

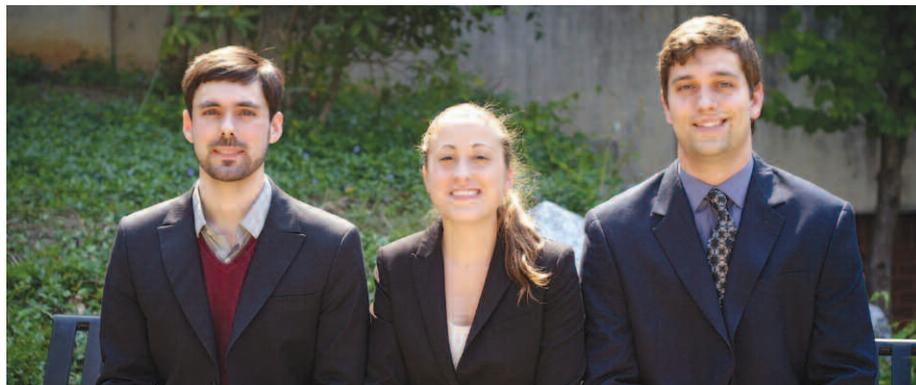
Public Service Internship Program: An Investment in the Community and Future Lawyers

by Dana M. Fallon

Each year since 1990 the Virginia Law Foundation has provided public service internship stipends to selected students at Virginia law schools. In 2013, Virginia's eight American Bar Association-accredited law schools received \$5,000 each to fund public service internships during the summer. This important program supports universal access to legal representation and enables law students to work at law-related public service jobs. It also encourages young lawyers to consider careers in public service and to be mindful of the importance of pro bono work. Interns work under the direct supervision of an attorney at an organization in Virginia. These organizations serve a variety of legal needs of the citizens of the commonwealth and provide access to legal services that might otherwise not be available. Some examples of the groups that Virginia law students serve include the Community Tax Law Project, Community Mediation Center, Refugee and Immigration Services, the Office of the Virginia Attorney General, as well as numerous commonwealth attorneys', legal services, and public defenders' offices.

The statistics are impressive, with more than \$1.2 million provided to more than 400 law students since 1990. But, the numbers alone do not speak to the real impact of the program. These stipends increase the awareness of public service legal opportunities available in the community. Additionally, the stipends allow some students to take on this type of service work who could not otherwise consider an unpaid summer position.

Dan Monahan, a student at George Mason University School of Law, spent last summer at the Fairfax County Public Defender Office. It was a challenge that helped him build professional skills while providing him the chance to make a greater impact on the community. "Without the financial support from the Virginia Law Foundation, I



Since 1990, the Virginia Law Foundation Public Service Internship Program has provided more than \$1.2 million to give more than 400 students at Virginia law schools the opportunity to learn more about public service while serving low-income clients. Interns from 2012 include Washington & Lee students William Beecher, Jan Fox, and Patrick Sweeney, all class of 2014.

would not have had this opportunity. The grant helped ease the uncertainty about providing for additional support to care for my daughter while I worked," he said. Monahan's biggest fear was that if his daughter got sick or when her preschool was closed he would have to take off work, not only reducing the amount of time he had to give back, but also affecting his ability to be a contributing member of the team. "Being an adult law student with a family, I work hard to balance and prioritize the things in my life. The VLF grant went a long way in eliminating a potential conflict in my developing legal career. As a result of my summer grant, I never had to worry about choosing between family and career because the financial support I received meant I would be able to provide both with quality care."

Malvina Hryniewicz graduated from George Mason in 2010 and currently works at the Office of Special Counsel. Her VLF internship gave her a better perspective on law school and the practice of law. "I first found law school extremely difficult due to the stress of classes and the pressure of grades," she said. "At the time, I associated the law with competition and academic success. But my time at the Immigration and Refugee Appellate Center showed me that the law could be used to help individuals who were suffering and needed protection. I learned to use the law as a

tool to assist real people facing tremendous and unthinkable problems." With the VLF scholarship opportunity, Hryniewicz realized how lucky she was that her biggest stress in life was law school grades rather than trying to seek a safe place to live. "My experience made me remember that attorneys can make big differences."

All the participating law schools and students are grateful for the support of the VLF, and especially all members of the bar who support the Public Service Internship stipend program. The efforts of all involved make an immediate and real difference in the lives of Virginia citizens. To find out more about the VLF's law related education grant programs go online at <http://virginialawfoundation.org/grantprogram.htm>.



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