reasons and to close Lorton faster, violent prisoners who would be difficult to place had simply been downgraded and reclassified to medium security risks. As records were changed, details, like specific instructions to keep certain people apart from other people, were dropped. One hundred Lorton prisoners were sent to Youngstown; people who had previously been carefully separated—some of the most dangerous and most violent prisoners—were now in the midst of those they wanted to hurt. The Project hurriedly filed suit based on concerns for their security, but before the trial was completed, one of their clients was killed. The case was settled for monetary damages and, most important, an injunction that required reform, ultimately resulting in the closure of the Youngstown prison.

It became clear to Jonathan that, as much as prisoner’s rights are important, the answer lay in working to keep people out of prison in the first place. Part of the solution would be to use the law to fight for justice in other areas of clients’ lives. Toward this end, he became the Executive Director of the Public Justice Center in Baltimore, and returned briefly to one of his original passions, labor law.

There he and the Center represented low-wage animal factory workers on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. In the midst of an extremely automated process worked the chicken catchers. No machine could grab 75,000 to 150,000 chickens at a time, and take them into the processing plant. Formerly employees, their status had been changed to independent contractors. They were denied overtime, a clear violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act, even for piece rate. The United Food and Commercial Workers Union had brought the case to the Center’s attention—and today the workers are organized and unionized.

Years later at the Legal Aid Society, Jonathan was painfully aware that neither he nor his colleagues in the other D.C. legal services groups could come close to meeting the legal representation needs of the District’s poor. After an in-depth D.C. Bar Foundation review found that only one in ten of the 110,000 District residents living in poverty actually get legal representation when needed, D.C. Court of Appeals Chief Judge Annice W. Brown promulgated the order to create the Access to Justice Commission in 2005. Jonathan played a key role in the establishment of the Commission and was appointed to serve on it as a founding member.

Chaired by Peter Edelman, its purpose is to elevate the conversation regarding access to, availability of, and funding for legal services in the District.

“It was the culmination of a two year push by the legal services community. When we finally got the idea to the Court, Judges Annice W. Brown, Inez Smith Reid, and Eric T.W. Ashington made it a reality. We made it our life’s work to get this Commission established in order to raise more money, sponsor needed research, and increase availability of resources,” says Jonathan.

The District Council wasted no time in making up for the city’s prior history of negligible legal services funding—after a pitch from Chair Peter Edelman, Access to Justice secured $3.2 million that went to the Bar Foundation to fund more than 30 new poverty lawyers. As a lump sum, the amount is minimal, but when figured on a per person basis, it is one of the most generous in the country.

“We went from 0 to 60 in no time,” Jonathan said.

The Commission worked to find money to link the approximately 30 disparate legal services programs in D.C. and make them collectively better by enabling them to refer people to each other and work together as appropriate.

The new funding also supported a loan forgiveness program for public interest lawyers, making it practical for lawyers paying off six figure student loans to take jobs in the lower paying public interest field.

Jonathan has just accepted his second, three-year term on the Commission, and the Council increased legal services funding to $3.6 million this year.

“There’s a lot of good will, not just among the commission members, but at the court, in the bar, at the D.C. Council, among community—consensus is really building.”

“Direct work helps you to recognize structural and systemic issues that need addressing. You solve those, you broaden justice.”
helping parents to help children with special needs:

A PROFILE OF KIM JONES
“Too sick to appear in court, my brother was tried in absentia for the theft and crash of a car he was riding in when he suffered a traumatic head injury. He was going to be warehoused in a nursing home with no rehabilitation—yet he clearly needed and was entitled to SSI and Medicaid. His attorney did not request a dismissal post-conviction based on his situation. There was no advocate for him. Our family, none of us lawyers, filed the appeals to get him placed where he could receive appropriate care. I said right then and there that I was going to law school.”

Kim Jones heads Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc. (AJE) in Anacostia. Its reason for being is simple, and written on the wall behind the reception desk: Children with special needs need parents with special skills. She helped found the organization while still in law school, but by her own admission, needed to leave and gain broader experience in order to better serve it today.

With her sociology background, Kim was intrigued by why people make the decisions they make and how institutions influence those decisions. She became a law clerk for the Legal Aid Society, working on prisoner’s rights and HIV AIDS issues in prison, meeting with clients behind bars.

“Working with prisoners, I saw how important it was to do something more from an education standpoint,” Kim said. “We had failed them somewhere along the way. Criminal behavior is not something that just happens. When your other options are taken away or are out of reach, it’s a viable alternative.” There were clear parallels between many of the clients she was seeing behind bars and those children in our schools who were not advancing. A lot of the men she interviewed were dropouts—many could not read or properly understand their options or even their situation. Some were simply learning disabled; others had major mental health disorders.

She realized that a proactive approach would do the most good. Her own experience a few years before when her brother was nearly denied the rehabilitation he needed gave her first-hand knowledge of the role that family can and must play as advocates; that the process cannot be left wholly to the volunteers and services available.

AJE came into being after fellow UDC-DCL law students, Kim and Bethann West, with seed money of just $12,000 and office space donated by the AME church. After graduation, Kim became its Executive Director, serving in that capacity through 1998.

The premise was simple. They would be there to ensure early intervention for children having problems. Parents’ rights were key, and parents would be given a process they could follow to argue on behalf of their children.
“If you lose sight of the fact that its about families, you become just another company,”

After two years at the fledgling AJE, Kim left her classmate Bethann in charge of the organization and moved on to become National Policy Director and Senior Analyst at the National Association of Community Action Agencies, an organization serving hundreds of local community action agencies across the country. She spent two years there working on human needs policy within 21 issue areas, including Head Start. It would prove to be invaluable experience for her return.

From there, she became a consultant at the Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collective, working on the group’s infrastructure; did policy work and fundraising for ARC of D.C.; was a court monitor for the deinstitutionalization case, Evans v. D.C. (a case brought by Antioch School of Law that resulted in the deinstitutionalizing of 1500 people with mental retardation) and for two years was in private practice civil litigation, much of it on behalf of non-profits.

When she returned to AJE, she brought new skill sets and new strengths gleaned from her national policy work. Critical to AJE’s recent success were her insights on major donor fundraising and the value of building local relationships.

As a founder, she was able to bring these associated managerial and systemic skills to bear and still keep AJE’s original vision paramount.

“If you lose sight of the fact that its about families, you become just another company,” Kim says. “There’s a danger that you’re making decisions for the sake of your own existence. You’re not serving those who need you.”

She had learned what makes a good program and what doesn’t, what it takes to grow yet remain relevant. She learned how to get past a band-aid approach—when the need is so great, it’s easy to spend all of your time on what’s in front of you, neglect planning and then grasp at whatever funding comes your way.

Kim gained the confidence to walk away from funding that doesn’t really match the model.

“It’s not enough to hand out checks. You have got to get to the root of this issue: Why is this family here today. How can they get whole? How did the problem happen? Many clients come to us and think the process is ‘here’s my problem—now you take over.’

“It doesn’t work that way—if you come through the door, you are part of the process,” Kim continues. “We’re not doing our job if they come to us and don’t learn how to do it themselves. This must be an empowerment mechanism to move families from dependency on the system. We help them write the letters, make the phone calls, be engaged in the meetings. We want their voices to be the first voices heard—that’s being truly constructive and supportive.”

After Bethann moved on from AJE, the organization endured a rocky period. Upon Kim’s return in 2002, she inherited a staff of 5 (only two full time) and a budget of $287,000. Today the AJE budget stands at $1.2 million with a staff of 22.

Kim comes from East of the River; her offices are just up Martin Luther King Boulevard from her grandmother’s home. (Her grandmother is herself president of her neighborhood civic association.) “I lived with my grandmother at 14. She pushed me to get out of my comfort zone; to view the world as a bigger place.”
She had other influences, too, including several of her law professors. Kim cites Professor Susan Sutler as a good friend as well as a mentor from whom she first learned to focus on strategic direction. “I still turn to her for advice.” From working with Professor Gay Gelhorn in the HIV/AIDS clinic she learned to push the envelope, be relentless and never settle for excuses. Professor Susan Waysdorf instilled her with confidence and Judge Tony Lee, supervisor of her thesis on the punitive nature of the juvenile justice system, pushed her writing skills.

Kim’s own experiences clearly shaped the model for the organization. “I grew up with two substance abusing parents; it was not the best situation. But it was not okay for the family to be dependent. Hand-outs are not enough. You must become part of the process.”

And the model works for everyone. “Because we intervene early, we avoid a hearing—so attorney’s fees aren’t charged against the school system’s budget.”

Yet, despite the successes, much needs to be done. “Every day a child is born who will need help,” Kim says. “Poor kids of color— they’re the ones suffering disproportionately. These are our kids. If we don’t help them, who will?”

It’s a daunting task, yet it can be stated simply: see the behaviors, address them, get these children to graduate and be better citizens.

“Will this make everyone a good citizen?” Kim asks. “No. But if they can’t acquire an education, they will—naturally—not value it. Even if they get in trouble, they need the skills to get out.”

“This is about exposing people to more opportunities.”

“We’re not doing our job if they come to us and don’t learn how to do it themselves.”
pioneering work with seniors:

JAN MAY AND THE LEGAL COUNSEL FOR THE ELDERLY
As a college student, Jan May helped people with disabilities to work in a factory setting. From their group home, they could walk to their sheltered workshop. “Teaching people these skills and helping them be self-sufficient was a wonderful job.” But Jan learned from that experience as well. He challenged himself to use every bit of his ability, as his students did. “It made me wonder—how can I help in such a way that I’m also using my intellectual capacity to the fullest?” He found the answer in public interest law.

Jan May was in the third Antioch graduating class, the Class of 1977. Fresh out of law school after stints in the housing, child neglect and consumer law clinics, he was working with an Antioch faculty member on a project that would prove pivotal for his career, and for those he serves: a book on the law affecting older people. The Federal Administration on Aging had recently given AARP a grant to evaluate the effectiveness of training lay advocates to assist attorneys in providing legal services to the elderly. From that grant came today’s Legal Counsel for the Elderly (LCE), affiliated with AARP but its own 501c3 corporation. It has been in operation for 33 years. And Jan May has been a part of it for 31 of those years.

Jan began as a staff attorney helping individual clients. However, even then much of the LCE’s focus was on developing systems for utilizing volunteers to deliver legal services. What was the best way to help the elderly with their legal problems? There was no definitive research on the subject, so the Legal Services Corporation funded a two-year study of the delivery systems of 40 grantees to determine what makes the most sense: volunteer pro bono, judicare or some other model. Factors studied included cost-per-case, impact, and client satisfaction, and only the top performers would continue to receive funding. The pro bono model was found to be very effective. Ultimately the Legal Services Corporation made funding contingent upon programs having a pro bono facet to their staff operation.

In the 1980’s, LCE was monitoring nursing homes as the long-term care ombudsman for the District of Columbia. They then launched a money-management program and created a legal hotline staffed by attorneys. The hotline concept began in Pittsburgh and spread across the country as it became clear to activists how well it facilitated competent legal representation. While developed for the elderly, the hotline model became popular in other areas of public interest legal services—today there are more than 160 legal hotlines across the country.

With LSC funding disappearing in the ‘90s, the hotline became even more important, allowing LCE to continue helping people despite a smaller budget. Jan characterizes LCE’s hotline as fast and efficient. It needs to be. LCE receives about 3600 calls each year. From those calls, about 700 matters go on to the Brief Services Unit made up of a couple of staff lawyers and several senior volunteers, about 2/3 of whom are paralegals and 1/3 lawyers. From there the cases go to a pro bono or staff lawyer.

“People shouldn’t be losing the homes they’ve lived in all their lives over a tax bill.”
Some hotline calls need immediate attention. Housing, protective services, consumer services and financial exploitation specialists handle emergency situations ranging from elder abuse to imminent foreclosures due to predatory lenders.

However, with limited funds, the best approach is to not wait for the problem to come to the LCE but to work with many community groups to identify and solve problems before they become acute.

For example, some people with fully paid homes—no mortgage—were still losing their homes because they could not pay their property taxes. “People shouldn’t be losing the homes they’ve lived in all their lives over a tax bill,” says Jan. “We preemptively identify and contact individuals whose homes are about to go up for tax sale, helping them find a remedy before going to court.”

Systemic changes can make a difference as well. With Steptoe & Johnson, the Legal Counsel for the Elderly drafted and worked for passage of tax-deferral legislation for low-income D.C. homeowners over the age of 65. From inception of the idea until passage into law took just over two years. While the D.C. Council passed the law, its benefits do not automatically accrue to eligible residents; low-income seniors still need to apply for the deferment. Again, working with grass-roots organizations to identify people who can be helped is critical.

Helping elders with obsessive compulsive hoarding is another example of LCE’s proactive approach. A clear health and fire hazard, hoarding is grounds for eviction. But LCE has created programs that offer an alternative to landlord/tenant court. Rather than wait for a complaint to be filed, a network of concerned landlords, attorneys and management companies function as an early warning system, alerting LCE’s multi-disciplinary team, including social workers and volunteer coordinators, of seniors living in homes often filled from floor-to-ceiling.

“A surprisingly effective strategy is to organize high school students to come in as volunteers and de-clutter the apartment. These young people, supervised by the social workers, receive community service credits toward their graduation requirements,” says Jan. “The psychology of hoarding is often tied to grief, and the fear of further loss. The effectiveness of this approach stems from the fact that high school students are often less threatening to the older people. We have prevented many hundreds of evictions this way.”

Clearly, seeking alternatives to landlord/tenant court is not only good for those LCE is trying to serve, it is far more cost-effective and a better use of limited resources—once the court process is underway, a good 30-40 hours of legal time typically will be incurred.

Some of these preventive measures involve less dire circumstances, such as making sure those who are eligible are receiving their homestead deductions on their property tax. But when people are on fixed incomes, even these simple steps can have an enormous impact.

The District of Columbia also faces a unique senior problem— it leads the country in the percentage of children being raised by grandparents. This can place an enormous strain on resources. Again, with help from local law firms such as Hogan & Hartson and Covington & Burling, LCE created a manual for those in contact with that population—doctors, nurses, school personnel—to once again head off problems in early stages.

Jan sees lots of opportunity for service in the aging of the baby boomers.

“When I went to law school, it was filled with firebrands out to change the world. And, of course, Antioch attracted that kind of student. But my sense is that a lot of our colleagues in the mainstream felt the same way,” Jan says. “Somehow, for the most part, they got sidetracked. That feeling gave way to a desire to make money.”

Jan believes that many lawyers who have never thought of doing any pro bono work will now consider it as they reach the twilight of their careers— and the country’s demographics make that a considerable number.

“There are 20,000 other lawyers in this town. I’m hopeful that many of them will consider doing volunteer work.”

For the past few years Jan has overseen a full-time staff of around 12 attorneys at LCE, plus another 5 working part-time to staff the hotline.

For him, the choice was not an arduous one; Jan has always known that this is the work he wants to do. “It’s who I am—If I were not a lawyer, I’d be a teacher or a social worker.”

He grew up in a small town in rural Massachusetts. Nobody there had much money, and the big industry was making maple syrup. “To make one gallon of syrup, you need 40-50 gallons of sap boiling away in big vats. It’s very labor intensive, and as it boils, you have to keep scraping scum off the top of the vats,” Jan says. “So I grew up with a model that was the exact opposite of the cream rising to the top.”

He is, for the most part, happy making a real difference representing the poor or near poor. But he has nothing against lawyers working in large law firms—especially those who contribute their share of pro bono time.

“It’s who I am. If I were not a lawyer, I’d be a teacher or a social worker.”
Alumni also at The Legal Counsel for the Elderly

Shirley Williams, ’82
Shirley runs LCE’s Pro Bono Program and has been at the Legal Counsel for the Elderly for 22 years. After getting a business degree from Wharton, she decided to focus more on the public service work she had always performed and enrolled in Antioch School of Law. Prior to joining LCE, she worked at Neighborhood Legal Services and also did contract work for a few years for the government, as management at law firms and in private practice. She cites the late Professor Francis Stevens as an influence at Antioch.

Karen Greene, ’02
Karen runs Elder Buddies, a program she created at LCE as a more humane alternative to landlord/tenant court for elderly people. By combining intense, short-term cleanup of housing with ongoing social work and, if necessary, legal representation, time spent in court can be minimized and evictions avoided. Karen worked with LCE during all three of her UDC-DCSL student years. The idea for Elder Buddies came from her frustrating experience of limited remedies for elderly facing eviction for unsanitary or hazardous conditions in their apartments. Her insight was to address the need with resources generated by mandatory community service requirements for high school students—including her own children. Karen came to UDC-DCSL after retiring from a successful government career, entering law school at age 56. “At my age, I didn’t want to sit in a classroom for three years,” she says. “I was familiar with the mission of UDC, the mandatory clinic work, and wanted to get my feet wet while I could still stand on them!”
alumni at the neighborhood legal services program

More than forty years spent vigorously representing low-income residents in the Nation’s Capital has earned the Neighborhood Legal Services Program (NLSP) the respect of the Equal Justice Community. Under its client-centered approach, NLSP provides advice and counsel for civil cases, representation in judicial and/or administrative hearings, brief service, educational and outreach programs, referrals to private attorneys and to other services, and other legal assistance.

Nakia Waggoner, ’06
Nakia is currently a staff attorney at NLSP. She applied to work there in March of ’06 (thanks to a listing supplied by Career Services Director Dena Bauman) and joined as a Covington & Burling Westwood Fellow in September of 2006. She gained a lot of experience with discovery issues while working in the Housing & Consumer and Government Accountability Project (GAP) Law Clinics. Still, the heavier workload and simultaneous trials took some getting used to, despite her experience in the School of Law’s clinics. She continues to specialize in landlord and tenant law. “I submit a lot of applications to stay the writ and save people from eviction these days,” says Nakia. “I love to help people.”

Erin McFarland, ’07
Erin joined NLSP in September of 2007, also as a Covington & Burling Westwood Fellow. She is a staff attorney today, working on a variety of civil matters, including family law, Social Security and disability. She chose UDC-DCSL for its public interest specialization, the general energy of the school and its location in the nation’s capital. She credits her Juvenile and Special Education Law Clinic Professor Joseph Tulman with providing “amazing guidance, but still pushing you to do things on your own” She still calls on him for advice today.

Heather Molina, ’07
Heather joined NLSP in May of 2008 as a second year Westwood Fellow. Her classmate (and one of her best friends) Erin McFarland alerted her to the opportunity. “It’s great to work for an underserved population,” Heather says. “While this is very challenging, it’s exactly why I went to UDC-DCSL in the first place: to help low-income residents and provide them with the best legal services that we can.” She cites all four of her clinical law program professors, Matthew Fraidin, Susan Sutler, Joseph Tulman and Joyce Batipps, as mentors.

Marc Borbely, ’08
Marc is also a Covington & Burling Westwood Fellow; this is his first job out of law school. “This is exactly what I want to be doing, a continuation of our work in the Housing & Consumer and Juvenile and Special Education Law Clinics,” says Marc. “It was also my first choice because it has federal funding, so it’s the government saying ‘this is what we should do for people.’” He cites Professors Edward Allen, Thomas Mack and Susan Sutler as major influences, with a special nod to Professor Sutler for her example of “tremendous, hands-on, zealous advocacy.”
The Children's Law Center (CLC) is the largest civil legal services provider in DC and the only organization offering comprehensive legal representation specifically for children. They provide legal services to at-risk children and their families and, using the knowledge gained from representing individual clients, advocate for changes in the law. CLC cases on behalf of at-risk children fall into several broad categories, including Adoption, Custody, Abuse and Neglect, Special Education, Domestic Violence and Government Benefits.

Jamie (Cleaver) Desjardins '06
Jamie joined the CLC as a staff attorney in October of 2006, primarily because of her experiences there as an intern during her second-year summer. As former legal director at CLC, it was Professor Matt Fraidin who suggested to Jaime that she would enjoy working there. “He was wonderful during the application process and helped me develop a good, solid foundation in working for a legal services agency.” She also credits Joe Tulman, her professor in the Juvenile and Special Education clinic, with providing her with guidance on how to be a better advocate for children who don’t always understand what is in their best interest.

Adrienne Jones, ’06
Adrienne Jones joined The Children’s Law Center in October 2006 as a staff attorney. She points to a clinical education overall as preparing her for the workload she faces—“all day, every day, weekends, too”—especially in terms of time management. More important, her work in the HIV/AIDS Legal Clinic gave her experience dealing with children in crisis. From Professor Fraidin she got a solid grounding in custody and standby guardianship; from Professor Batipps she learned how to work with agencies such as the SSA and the D.C. Housing Authority.

Genetta Smith, ’06
Genetta joined CLC in October 2006, after interning there for the summer between her second and third years of law school. Having had some experience working with people affected by HIV/AIDS, she already knew before she applied to law school that she wanted to continue in that area, and especially in child advocacy. Her research revealed the clinical programs at UDC-DCSL and the decision was simple. While there she worked in the HIV/AIDS and Government Accountability Project Law clinics; mentors include Professors Alice Thomas and Matthew Fraidin.

Alyssa Patzoldt, ’08
Alyssa begins work at the CLC in October of ’08.
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