UB Law Forum

Volume 6
Number 1 *Fall 1991*

Article 24

10-1-1991

Trial Lawyers Fund Advocacy Contest

UB Law Forum

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum

Recommended Citation
UB Law Forum (1991) "Trial Lawyers Fund Advocacy Contest," *UB Law Forum*: Vol. 6 : No. 1 , Article 24.
Available at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum/vol6/iss1/24

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Alumni Publications at Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in UB Law Forum by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. For more information, please contact lawscholar@buffalo.edu.

Students Fund Legal Services for the Poor

While the legal establishment in New York continues to debate the issue of legal services for the poor, law students are taking action to get services to those in need. This summer, 17 law students provided legal services for those who otherwise might not have been able to afford a lawyer, thanks to more than $42,000 raised by the Buffalo Public Interest Law Program (BPILP).

BPILP is a law student organization that encourages careers in public service — particularly, legal services to the poor. One of the ways it does this is by providing stipends to fund full-time summer positions with public interest agencies.

According to BPILP organizers, a study released last year by a state judicial committee, the Marrero Commission, reported that 86 percent of the legal needs of New York's poor go unmet.

"BPILP's program has grown impressively in the past few years. Our students have exhibited a vigorous and effective commitment to the public service area," said Dean David B. Filvaroff. "We can be justly proud of their accomplishments."

UB Law students recently went to work for the following organizations in New York and throughout the nation: Buffalo Legal Aid; Volunteer Lawyers Project of Erie County; Farm workers Legal Services; Homeless Task Force; Neighborhood Legal Services, Family Law Unit; Legal Services for the Elderly, Disabled or Disadvantaged; Niagara County Legal Aid; Prisoners Legal Services,Wyoming County-Attica Legal Aid Bureau Inc.; Haven House; Vive;Monroe County Legal Assistance Corp.; Miami Public Defender;Philadelphia Public Defender; and the Capital Jury Sentencing Project (Atlanta, Georgia).

Much of the money is raised through BPILP's annual "Work a Day in the Public Interest" pledge drive, a law student-run campaign that invites students, faculty and staff of the Law School to contribute one day's salary to fund the summer internships. This year, BPILP received over $20,000 in pledges.

Funds also came from a $12,500 award from the Interest on Lawyer Accounts, a state foundation that awards grants to agencies that provide legal services to the poor, and from UB Law alumni/ae.

In addition to the fund drive, BPILP's other activities include:

* A pro bono task force matches law student volunteers with local legal service agencies during the school year and summer. More than 60 organizations in Western New York have been invited to participate in the program.

* In conjunction with the Erie County Bar Association and Neighborhood Legal Services, BPILIP provided seed money for the Homeless Task Force, a new legal services project operating in the Greater Buffalo area.

* A loan repayment assistance program is being established. Funds from this program would provide financial assistance to UB Law graduates who choose to enter lower paying public interest jobs.

"This would remove a large obstacle for graduates who want to work in public interest law positions but have large outstanding educational debt," said Michael Freedman '93, a co-director of BPILP.

* BPILP co-sponsors a series of public interest events, such as the April speech by consumer advocate Ralph Nader.

* It awards four $750 bar review scholarships to students who pursue public interest careers. ■

Trial Lawyers Fund Advocacy Contest

Thanks to a grant made by the Western New York Trial Lawyers Association, UB Law was able to field a team of six students to compete in the 16th Annual National Trial Advocacy Competition. Sponsored by the NYS Bar Association, the contest was held last February in the Supreme Court, Kings County Court House, Manhattan. Fourteen law schools took part.

The competition is designed to be a learning experience for student advocates, student witnesses and other law students who attend to support their team, according to Anthony J. DeMarco, Jr., chair of the National Trial Advocacy and Scholarship Committee of the NYS Bar Association.

Charles H. Dougherty, administrator for the Trial Technique Program at the Law School and a partner in the law firm of Albrecht, Maguire, Heffern & Gregg, P.C., reported that UB won their trials on the first day. However, in the end the team fell short of winning by a mere 10 points. He credits their good showing not only to the high caliber of the students but also to the hard work of Robert M. Murphy '56, who coached them.

Team members were Ann Chung-Jahnke '91, Kevin Doyle '91, Eric Katz '91, Kimberlianne Podlas '91, Deeanna Galla '91 and James Connor '91.

Dougherty said that without the grant, UB Law probably would have had to withdraw from the competition.

"That would have been a real setback after all the work the students put into their preparation," he said. ■